

# FCW

## FLOOR COVERING WEEKLY

The Industry's Business News & Information Resource



## Price pressure forces new wood strategies

By Mallory Cruise

Just as the industry gained confidence in the economic recovery, the increase in demand for hardwood has put pressure on raw material inventories forcing flooring suppliers to post dramatic price increases — all told, some 20 percent over the last six months.

“We’ve been waiting for the market to turn around and offer relief on the sales side, and we’ve been waiting for demand to improve. I think it caught many people off guard how fast it improved; we started to see things pick up in the 4th quarter of 2012 and it has continued to accelerate. That has been the biggest surprise — how quickly things have gotten better on the demand side,” noted Milton Goodwin, vice president of product management, hardwood, at Armstrong.

Over the past couple of months, a number of the larger mills have announced price increases on both solid and engineered hardwood flooring products. Most recently, companies posted increases of up to 6 percent on engineered products and 10 percent on solid products.

Factors other than the economy came into play as well. “We had a bad winter which doesn’t help with procurement. Log decks were basically empty because snowstorms in the Appalachian mountain region made it difficult to get into the forests to cut down trees. All together it was the perfect storm: high demand and low inventory means higher prices,” explained Goodwin at Armstrong.

The situation has forced manufacturers to take a hard look at their own supply and

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# FlorStar: True to its culture for 25 years

Investments, logistics fuel distributor's longevity

By Mallory Cruise

[ROMEVILLE, ILL.] Despite the flailing economy, FlorStar, a wholesale distributor based here, kept true to its core culture, strategy and logistics enabling it to not just survive the downturn but grow profit and reach its milestone 25th Anniversary this year.

FlorStar grew out of Carson Pirie & Scott Co., a department store founded back in the 1850s that operated a variety of other businesses including a wholesale flooring division. In 1988, Carson's sold its flooring division to a management group led by Wade Cassidy, CEO and owner. He and his new management team changed the name to FlorStar Sales, Inc.



Scott Rozmus



Wade Cassidy

Cassidy attributes much of the company's success to the people involved in the business. “We’ve been very fortunate to rep some of the most noteworthy manufacturers who have helped us along the way. It’s been a combina-

tion of good service, good people and vendors who want to see us succeed,” he said.

The culture built by Cassidy and the original management team is what keeps the distributor successful today, according to Scott Rozmus, president of FlorStar. “It is a conservative culture. In order to prosper in profitability, it’s important to be conservative even when times are good; you need to consistently reinvest back in the business so that you are always a step ahead from a technological standpoint and an efficiency standpoint,” said Rozmus.

It was this culture, said Cassidy, that helped to keep the company profitable during the

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## Contract shines at NeoCon 2013

New products, spaces, initiatives drive market

By Amy Joyce Rush

[CHICAGO] NeoCon has been a hallmark of commercial business for nearly half a century — this year marks its 45th year. What started as a furniture show has grown to be so much more for the commercial market, the sustainability movement and the flooring industry in particular.

This year's NeoCon, running June 10 through 12 here, promises to deliver a comprehensive line-up of exhibitors — online

registration of attendees at press time was running some 49 percent above last year. Permanent space is about 99 percent occupied and sales of temporary exhibit space are up over last year's numbers, according to Merchandise Mart Properties Inc. (MMPI).

“The numbers are all looking really good. It speaks to the strength of the industry and the positive attitude, and that day to day business is up,” said Byron Morton, vice president, contract furnishings leasing, MMPI.

Morton said that what has fueled the show

these 45 years is, at the core, new product. “Year in and year out, suppliers bring new products in a mass introduction at NeoCon. That is why attendees say they come — to see new product. As a result, we’ve seen the new product cycle follow the show — it builds buzz and excitement. Some 95 percent of attendees say that is why they come to NeoCon,” he said.

The other component, said Morton, is the concentration of product that is seen at the show. “Nowhere else in North America do

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Chicago's Merchandise Mart has played host to NeoCon for 45 years.

# Shaw and HGTV Home drive store traffic

Smart Home giveaway puts spotlight on integrated flooring program

By Amy Joyce Rush

[JACKSONVILLE BEACH, FLA.] The average consumer might not know much about flooring but with more than 98 million viewing households, most will know about HGTV and its authority on all things home. And that in fact, is the strength of the HGTV Home Flooring by Shaw program and all of the integrated media events the brand provides.

An anchor of the program — which launched at the 2011 winter markets with carpet, hardwood, laminate and area rugs, adding resilient this year — is the annual home giveaway. This year, the HGTV Green Home has been morphed into the first Smart Home which mixes green features with the latest in home technology. Shaw, the exclusive flooring provider and sponsor of the home since 2008, hosted its Florida-based dealers to a private tour of the Smart Home here May 2.



The first HGTV Smart Home brings fashion and function together under one roof.

Bob Ferguson of Castle Carpets and Interiors in Ocala, Fla. said he carries everything the product line has to offer and includes the HGTV Home logo on everything from magnets to business cards. “It’s beneficial to us. Our client is older and they watch HGTV like crazy.”

The same was echoed by all attending dealers here from Ed Keller, who carries the line in all 15 Bob’s Carpet Mart stores on the West Coast of Fla., to Floorida Floors in Tallahassee, Fla. These dealers also said that the brand integration from the home giveaway to TV programming, print advertising and the product itself helps to drive store traffic.

“In order to showcase the HGTV Home Flooring by Shaw

brand, we fully support it in TV, print, web, Facebook, e-newsletter and national promotions,” noted Heather Yamada, marketing manager at Shaw. “But integrating it into all of our media channels allows us to reach millions of consumers — and we reach her wherever she may be looking for product.”

Warren Weeks at Floorida said he uses the logo and brand on his digital store sign that allows him to call-out special products and promotions at will. Weeks said the HGTV Home product gives him an edge in his marketplace.

Some 600 retailers currently showcase the HGTV Home Flooring by Shaw and events such as the Smart Home give-away are designed to help drive traffic into these dealer partners’ stores, according to Todd Callaway, Shaw’s interactive marketing and media manager. “The integration is

beautiful. This is our sixth year sponsoring the home and these kinds of events give us the opportunity to bring dealers here as well as promote consumer integration.”

All the flooring in the home is part of the HGTV Home Flooring by Shaw. Pemberton hardwood floors were used throughout the home. Interior designer Linda Woodrum, noted, “The dark brown floors actually make the lights lighter,” adding, “The area rugs are to die for.”

Rugs used in the home include Luna de Luna in teal, Stitch in Time in chocolate brown, Zara in blue and Venezia in gold. Signature Style III bound carpet in English toffee was also used.

If one questioned Shaw’s presence in the

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The Smart Home blends eco-friendly and high tech function with a subtle beach theme.



Signature Style III broadloom is used in one of the upstairs bedrooms.

## Multi-purpose adhesives on the rise

By Mallory Cruise and Raymond Pina

With time and budget constraints at an all time high, leading adhesive suppliers have launched new multi-purpose hard surface glues that also act as moisture barrier and sound-dampening systems while keeping cracks under control.



W.F. Taylor’s MS Plus Acous-Tec protects LVT, like Shaw’s VersaFit shown here, from subfloor water invasion while providing acoustic benefits.

Bronx, N.Y.-based Port Morris Tile & Marble utilized Laticrete’s Hydro Ban adhesive to act as both a load-bearing waterproof and crack isolation membrane for 500,000 square feet of granite and marble flooring in Manhattan’s 1 World Trade Center — now the tallest skyscraper in the Western Hemisphere.

“Rather than buying a number of different installation products from a number of different companies, we decided upon Laticrete’s system which worked perfectly for our needs,” said John Bertone, executive project manager, Port Morris Tile & Marble.

One product, multiple solutions, one warranty — this has become the new standard, said Erik Kurtz, market manager for hardwood installation systems, Bostik.

Bostik’s new Ultra-Set Single Step hardwood adhesive is warranted to prevent water damage while its patented formula also controls sound, contains subfloor cracks and fights mold. The system works equally well for solid, engineered and bamboo flooring, said Kurtz.

“We have the only hardwood adhesive system that can be used without testing the moisture emission rate of the concrete subfloor. If it’s dry to the touch, you can use Ultra-Set Single Step and we will warrant the installation against water. The formula also has rubber particles in it to prevent the adhesive from being squeezed too thin to ensure the right thickness for moisture and sound abatement. It even provides anti-microbial protection,” he said.

W.F. Taylor also recently launched MS Plus Acous-Tec which protects all resilient flooring, especially popular luxury vinyl tiles (LVT), from sub-floor water exposure while exceeding building code requirements for acceptable sound levels — an important consideration for the growing multi-family market.

“Just getting vinyl to stick to the subfloor is difficult. But with modified chemistry our new Acous-Tec not only does that, but it’s a sound deadening barrier, moisture barrier, crack isolation membrane and it has enhancing thermal properties,” said Gary Liddington, business



Bostik’s Ultra-Set Single Step subdues water, sound, cracks and mold.

manager, W.F. Taylor.

These new multi-purpose adhesives are also greener than their stick-only predecessors and are certified by Greenguard for contributing to healthy indoor air quality. They also contribute Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) points to building projects.

“These adhesives are a rare green building innovation that also saves contractors quite a bit of green — labor time and materials — by successfully tackling multiple jobs at once with no limitations and no sacrifice in performance,” said Kurtz. **FCW**

# Home Legend laminate stays on shelf for now

## Court denies Mannington request for preliminary injunction

By Raymond Pina

[ROME, GA.] On April 9 the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, based here, denied Mannington's request for a preliminary injunction that would have forced Home Legend to remove its Home Legend Maple laminate floor collection from 1,800 Home Depot locations.

The legal tussle began when Mannington issued Home Legend a "cease and desist" order on Sept. 28, 2012 alleging that Home Legend's Maple collection infringes upon copyrighted designs featured in Mannington's Time Crafted Maple laminate flooring. In response, Home Legend filed suit on Oct. 8, 2012 with the intention of having Mannington's copyright declared invalid by the court. While a date for that trial by jury has not yet

been set, Mannington filed motion on Nov. 30, 2012 to initiate the preliminary injunction to remove the alleged infringing product from market in the meantime but was unsuccessful.

"The evidence at this point does not permit the court to determine that the defendant [Mannington] has a valid copyright and consequently cannot obtain a preliminary injunction," according to District Court Judge Harold Murphy in court papers dated April 11. "The defendant [Mannington] has also not demonstrated that it will suffer irreparable harm in the absence of an injunction."

Despite recognizing the "substantial similarity" between the products in question, Murphy said legal precedence does not accept Mannington's physical process of handscraping and staining natural wood to achieve unique laminate visuals as "suffi-

ciently original to warrant copyright protection" — at least not to a degree that warrants the removal of allegedly infringing product before a trial by jury can take place.

"The judge's opinion was that the Home Depot customer is a different customer than our customer so there's not enough damage to warrant an injunction, which is ludicrous. That's exactly why we are fighting so hard. We hang our hat on style and design and if we don't fight this we just give them free license to copy us," said Dan Natkin, director of wood and laminate flooring, Mannington.

Also complicating matters was the testimony of Joe Garofalo, Home Legend's executive vice president of sales, which revealed the allegedly infringing visuals were not the creation of Home Legend but of third-party décor suppliers Lenox, Mass.-based InterPrint

and China-based J&F Impregnated Paper Co.

Mannington has appealed the decision denying a preliminary injunction against Home Legend while both parties prepare for the still unscheduled jury trial.

"The District Court in Rome held that Home Legend did not have to immediately stop selling its laminate products pending a full trial," said Sherry Flax, Mannington's attorney and partner at Mid-Atlantic law firm Saul Hewing. "Mannington has filed an interlocutory appeal to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals requesting a review of whether the District Court applied the correct law in its ruling. The ultimate issue of whether Home Legend is infringing Mannington's copyright remains to be decided."

While counsel for Home Legend was consulted for this story, they chose not to comment directly. **FCW**

# Humphrey: WFCFA members vital to pushing Marketplace Fairness Act through Senate

[Anaheim, Calif.] Scott Humphrey, CEO, World Floor Covering Association (WFCFA), announced that the U.S. Senate passed the Marketplace Fairness Act May 6.

Humphrey gives credit to WFCFA members who reached out to their respective Senators for weeks prior to passage, reminding them of how important the bill would be in restoring fairness and leveling the playing field for retailers nationwide. The ensuing legislative victory was a 69-to-29-vote landslide with broad bipartisan support.

The Marketplace Fairness Act addresses a critical loophole that allowed out-of-state Internet and mail order companies to avoid collecting and remitting state and local sales taxes that local brick and mortar stores always have been obliged to collect. Here, Humphrey talks with FCW about the initiative and the role WFCFA members played in the effort.



Scott Humphrey

could only be attributed to the groundswell of organizations like the WFCFA.

### How were they able to make an impact?

**Humphrey:** Targeted approach and consistent talking points combined with heartfelt belief that fairness is essential when we have consumers who are shopping in "brick and mortar" retail stores and then going online to purchase flooring.

### What's the next step for the measure?

**Humphrey:** Passage will be a challenge in the House, but the overwhelming vote for the act in the Senate certainly gives us momentum. We are already rallying the troops to reach out to their congressmen. Many of whom do not want to go on record as supporting any tax during our current economic challenges. We must work to help Congress understand that this is not a new tax, but simply closing the loophole of an existing tax that is being

unfairly enforced on a select group of sellers. To not pass the Marketplace Fairness Act is a vote to penalize a good deal of their existing voter base. Those voters run the political gamut from Democrat to Republican to Tea Party and any and everyone in between

### Any other thoughts you would like to share?

**Humphrey:** WFCFA represents retailers in all 50 states and it was through this unified voice that we were able to effect change but we are not there yet. Though we are an industry speaking with one voice, and that is powerful, we are not limited to only those in our industry. It is imperative that we expand our voice by joining together with those who will also continue to be impacted by the unfair application of our current sales tax structure. We continue to challenge our members to reach out to their Chambers of Commerce, Mayors and anyone in their community involved in the local infrastructure.

WFCFA tracks and informs on Federal and State legislative initiatives that may impact their businesses. The larger WFCFA's industry representation, the more impactful our message and the more change we can effect. **FCW**

### What role did members play in getting this measure passed?

**Humphrey:** We sent out several urgent requests to our entire membership and made key phone calls ourselves to Senators who we felt could be swayed. Targeted requests were sent to members in key states with potential talking points and contact information to

reach out to their Senators.

### How many members responded?

**Humphrey:** I spoke with Senator Durbin, sponsor of the bill, and he shared that the response of our members and other retailers had a great impact on the final vote. He felt that the overwhelming support of the bill

# Unilin gets laminate waterproofing technology

By Raymond Pina

Unilin entered into an agreement with New Zealand-based Panchem Industries on March 25 to jointly commercialize Vitec, a patented chemical additive that renders laminate floors waterproof and fire retardant — properties that could pave the way for greater commercial market exposure for the durable category.

Panchem Industries' patented moisture resistant agents are "pulled into" finished laminate floor planks at the end of production lines, according to Bart Van der Stockt, managing director of Flooring Industries, Unilin's intellectual property business unit.

"The purpose of the agreement is to leverage our licensing experience to get this technology out to all interested parties. The

technology has great potential for the flooring industry and could prove to be very important," said Van der Stockt.

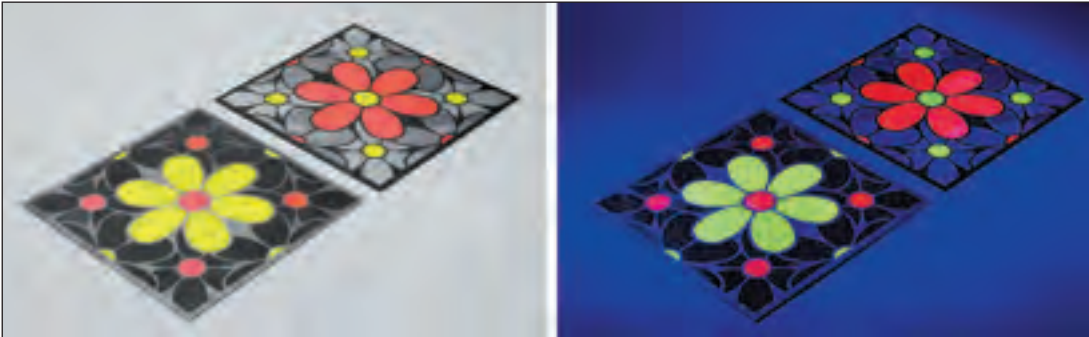
With the exception of small Main Street installations like medical offices, hair salons and boutiques, laminate flooring has not been fully embraced by the commercial community because of its tendency to swell and buckle when exposed to moisture.

While waterproofing laminate wouldn't totally resolve its commercial shortcomings — the need for expansion joints in rooms larger than 30 square feet still remains — it would greatly expand the category's reach into wet areas of the home and into smaller mainstream commercial applications.

"It is more expensive to add the extra step and chemicals to make the boards resistant against moisture, but the potential upside for the category is immense," said Van der Stockt. **FCW**



Commercial specifiers are using multiple-sized LVT to create modular installations. Shown is Shaw's Array LVT in Versailles Tile.



Centiva's black-light responsive Brites highlight the commercial move to more color.

## Commercial LVT: Larger formats, more color

By Raymond Pina

The recent success of luxury vinyl tile (LVT) in the commercial market is driving makers to create larger formats, unique designs and focus much more on color than they do for residential.

"The commercial LVT channel is an entirely different beast than the residential side. Architects and designers are looking for colors and designs that are outside the conventional and in larger plank and tile sizes. These unique looking, larger LVTs create the desired ambiance while allowing installation crews to get the job done more efficiently," said Michael Lang, senior marketing manager, Karndean Designflooring.

Case in point is Karndean's new Opus Collection. Designed exclusively with the commercial market in mind,

the line features a distinctive blend of multi-colored rustic metallic visuals in interchangeable 6" x 36" and 18" x 36" formats.

"The Opus visual is unique, there's nothing to compare it to, but specifiers are drawn to it aesthetically and they like the ability to get creative with different but corresponding sizes," added Lang.

Large format commercial LVT wood visuals have now become the preferred flooring for restaurants, retail and grocery stores, according to Diana Borders, principal designer, commercial flooring, Armstrong.

"The retail segment is now the fastest growing segment we're involved in and it has gravitated to our much wider 9" x 48" rustic wood visuals. Wider and longer just looks more realistic and these settings have the space to portray them properly. A plank that large might not look right in a home, but in a large retail space they get an upscale look that's easy to maintain," she said.

Metroflor has found success tapping into the same trend offering wood visuals

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in 6" x 48", 7.5" x 48" and 8.6" x 48" LVT planks, according to Russell Rogg, president and CEO.

"It's not just about having the larger sizes though. It's important to have colors specifically for the commercial market. We have the light and natural oaks and maples but we found when you transition to grays and chocolates they work really well for retail, hospitality and corporate environments," he said.

Amtico is finding success with the unique direction its new Quill pattern has taken by portraying rustic wood visuals in a weaved format.

"Amtico took wood and put it in a different orientation than architects and designers have ever seen before. We just launched it and we're already getting a lot of requests for samples," said David Sheehan, vice president of commercial LVT, Mannington Commercial/Amtico.

On the commercial LVT tile front, products are not only getting larger but there is a definite push toward rectangular formats, particularly in 8" x 16", 12" x 24" and 18" x 36" formats, according to insiders.

"We launched a 12" x 24" Konecto with a linear stone pattern specifically to address this new commercial trend," said Rogg. "The rectangular tile format also features a micro-beveled edge to further delineate from tile to tile, which we recommend for a stagger or brick-like installation."

While these new larger and rectangular formats stand on their own, the real appeal for designers is the ability to mix and match them, said Allen Cubell, vice president of resilient product management, Armstrong.

"We definitely see 12" x 24" standing on its own but the nice thing about having 8" x 16" and 8" x 8" is that you can combine them for a nice modular design," said Cubell.

#### Color is king

After years of natural and neutral color predominance, specifiers are demanding more color to help retailers, hospitals and corporations stand out and attract customers and employees, said Armstrong's Borders.



Wider wood visual planks, like Metroflor's Konecto Prestige shown here, are becoming a favored format at restaurants and retail.

"After so many years of neutrals, it's exciting to see the requests pouring in not just for more color, but colors that pop," she said. "Today, we have so many choices for where to shop, eat, get medical attention and go to school. All of these settings are now using color to make people want to be in their space."

Centiva has taken this emerging trend to the extreme with the launch of Brites, a collection of both bright neon and black-light responsive LVTs available in a wide range of sizes of up to 36" x 36".

"Brites will get your attention. That's exactly what it was designed to do. And that's why designers turn to Centiva. They want one-of-a-kind products like this that stand out from a crowd," said Erin Dempsey, public relations and manager of environmental strategy, Centiva.

As contrast, but also as an emerging major commercial trend, are abstract concrete visuals, according to Armstrong's Borders.

"Retailers always want to stain the concrete they have and it looks beautiful for about a month and then they have maintenance issues.

Now specifiers have realized they can get the same if not better visual in vinyl and have it for 10 years," said Borders. **FCW**



Congoleum's Dennis Jarosz shows off the new commercial Structure line.

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# Why glue is sticking around

By Raymond Pina

With nearly 100 exhibitors of click luxury vinyl tile (LVT) at this year's Surfaces, one could be lead to believe that glue-down installations are dead, but that simply isn't the case, said industry insiders. In fact, executives at Armstrong, Congoleum and Mannington said more than 80 percent of all vinyl floor

installations continue to be glued in place.

"Glue down remains the prominent installation method," said Allen Cubell, vice president of resilient product management, Armstrong. "If you look at big LVT companies like Amtico and Centiva, that's almost all glue down business. And most fiberglass floors are being glued down now, too — at least around their perimeters. Glue down is still the safest way to install

a floor and it hits a lower price point that you can't reach with floating formats."

Despite the widespread introduction of glueless vinyl floors, many dealers still prefer to glue product down when there are subfloor irregularities or environments where heavy rolling loads could be an issue, according to Ed Keller, executive vice president and general manager of Tampa, Fla.-based Bob's Carpet Mart.



**While click LVT has become the industry's latest darling the majority of floors continue to be installed with glue, said insiders.**

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"There's no denying click LVT is popular but for me to recommend it, the subfloor has got to be perfect with no telegraphs at all," he said. "It would be nice if every floor we go over was perfectly flat without a blemish but that's rarely the case. And when you combine the premium of a floating floor with the cost of properly preparing the subfloor to accept it, most would rather have the glue and the peace of mind that the floor is secure."

But industry experts caution that insisting on gluing down new floating LVT formats can be equally detrimental.

Lew Migliore, president of Dalton-based LGM & Associates, explained, "Sometimes guys who have been in the business for years see a new product and either don't read or believe the instructions and assume gluing it down will be best," he said. "Then a floor that was designed to shift with a moving subfloor gets pulled apart or buckles. The industry is changing so quickly and adopting so many new locking technologies it's taking some time to assimilate the new methods."

As a result, suppliers and certifying bodies have ramped up training to ensure installers are familiar with new floating vinyl floors and how best to install them.

"I've been installing floors for two years and I've never encountered a mechanical locking LVT while on the job," said Matt Snodgrass, a Kansas City, Mo.-based installer. "I'm familiar with them. I train with them and I've even installed one for my friend. And I like not working with glue. But out on the job everything is glued down and that makes sense. If you're paying to have the floor professionally installed you might as well permanently adhere it."

A number of vinyl suppliers have also taken to engineering floors that are more versatile and can be installed with or without glue or a combination of both methods, said Patrick Buckley, vice president of product management, Congoleum

"There will always be a group of people out there that will prefer to fully adhere their floors. That's their choice," he said. "However, the industry has learned that in some occasions you simply need to secure the perimeter, either with glue or a double sided tape, and you can float the rest. It gives you the flexibility to choose if you want to fully adhere, partially adhere or float the whole installation." **FCW**

# Alloc travels high road to success

By Raymond Pina

[CALHOUN, GA.] Alloc's laminate floor sales are up 40 percent one year after reestablishing itself here in the States with a 50,000 square foot warehouse, according to Patty Banwart, regional sales manager.

"We stuck with producing value-added products with sellable differences," she said. "We didn't follow everyone to the bottom on price and it's paying off."

Alloc has always maintained a unique position within the category. Alloc and Wilsonart were the only two suppliers offering high-pressure laminate (HPL) floors suitable for heavy commercial applications when the economy turned in 2008. Alloc is the only supplier of its patented aluminum mechanical locking system — now available in a 5G fold-down format. Its aluminum locking system allows its laminate flooring to be installed 50 square feet before requiring transition joints to hold it in check. Traditional laminate flooring is limited to 30 square feet.

Having a durable HPL commercial-rated product that could be installed without unsightly transition joints and the wherewithal to pull the plug on an expensive transatlantic manufacturing model saved the company. "We never stood still. We kept refining our business model and realized we had to pull out of the U.S. and set up centralized distribution until the market got strong again," said Banwart.

The market for high-end laminate is improving, according to Alloc dealers charging a premium for top-quality laminate guaranteed to stay put and beautiful under the toughest conditions.

"Today's consumer is looking for something better than 49 cent laminate from a big box store," said Harvey Johnson, owner of Miami-based Mastercraft Flooring Distributors. "Alloc is our differentiator. We can clearly demonstrate its superiority if the consumer decides she wants to buy a better product."

Alloc services its distributors from its Calhoun warehouse but also with a Distributor-to-Distributor (D2D) program where distributors sell to each other as well.

"Each distributor customizes its own program and that's a big deal," said Banwart. "There are specific brochures for each distributor which may carry 45 SKUs or 60 SKUs and some 120 SKUs — whatever makes

sense to them."

While Alloc's durable HPL aluminum locking products remain a hit, the company branched out this year with a new wide-body long laminate that's nearly 7 feet long. Utilizing a non-aluminum drop lock system, the new Elegance Long Plank is AC-4 commercially rated.

Also new is Alloc Universal, a heavy-

commercial HPL laminate in a traditional size format but also without an aluminum locking system.

"We offered some products without aluminum to lower the price point for small business owners who are cost conscious and want to install the product themselves," said Banwart. "It's still HPL and a superior product. You can walk all over it with muddy

boots right off the street. You can do that every day and it will stand the test of time."

Alloc has also entered the luxury vinyl tile (LVT) market with a one-of-a-kind product.

As the exclusive North American licensee of the Super-Click locking system, Alloc's Dream Click LVT planks simply slide together, even using one's feet.

"We looked at a few LVTs and Alloc's was by far the nicest one we saw," said Ray Rucier, residential product manager for Delaware-based Derr Flooring Company. "We're doing really well with Dream Click. It's taking off." **FCW**



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Alloc's new Elegance is nearly 7 feet long.

# Contract tile gets clean and thin

By Tanja Kern

New technologies that ease installation and maintenance, along with highly saturated neutrals, are the trends driving porcelain tile for the contract market in 2013.

## Self-cleaning tiles

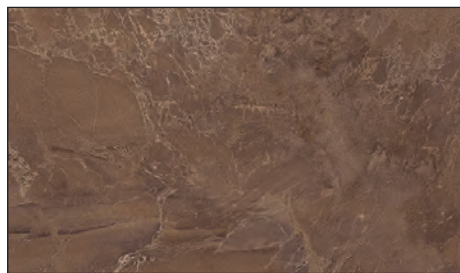
Self-cleaning and antimicrobial treatments offer another level of functionality for contract spaces, such as hotels, restaurants, spas and medical facilities. Italy's Casalgrande Padana and U.S.-based Crossville Inc. recently added Toto's Hydrotect technology to its tile, which adds antimicrobial, self-cleaning and air purifying effects to the tile surfaces. Hydrotect adds a nontoxic titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) coating to tile surfaces during the glazing and coating process. With its hydrophilic and photocatalytic properties, the coating kills odor-causing bacteria, reduces dirt and oil accumulation and rids the air of odors and nitrous oxide, said Lindsey Waldrep, vice president of marketing for Crossville.

Casalgrande Padana added the technology in fall 2012, and Crossville will follow suit in June 2013, offering the technology as an

optional treatment for most of its porcelain tile collections at an additional cost.

Hydrotect is a coating applied to tile during a second firing process that occurs after the tile is traditionally glazed and fired. This treatment will not wash or wear off over time. It is not visible and does not alter the appearance of the tile.

"We are not early adopters, and in some cases that is good," Waldrep said. "What we have is Toto's fourth generation technology. It is the latest and greatest version of it. They have tweaked the formulas a) to improve how they work and, b) for U.S. EPA regulations. Frankly, it had a lot to do with trust and us feeling like the technology was something that



This stone-look porcelain can be used as part of Marazzi's ventilated wall system.

we should invest in. It came to a point where the technology is irrefutable and our partnership with Toto is a lasting joint venture."

## Slim panels

Slim panel tile technology continues to gain steam with architects and designers. The panels are designed for wall tile installation, indoors or out, and can be placed over existing tile to reduce installation time and cut the mess of demolition.

Crossville introduced a new line of porcelain panels as part of its Laminam brand, Crossville's U.S. distributorship of thin-panel porcelain products manufactured by Laminam S.p.A. called Collection. The line features 18 colors that range from brights to versatile neutrals created to work together, allowing designers to custom combinations and patterns, or apply them individually.

Collection porcelain panels, which measure 3.4' x 10' in size and 3 millimeters in thickness, are recommended for vertical surfaces, including interior and exterior walls, doors and cabinet facings, as well as horizontal surfaces such as countertops.

Italian tile firm Lea Ceramiche showcased its Slimtech technology at Coverings, which uses 3 millimeter laminated porcelain in 40" x 40" sizes. The thin slab can be installed over old surfaces as floors, walls or ceilings, applied to building exteriors, and used as countertops.

## Versatile neutrals

By providing a strong neutral base of floor tiles, suppliers can answer the need for a variety of commercial projects. Florida Tile's Time/2.0 collection is a commercial grade floor and wall tile that comes in an extensive palette of nine colors. "We have been trying to build our commercial business and now we have everything we need to support it — the merchandising, a team of sales representatives and the technical material," said Florida Tile marketing director Sean Cilon. "This is a one-size-fits-all commercial line with 90 SKUs."

Cilon said Time/2.0 is designed to be a staple in any design library. It is available in 12 x 12, 6 x 24, 12 x 24 and 24 x 24 in three finishes natural, polished and textured, all rectified. The collection also includes trims.

Daltile also continues to respond to the emerging trends driving today's commercial designs. Wood looks, dimensionality, plank sizes and the use of larger format sizes are all trends that the company anticipates will continue to remain popular for years to come.

"We strive to ensure we have depth in our product offerings, provide competitive pricing and continue to deliver product innova-



Laminam by Crossville unveils Collection, a new line of thin-panel porcelain tile in 18 colors.

tion," said Lori Kirk-Rolley, senior marketing director for Daltile.

This spring the company launched five new collections: Parkway, a minimalistic stained concrete look; Bay Bridge, a wood-look porcelain in plank shape; a natural travertine look called Cortona; a marble visual, Florentine; and, Mosaic Traditions, which is a blend of stone and glass accent tile.

"This new product launch represents the 'best in class' our customers know and expect from Daltile, and our ongoing commitment to those looking for total design versatility in the products they choose," Kirk-Rolley added.

Marazzi uses 3D imaging technology to recreate the look of natural wood on porcelain with its Harmony collection. It comes in three modern shades of brown and a white. "This tile looks like wood but performs better since it withstands water as well as freezing conditions, which most woods cannot," said marketing director Marianne Cox. The collection contains 21 percent recycled content and offers a bevy of installation options.

In addition, Marazzi's new Perseo collection is an alternative to natural stone that can be used as part of the company's energy-efficient ventilated wall systems, thanks in particular to its frost resistance and rectified edges. "Perseo contains 45 percent recycled content, no VOCs and has low life cycle costs," Cox added. **FCW**



Casalgrande Padana introduced Toto's Hydrotect technology through its Bios Self-Cleaning Ceramics.

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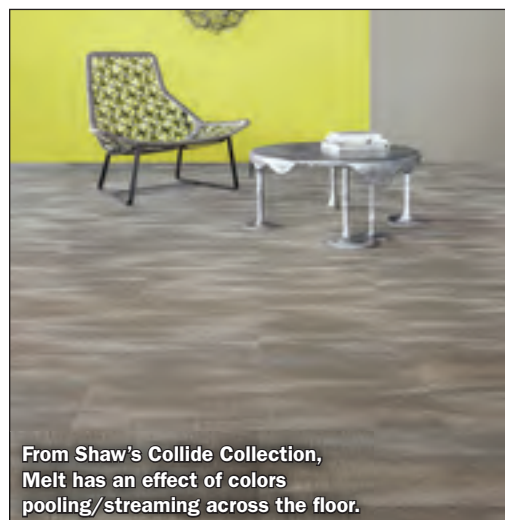


# Carpet tile has it all

New modular products offer style, performance, lower price

By Janet Herlihy

Despite today's slow economic recovery, the commercial carpet tile market continues to gain sales. That growth is fueled by innovative design that has lowered costs while creating a variety of stylish products offering convenient handling, installation and maintenance.



From Shaw's Collide Collection, Melt has an effect of colors pooling/streaming across the floor.

"For BOLYU, the modular business continues to be the driving force behind our 2013 year-to-date (YTD) growth," reported David Vita, executive vice president of BOLYU.

Mike Gallman, Mohawk Group's vice president of product management, agreed, saying, "We saw healthy year over year growth in tile for the first quarter both in shipments and orders."

J&J/Invision is especially pleased. "J&J's year-over-year increase in tile sales is almost plus 30 percent, which is in keeping with the past several years' performance," said David Jolly, president and COO of J&J/Invision.

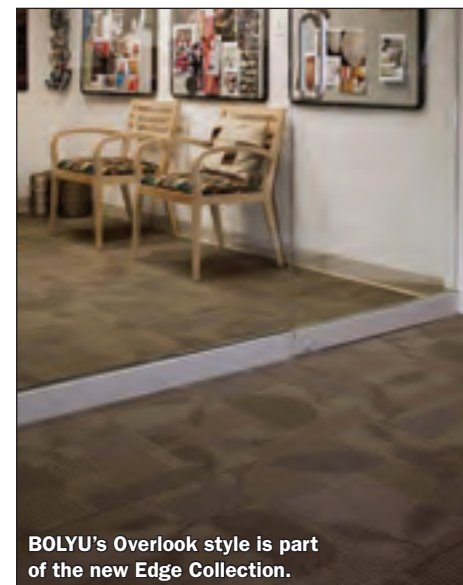
Others were more cautious. "General market uncertainty and conflicting economic data has led to some postponed spending in the first quarter of 2013," noted Jack Ganley, president of Mannington Commercial. "The forecast for the balance of the year still remains optimistic for mid single digit growth — reflected in the strong recent numbers in the Architectural Billing Index."

## Where is the growth?

While all commercial segments are using carpet tile, suppliers agreed that corporate was the strongest. John Stephens, vice president of marketing for Shaw Contract Group, said, "Corporate is the highest percentage tile and hospitality the lowest. Healthcare, education and retail are all experiencing significant growth in carpet tile."

Tom Ellis, vice president of marketing for Tandus Flooring, explained, "Because government operates as an owner occupied space, government is also a strong market. Higher education, more than K-12, considers modular carpet as a flooring option due to the amount of office locations on a campus and the same for medical office buildings."

Vita added, "Even traditional multi-tenant office buildings are now specifying carpet tile in both their public space areas (lobbies, corridors, food service areas, etc.) and individual tenant suites. Historically, Tenant Improvement spaces didn't provide the budgets to use modular tile, but with the lower cost carpet tiles that are now available, Property



BOLYU's Overlook style is part of the new Edge Collection.

Management/TI companies are now using tile with growing frequency."

Bentley (formerly Bentley Prince Street) is also seeing sales from non-traditional markets, according to Todd van der Kruijk, vice president of design. "We note that education and healthcare continue to grow in their specification of tile products. The incorporation of high-performance fiber in new product introductions along with a growing alignment of color trends across segments has

Continued on page 10



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## Carpet tile

Continued from page 9

allowed our product to broaden its reach.”

Carpet tile demand is growing around the world as well. Shaw will open its carpet tile plant in Nantong, China in July this summer. “This will be the first Cradle to Cradle production capacity in Asia,” Stephens said.

### Product innovation:

#### Lower cost/higher performance

In the commercial market, suppliers are constantly working to develop the best modular fashion married to great performance, while meeting cost requirements



**Kinetex from J&J/Invision is a new textile flooring that combines features of carpet tile with hard surface flooring.**

and featuring environmental advances.

► Bentley will be first to launch a product made of the new Antron ‘Fine Denier’ fiber system. The new yarn yields high performance products that are suitable for a variety of applications, according to van der Kruik. “Recent advancements in our tufting technology will enable enhanced pattern capability in addition to increased precision and texture within the design,” he noted.

► BOLYU is expecting more growth from its Edge Series that launched in March. Vita explained, “This package provides our brand with a tremendous combination of pattern, texture and color that can hit very aggressive budget requirements and two week service requirements.”

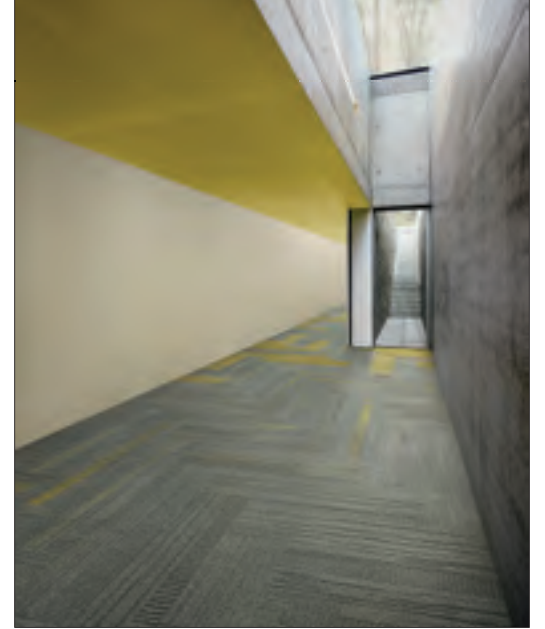
► Interface continues to work on increasing the recycled content of its tiles, according to Peter Greene, vice president, marketing for the company. “Recent introductions using 100 percent recycled yarns from Aquafil contain up to 80 percent recycled content,” he said.

► At NeoCon, J&J will formally introduce Kinetex, new soft-surface flooring, according to Jolly. Kinetex, which previewed last year at NeoCon and won a Product Innovation Award, combines soft surface attributes with hard surface performance. “It was created in response to A&D/end user requests for a flooring alternative to VCT, rubber and LVT,” Jolly explained. Made of polyester, it is composite textile flooring that provides unique benefits including: durability, maintainability, slip-fall safety, acoustical benefits, comfort, ergonomics and sustainability, according to J&J.

► Mannington continues to innovate in the area of yarn processing and to invest in the latest in tufting technologies to create texturally rich designs that support the design of the modern workspace, Ganley said.

A new collection in the 18" x 36" format takes full advantage of the length of the plank, with a pattern that fades in and out. It also promises to ease installation — no complex planning or installation methods required.

Mannington first showed the Vivendi Collection of modular and broadloom styles at NeoCon 2012 where it won the NeoCon Gold Award. The collection will



**From Interface, Duo provides pattern and palette, while Trio adds a swath of color for limitless possibilities.**

officially launch at NeoCon this year. The Vivendi resilient collection won NeoCon Gold in 2011.

► Masland is offering Merge and Mesh as part of its FIT program of stylish broadloom and tile that meets budgets and quick delivery needs. Tufted with Universal Re-Fresh Nylon SDN as face fiber with 30 percent total recycled content, the styles can be combined to create movement in the visual field.

► Answering demand, Shaw will expand its line-up of 18" x 36" planks this year. “Designers are thinking of the module itself as a design element,” noted Reesie Duncan, Shaw’s creative director.

Shaw will unveil the Collide Collection, including four styles, in the 18" x 36" size. The inspiration is colliding patterns inspired by fractures and splits in nature.

► TanduS will be introducing a solution dyed nylon yarn technology that is so new it hasn’t been named yet. It allows for a high styled carpet tile that is faster to manufacture and deliver to market, with lower maintenance costs and more durability, according to Ellis. This new approach to construction also provides excellent appearance retention, especially for environments with heavy rolling and foot traffic, he added. **FCW**

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## Bentley rebrands name for future

The company that has gone to market under the name Bentley Prince Street for the past decade is returning to its roots as Bentley.

Bentley’s focus on design and innovation remains at the core of the company as they reach back to the past to build the future. Bentley plans to introduce new identity and branding components during the NeoCon season, said Ralph Grogan, president, CEO. **FCW**

**BENTLEY**



Kardean Designflooring installed Rustic Metallic Opus LVT in interchangeable 6" X 36" and 18" X 36" formats at City of Westminster College in London.

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come together**

**Pavilion takes on  
install challenges**

**Barclays Center's new  
floors to wow crowds**

# Consolidated Carpet outfits high-profile Barclays Center

Consolidated Carpet furnished and installed more than 300,000 square feet of various flooring products throughout the newly-constructed and highly-profiled Barclays Center Arena in Brooklyn, N.Y. The arena, home to the Brooklyn Nets and future home of the New York Islanders, is a state-of-the-art facility constructed through the efforts of Consolidated Carpet, Ellerbe Becket, ShOP Architects, Relative Space and Hunt Construction. It opened in September 2012.

The project called for an exclusive and high-quality line of flooring products to fit the various needs of the arena, as well as providing a pleasant visual experience for visitors to the space. Vorwerk created more than 153,000 square feet of custom carpet tiles in various shades of gray, which were installed by Consolidated Carpet throughout the corridors, stairways, VIP spaces and suites in the arena. This keystone feature of the flooring in the area required precise installation centered on their unique shape, color scheme and pattern. Additional specialty features in the arena included the installation of a custom carpet featuring the new Brooklyn Nets logo in the team's locker room, as well as an intricate herringbone patterned wood flooring installation in the Player's Lounge that mimics the Nets' actual playing court.

"The Barclays Center was a marquee project utilizing many unique products. Consolidated wanted to be involved not only because of the stature of the job, but of the unique installation challenges it would present. We couldn't be happier with the outcome," said Consolidated Carpet president and CEO, David T. Meberg. **FCW**

## Commercial Case Study

**Project:** Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Contractor:** Consolidated Carpet

**Product used:** Vorwerk broadloom and carpet tile; Masland broadloom; Stark Carpet broadloom; Lees carpet tile; Shaw Contract carpet tile; Nora Rubber resilient flooring; Johnsonite resilient flooring; Shaw Hospitality engineered maple wood flooring; Teragren Commercial bamboo floating flooring



Consolidated installed more than 300,000 square feet of flooring.



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SURFACE CLEANUP	Easy	Difficult
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ODOR	Virtually None!	Strong
HAZARDOUS INGREDIENTS	None!	MDI & TDI Isocyanates & Solvents
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U.S. Patent # 6,706,789 | Media Contact: Mihir Gandhi  
Ext: 100 (mgandhi@wftaylor.com)

# 78 new visuals reshape Amtico design

Company leverages Mannington technology, resources

[MADISON, GA.] The Amtico Collection of upscale commercial luxury vinyl tiles (LVT) has been redefined with 78 truly unique and highly customizable wood, stone and abstract visuals.

Utilizing new non-repeat print technology and custom cutting tables at its manufacturing facilities, based here and in Conyers, Ga., the

40 mil Amtico Collection is now available with or without bevels and in any shape and size combination ranging between 3 inches and 48 inches. These custom made products ship directly within 5-10 business days, said David Sheehan, vice president of commercial LVT, Mannington Commercial/Amtico.

“If you add up all the possibilities including popular 12 × 12 and 18 × 18 tiles as well as 4 inch and 6 inch wide planks, the new launch is really something like 8,000 SKUs,” he said. “At Amtico, we literally adjust the cutting table to achieve any size you want. Having the ability to provide this level of customization makes designers extremely eager to work with Amtico.”

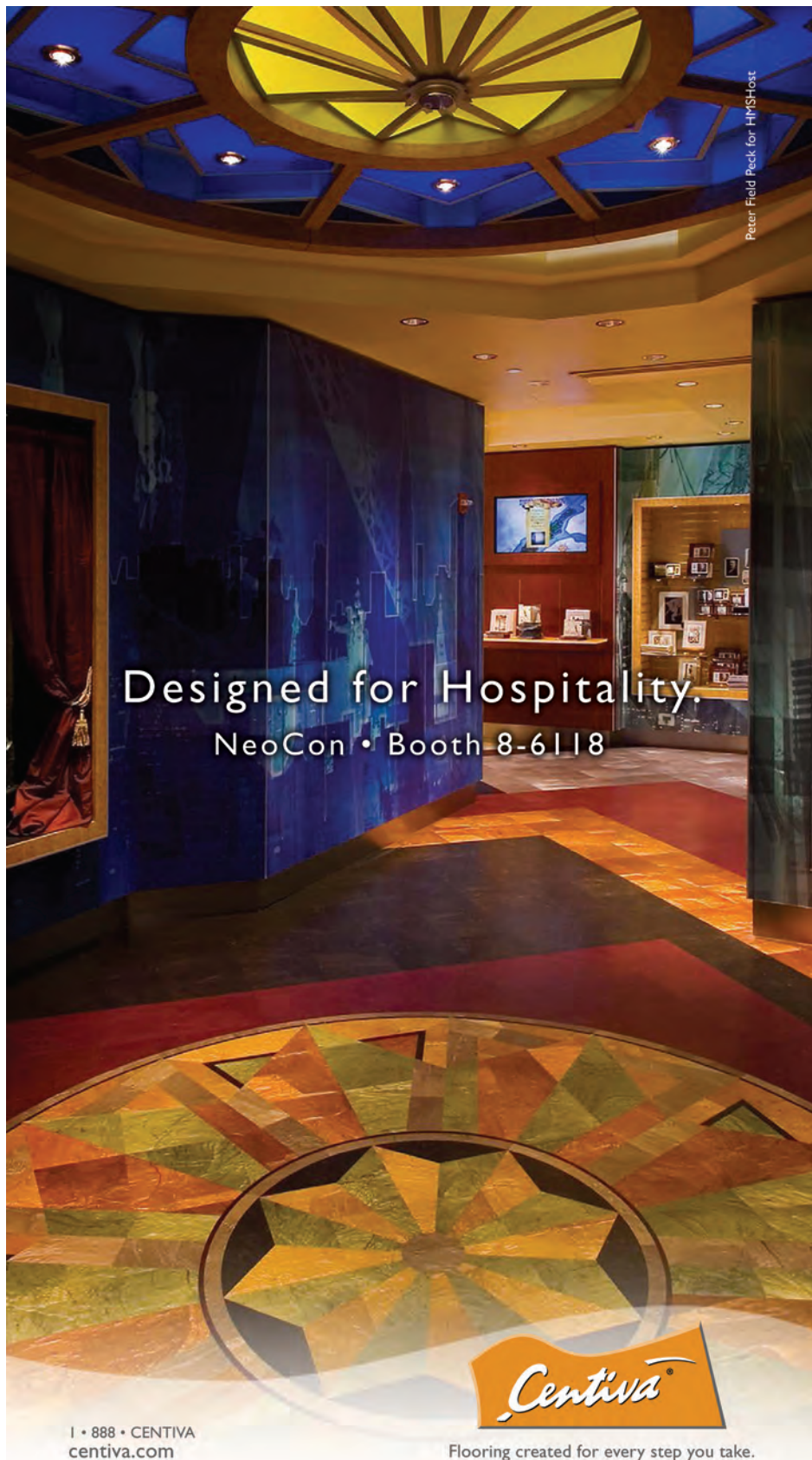
New York City based architect Lisa Chan said, “You specify Amtico when you want to create something really special. When you have a vision you simply won’t compromise on and want something unique and customized.”

The collection is more than simple mimicking of popular trends like rustic woods, urban concrete and worn metals — the company

takes it one step further by offering unique orientations as well.

“The guiding vision of this product expansion has not been simply to mimic natural materials, but to offer creative interpretations and upscale aesthetics,” explained Tyrone Johnson, senior vice president of hard surface, Mannington Commercial/Amtico. “The products are designed to support highly customizable design formats such as herringbone, basket weave, stitch, cross grain and random planks. Designers can specify completely customized products to create thematic icons, one-of-a-kind imagery, corporate logos, elaborate borders and motifs.”

These new 78 designs now account for 41 percent of the total 188 SKUs offered under the Amtico Collection.



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Baltimore's Sheppard Pratt Medical System switched out carpet for new Karndean LooseLay LVT, shown here in Tasmanian Whattle and Copper Gum.

## Commercial Case Study

# Karndean LooseLay in it for the long haul

[BALTIMORE, MD.] Sheppard Pratt Medical System, a private, non-profit behavioral health inpatient facility located here, recently renovated by replacing 3,661 square feet of commercial carpet with Karndean Designflooring's LooseLay luxury vinyl tile (LVT).

As is the growing trend, Sheppard Pratt's facility project coordinator Marilyn Romano decided to renovate with LVT rather than other hard surface or soft surface products because it's quiet, waterproof, comfortable and easy to clean.

“We have a lot of open space for activities so acoustics were an important consideration,” said Romano. “Traditional hard surface would be too noisy but carpet became such a problem we were replacing it. The patients would pull at it. So when Karndean's local sales rep showed me LooseLay LVT, I knew I found our floor. We have a beautiful wood layout — in two species — and it doesn't need to be vacuumed or waxed. Maintenance loves that aspect of it.”

Karndean's 41.3" × 9.85" LooseLay vinyl planks are 4.5 mm thick and engineered to be installed in a floating format without glues or click systems. While Karndean warrants floating commercial installations of LooseLay for 10 years, Romano decided to glue it down. “I was willing to try LooseLay without glue but our needs are a little different. Behavior patients have the habit of trying to pick things up,” she said. “But we've had the new floor now for two months and it's perfect. The other nice thing was that the product was stocked in Pennsylvania. I didn't have to wait for it and easily met my deadline.” **FCW**

While these new additions to the Amtico Collection are the work of Amtico International's U.K.-based design team, the organization is currently utilizing technology and design input from parent company Mannington, which acquired Amtico March 5, 2012.

"Amtico's and Mannington's design teams are beginning to collaborate," said Sheehan. "We want to leverage the strength of both. We will continue to utilize the capabilities of our U.K. designers but Mannington definitely has vast knowledge of color and pattern as it relates to U.S. trends."

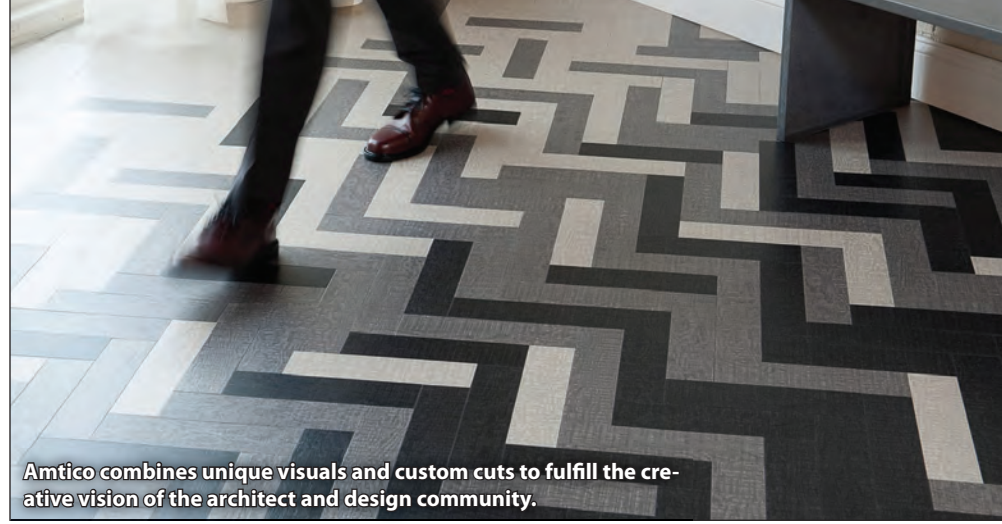
An immediate result of this recent collaboration is Amtico's commercial adaptation of the abstract linear design featured in Mannington's residential Adura Linea LVT.

"The Linea pattern we introduced in Mannington Adura could have real potential on the commercial side, especially in healthcare," said Sheehan. "This is a small example of what these two design groups can do long term."

The largest impact, however, will result from combining Amtico's state-of-the-art domestic

production capabilities and Mannington's intellectual property, particularly patents for mechanical locking, embossed-in-registration (EIR) and advanced wearlayers, added Sheehan.

"There is a whole slew of proprietary technology that exists on both the Amtico and Mannington side," he said. "We utilize patented film, wearlayer and EIR technology that creates optically aligned visuals and textures that pop but are nearly as hard and durable as diamonds for commercial use. And the big one is speed of installation. We're incorporating our patented click technology here on the Amtico side. That's a major first hand success we can share." **FCW**



Amtico combines unique visuals and custom cuts to fulfill the creative vision of the architect and design community.



**Project:** Sheppard Pratt Medical System, Baltimore, Md.

**Specifier:** Marilyn Romano, facility project coordinator, Sheppard Pratt

**Product Provider:** Karndean Designflooring, Pittsburgh, Pa.

**Product Used:** LooseLay LVT — Tasmanian Whattle and Copper Gum

**Installation:** Corridor Flooring Associates, LLC, Baltimore, Md.

**Karndean's customized options have carried over to its new LooseLay collection.**



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# Pavilion Floors' approach wins challenging installs

By Janet Herlihy

[WOBURN, MASS.] Pavilion Floors has built its success on a firm foundation of experience, a commitment to quality and service and a willingness to make the most of opportunities, according to Jamie Gilmore, president of the company.

Gilmore joined Pavilion in 2002, when it was a division of Creative Office Pavilion (COP), the largest Herman Miller office furniture dealer in the Northeast. He then assisted in its transition from a non-union operation to an independent union contract flooring company. "There is still a close strategic partnership with COP, which has helped us a lot," Gilmore said.

He brought a wealth of experience to Pavilion. In the 1980s, while in high school, he started working for his father's flooring business in Amsterdam, N.Y., during vacations and continued through college. "I installed, estimated, presented and priced various projects," he recalled.

He left the family business in 1985, but continued to work in the flooring industry, gathering a wide variety of experiences, from creating a floor covering division for a chain of home and paint centers and developing its private label program, to working with union and non-union installers.

Pavilion's move to union installers brought several advantages. "We realized that we were missing out on many large contracts, so we

decided to go with the Floorcoverer's Union as well as the Bricklayers Union in the New England Jurisdiction," Gilmore said.

Also, union installers provide a reliable source of qualified, well skilled labor, according to Gilmore. "All (journeymen) installers start with a formal four year apprentice training program, INSTALL, which is guided by manufacturers' standards," he explained.

Pavilion is now a fully diverse product company, handling not only broadloom, carpet tile and resilient but also stone, stone fabrication, ceramic, rubber, hardwood, engineered wood, cork, leather, sports flooring, moisture mitigation, subfloor leveling and restoration. It has 24 full time employees and between 65 to 100 hourly installers per day based on project need.

The company serves all segments of the commercial market, but has become known for its expertise in healthcare, according to Gilmore. "Pavilion Floors is known for being able to excel at challenging work," he stressed. "Hospitals have strict deadlines and use a lot of rubber and Marmoleum (Forbos's linoleum flooring), which can be hard to install. We are known for the quality of our work. We do our own moisture control and mitigation work as well as sub-floor leveling."

Whatever the project, Pavilion assigns a team to each to assure consistency and pride of authorship. "A Pavilion account executive has an assigned field supervisor, estimator and project coordinator for each project. By

this organized method, the client knows who to call all the time and we create familiarity throughout the many levels of the project and also reduce bottleneck communications," Gilmore noted.

Joining the Fuse Alliance, a nationwide network of commercial flooring contractors in January 2012 has brought advantages too, Gilmore said. "Fuse gives me other members to talk to and share best practices with, as well as a labor net across the country to access for projects nationwide. It's always good to be able to talk to someone in another market who has the same issues."

An expansion project at the South Shore Hospital, South Weymouth, Mass., is a good example of how Pavilion works. "We were awarded this project over a year ago and completed it this past December," said Gilmore. "We engaged in the project in order to bring a higher level of quality installation."

Overall, more than 45,000 square feet of flooring was installed, including expansions to existing floors and the two entirely new floors. These two new floors amounted to 34,000 square feet and had to be self-leveled.

When the job schedule was accelerated, Pavilion was able to field as many as 20 qualified journeymen, who installed: 30,000 square feet



Pavilion installed three different types of flooring that meet seamlessly in this waiting area at South Shore Hospital.

of Mannington's Vinyl Plank; 4,000 square feet of Chilewich Plynyl Flooring; and, 1,000 square yards of Altro Sheet Vinyl with Flash Cove.

Pavilion's work at Ocean House, a replica of a hotel built in 1868 in Watch Hill, R.I., is a showcase of the company's breadth of skill across a range of luxury floor coverings. Rebuilt to have the look of the original iconic seaside resort, the new hotel includes 49 guest rooms and 23 luxury condos.

Pavilion installed: 7,000 square yards of custom Crossley Axminster carpet; 12,000 square feet of Fir solid wood flooring; 3,000 square feet of Carlisle Heart Pine solid wood; 1,000 square feet of Maple Action Aerobics flooring; and 20,000 square feet of WFI Prefinished hardwood. The work began in July 2009 and was completed in June 2010. **FCW**



Pavilion installed Axminster carpet to recreate the look of the original Ocean House in the main hallway entrance.

## 3M launches advanced commercial vinyl finish

[St. Paul, Minn.] 3M, based here, is launching Scotchgard Resilient Floor Protector, a new finish designed to keep commercial vinyl and linoleum floors beautiful without the expense of heavy maintenance and chemicals.

Unlike traditional finishes, Scotchgard Resilient Floor Protector never dulls so it never needs to be stripped or refinished. The new formulation is the result of more than five decades of research and provides twice the abrasion resistance than traditional finishes, said Pedro Recio, global portfolio manager, 3M. The protector is applied after installation and can be maintained using 3M's cleaning product.

"For the first time commercial customers are able to keep their resilient floors looking their best while eliminating some of the traditional steps required for a typical cleaning and maintenance process," he said. "Once floors are protected with Scotchgard Resilient Floor Protector, end-users are able to maintain their beauty with simple daily cleaning with 3M Neutral Cleaner."

3M recorded \$30 billion in sales last year conducting business in more than 70 countries. It employs 88,000 people worldwide. **FCW**



# Tandus, Centiva join forces

## Combining sales and market approach for wider reach

By Raymond Pina

[DALTON] Both Centiva and Tandus, owned by Tarkett, have deep roots in the commercial segment but now they come to market with a united sales force and the ability to leverage a combined portfolio of hard and soft surface product, two strong reputations and long-lasting relationships.

“What’s cool is that since Centiva and Tandus primarily call on the same customer, one meeting now covers a multitude of flooring options. If someone has a particularly strong relationship with an account, they’ll make the

call but the customers’ needs will determine the solution. To work with one rep for hard and soft surface options is pretty unique,” said Tom Ellis, vice president of marketing, Tandus Flooring.

Tarkett bought Florence, Ala.-based Centiva, a leading supplier of upscale boutique luxury vinyl tile (LVT) to the commercial market, in November of 2010. Last September, Tarkett moved on to add soft surface to the mix by acquiring Tandus Flooring, a leading innovator and supplier of commercial carpet. In March, Tandus Flooring president Glen Hussmann was appointed president of both organizations.

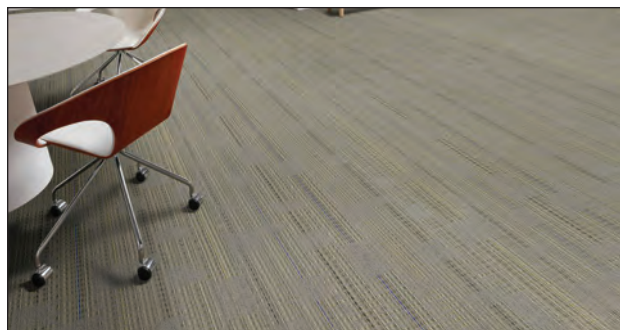
“We are 100 percent focused on accelerating our growth and devoting all of our energy to creating more value for our customers. I’ve been involved in changes of ownership in other businesses and it’s refreshing and fun to be working on exciting growth possibilities instead of cost reduction,” said Hussmann.

While Tarkett, Tandus and

Centiva each traditionally go to market differently, combining approaches gives Tarkett as a whole a much broader reach. “Tarkett’s model mostly went through distribution which is a push into the marketplace. Centiva and Tandus work closely with architects and designers to help them solve unique problems and get our products written into the spec. We also work closely with dealers and contractors. This is both a push and pull market approach,” said Ellis.

Though company integration is firmly in place, plans for NeoCon 2013, being held in Chicago June 10 through 12, were already in motion prior to uniting the sales forces. So for this year’s show, Centiva and Tandus Flooring will maintain separate exhibit spaces but feature each other’s products on the show floor. Tandus Flooring will exhibit from its permanent showroom on the third floor while Centiva will host an exhibit on the eighth floor. The organizations will co-host a cocktail party on June 10.

“We’re trying to create a united front so when the customer thinks of Centiva they also think of Tandus and when they think of Tandus they think of us. We have a bigger presence together,”



Tandus is a soft surface solution for architects and designers of commercial, healthcare and educational environments.



Centiva’s LVT is often used in upscale retail and grocery centers.

explained Erin Dempsey, who heads Centiva’s public relations and environmental strategy. Plans are already in place for Centiva and Tandus Flooring to share a booth at NeoCon 2014.

“We are now collaborating very closely and only beginning to tap into each other’s technologies,” said Ellis. “We’ll start planning NeoCon 2014 the day they shut the door to NeoCon 2013. But what you will see in 2014 is a true collaborative effort between LVT and carpet and how these should be considered companion products because they typically go into the same places.” **FCW**

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# Wood makes play for commercial market

## High performance, high style bring opportunity

By Mallory Cruise

Hardwood has not traditionally been the “go to” option for commercial applications because some in the design community say that, while aesthetically pleasing, it doesn’t hold up to high volume traffic. But, leading hardwood suppliers are looking to change that perception.

Education, in fact, has become a key factor in allowing hardwood floors to enter into the commercial setting, especially when it comes to performance, explained Michel Collin director of marketing at Mercier. “Better questions are being asked regarding the use of the product. In turn, better answers are given, and there is a deeper understanding (technically) of the wood product. Better tools have been developed to help promote the wood product,” he said.

Kevin Thompson, Shaw’s hardwood category manager, explained that there is a growing trend in the commercial sector to use hardwood floors because designers are looking for a natural surface and improved finishes are making that possible.

“The biggest benefit is a stylish upscale look and feel. Additionally with superior finishes on harder species, hardwood can be a very durable commercial option,” said Thompson.

According to IndusParquet, designers spec

its products because of its sustainability story.

“Designers appreciate that at IndusParquet we have a zero waste policy — we use 100 percent of the wood we harvest. They also like that we are FSC certified, signifying that our products are made of wood from well managed forests,” noted Jason Strong, vice president of marketing and sales.

Mercier is growing its commercial presence by developing products that are specifically designed for commercial applications. “We’ve launched seven new wood series and have developed documents and tools to make sure they get all the information needed: product spec sheets, installation guides, inside technical support: Inspiration Boxes,” said Collin.

Mercier is also offering a commercial finish with its Mercier Generations Green-guard Certified finish line.

In addition to designing product to meet commercial needs, companies are also employing other tactics to expand commercial presence.

Thompson of Shaw offered, “We are leveraging our vast resources within the Shaw Commercial division. Additionally, Anderson has over 3,000 architect folders out in the market and is continually improving our web destination, [andersonarchitectural.com](http://andersonarchitectural.com),” said Thompson.

IndusParquet is supporting its distributors with marketing targeted at the architect and designer community, said Strong.

“We are in the process of developing product boxes for the A & D community as well as developing a trade friendly website and developing accredited presentations for designers,” he said.

### Bamboo: Made for commercial

Bamboo has a market advantage because, while it has its own set of benefits, it doesn’t pose the same concerns as hardwood.

In addition to its inherent benefits like durability, the current wood shortages in the domestic hardwood industry are giving bamboo a market advantage, according to Caitlyn Kari, marketing manager at Teragren.

“Unfortunately, so much hardwood has been harvested so you’re seeing younger harvests and dealing with shorter and thinner planks. With bamboo, we are able to offer consistently longer lengths and wider widths. We can customize our products and offer a unique alternative to

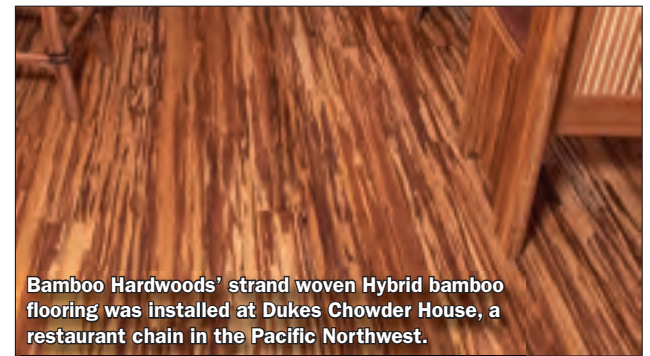
what is out there,” said Kari.

David Keegan, COO, Bamboo Hardwoods, pointed out that bamboo offers a durability, ease of maintenance and a sustainable story.

“The durability of strand woven is appealing to designers. Combine the durability of the product with its sustainability, it’s easy for bamboo to be spec’d for commercial projects,” offered Keegan.

Teragren has adjusted its product offerings to better meet the demands of the commercial, design community, according to Kari.

“We’ve recently adjusted our commercial product line. We re-released our most popular lines in a tongue and groove format which is ideal because it can be used in projects that span greater than 50-foot stretches,” said Kari. **FCW**



Bamboo Hardwoods’ strand woven Hybrid bamboo flooring was installed at Dukes Chowder House, a restaurant chain in the Pacific Northwest.

## Price pressure

Continued from page 1

make the necessary adjustments needed to ensure that they will continue to be able to adequately supply the industry with flooring.

Some suppliers said they are looking to new sources to fulfill their raw material needs. Mannington Mills, for example, is extending beyond its traditional supply zone, according to Dan Natkin, director of wood and laminate business.

“We’re going further out to source raw material; we’re beefing up our raw material supply as fast as we can. We’re facing some challenges as raw material demand is outpacing supply so we’re working to keep pace with it — it’s an interesting challenge,” explained Natkin.

Kevin Thompson, hardwood category manager at Shaw, noted that the company is meeting the supply shortage head on. “We have been working months in advance to build up strategic raw material reserves to insure we are able to supply during the upturn,” said Thompson.

Another challenge Thompson said the company is facing head on is the ability to keep product moving through the supply chain.

“We are leveraging our strategic partnerships, and our financial strength is a consistent focus for us as we work to maintain the

supply chain,” said Thompson.

Goodwin at Armstrong said the company is going to work hard to fulfill consumer demand. “Unfortunately that may mean we have to go and procure a higher priced lumber which translates to higher prices. Lumber prices are up 40 percent from last year and there is no relief in sight that we see. We see prices continuing to rise as demand increases in all of our channels,” he said.

A variety of industries, including the fracking, builder and furniture businesses, are all vying for the same raw material, and the increased demand for the tree is posing a challenge. Exports are also rising, according to Goodwin at Armstrong, as Chinese suppliers are buying raw material from the U.S.

After several years of reduced demand for hardwood flooring, the recent growth in demand has for sure put a strain on the supply chain, said Dick Quinlan, senior director of hardwood products Unilin (a Mohawk Industries company) — all the way from the forest to the mills producing the raw materials for hardwood flooring manufacturers.

“Constrained supply has forced us to travel further to acquire materials from new suppliers and has pushed up prices from current suppliers. Acquiring materials in the quantities needed to service our customers has required that we pay more for

transportation costs, production materials and lumber,” Quinlan said.

### What’s next?

According to Goodwin at Armstrong, higher prices have the potential to alter the wood industry long term. “What I think we will see is the low end of the wood market will somewhat go away, and the quality of wood will improve and will steer the industry away from commoditized wood. There is a shift from five years ago when there was more wood available than demand which drove pricing down,” he said.

Consumer preferences may also be impacted, noted Quinlan at Unilin.

“As prices move up on hardwood flooring, this may impact some customers selection choices of hardwood flooring. While hardwood flooring remains a higher ticket flooring item, it also remains at the top of the consumers list for the flooring type they desire to have in their home,” Quinlan added.

Goodwin at Armstrong agreed, saying, “You will begin to see builders and consumers opting away from value propositions to the mentality of ‘If I can pay for a wood floor, give me the best I can get instead of offering me a lesser quality wood floor to save price.’ These value propositions were not really available five years ago and they became part of

the industry as the market gravitated towards value oriented price points. Builders and customers have always wanted wood floors but opted to put lower quality wood floors in so the industry saw quality decrease and price decrease; now we see the opposite happening.”

And executives said that they expect this trend to continue. “The builder business will continue to be good for the next few years. We think the demand will continue to improve and price will continue to rise. Will capacity meet demand and bring back a more normal situation? I don’t see that happening for the next few years,” explained Goodwin at Armstrong.

Understanding needs and managing expectations is important to the process, said Quilan. “We are working aggressively with our suppliers to insure they understand our current and future raw materials needs so they can plan to meet our supply needs,” he said.

According to Natkin at Mannington, despite the challenges facing the industry, outlook as a whole still looks good.

“I think the outlook is good for the remainder of the year. The challenge is will raw material keep pace with demand or will there continue to be some pull back? This is an industry that has been distressed pricing wise for the last couple of years, so it is interesting to see what will happen over the next six to eight months but outlook is still good,” said Natkin. **FCW**



## Making What Matters Most Happen!

BY RHONDA ROBINSON

### What are you doing right for your business?

Everyone who fulfills a role within the organizational structure of a business must have an unwavering focus on and commitment to this objective: ensuring the long-term health and growth of the organization. Every business owner needs to understand and appreciate that their primary job, their absolute duty as the leader, is seeing to it they've established and determined the overall scope of the business for the long haul and authored a viable and executable "Written Plan" based on their strategic vision.

If you can't state your strategy in a sentence, you don't have one. Authoring a meaningful vision is the least understood yet most important strategy for building a successful business. It is the goal outlining what the organization wants to become at some future point — it clearly defines the enduring core purpose of the organization and is the gauge by which sustainable health and growth is measured.

Whether you're preparing to launch a new business or developing strategies and plans for an existing business, two fundamental beliefs must be reinforced: 1.) The business of a business is to maximize its shareholder value, by increasing its intrinsic value; and, 2.) Maximizing value involves managing the company's short-term performance, as well as its long-term health and growth.

Most business owners I encounter operate day-to-day devoid of any plan that establishes a well-defined course (a roadmap, if you will) for the company's activities and investments.

Many of these same business owners lament about being buried by the press of business and spending most of their time running around putting out fires. How then can a business owner possibly expect that their employees — the stakeholders who are expected to be good stewards of the company's resources and accountable for ensuring

the organization achieves its business goals — would automatically know what level of performance is expected?

If you want to gain control of your business and ensure appropriate long-term health and growth, become "Smokey the Bear" — start practicing proactive preventive planning. If you commit to getting the scope, direction and focus of your business lined out today, it will make a huge difference tomorrow. Business strategies founded upon a meaningful vision are the decisions that make you real money and help you dominate your industry within your niche.

Properly planned and managed growth is a good thing — setting clearly defined boundaries so the organization is not overwhelmed by too much growth. Too much growth, too quickly, creates quality issues and financial risks that can destroy brand reputation and kill the company.

Business growth is simply defined within a few main categories: Geographical growth

(physical expansion), Resource growth (financial, operational and human resources) and Capacity growth (maximizing resource productivity).

Healthy and sustainable growth happens only when growth of any sort is approached under a certain and well-thought-out Written Plan that ensures the people of the organization have the requisite leadership and tools necessary to do excellent work.

Understand and embrace the definition of success: achieving something that's planned and desired. This purpose might spur you to acknowledge and accept that a goal without a viable plan is nothing more than a wish.

If your desire is to see to it your business live long and prosper, I suggest you set about devising a "Written Strategic Plan" that involves an ultimate focus on: becoming the best you can be within your niche.

*Rhonda Robinson, Principal, Corporate Strategist & "Business Coach" at Robinson Enterprises, LLC, is a Transition Expert with 36 years experience helping companies throughout the USA and Canada navigate the challenges of business.*

*To reach Rhonda, call her Office: 541-383.8044 / Cell: 541-410.4258 or email Rhonda@RobinsonROI.com.*

## Florstar

Continued from page 1

recent and long-lasting downturn. It continued to invest in merchandising units, product lines and samples. "We streamlined product lines and continued to look for new product that would enhance our business. We placed more displays, and spent more money on displays and samples in the downturn than we did when things were going well. We want to continue investing in business so our vendors are more positive, as well as our employees," Cassidy offered.

He added that FlorStar makes a point to look downstream at what is to come and be prepared. "We listen to economists and try to understand what is ahead of us. Cash is king and we have to be able to finance business. When we were looking downstream, we said, 'OK, we're not going to be the same size we were two years ago.' Instead of layoffs, we did our best to manage the business and hire back as many people as possible, and gain

profit, in spite of obstacles," he said.

Keeping true to its culture was also important to survival, according to Rozmus. "You can't change your corporate culture at the drop of a hat," he said, adding that consistency is paramount to success. "We try to emphasize that when you face an economic downturn, you want to have good people on your team. When you change your vendor like you change your pants everyday, at some point that's a problem. It becomes a problem when you need people to be supporting you but haven't supported them," he said.

Another lesson — be prepared for when things get better. "You have to keep investing in product lines, merchandise, training people and updating your software so that when things do get better, you're prepared. If companies fail to make investments, as soon as the economy experiences an uptick, you may not be able to capitalize on the recovery," Rozmus said.

#### Look back, look ahead

"When I came to the company we were already a primarily hard surface company, and

it was around the time when laminate didn't even exist. Soon after, laminate came to the U.S. and our laminate business was one of the largest. Now, hardwood and LVT are the hot ticket items because the market and consumer tastes and trends have changed. Today's consumer has a plethora of choices relative to the consumer of 25 years ago," Rozmus said.

Electronics and increased mobility has also changed the market, Rozmus added. "Today, everything is done electronically. You have more mobility in the marketplace, with smartphones, laptops, tablets and increased access to the Internet. Information is more readily available, and people's expectations have changed in terms of timing," he said.

Rozmus also noted that the company has always invested in both software and computer technology as well. "All investments were made to be more accurate and more efficient. The equipment in the warehouse is computer guided; it has been one major area for investments and logistics. FlorStar was also one of the first adopters of the narrow aisle system in the warehouse and the employee

voicemail system," he explained.

The significance of this anniversary is huge, said Wade. The industry has experienced a number of changes, but FlorStar kept to its roots and prospered.

"The industry has changed considerably over the past 25 years. Wilsonart went away, carpet went away; you add that revenue up and it's almost 100 million dollars that went away, and to be able to replace that over the same period of time is very significant. Throughout the years at FlorStar, we saw the mills going direct more and more, and we were fighting a losing battle so we said, 'Let's bring in more hard surface.' That's probably the most significant event in our history. We also have a great succession plan and players to fill the holes left by those who retire. I feel good about the team we have to drive business in the future," he said.

FlorStar will celebrate its 25th Anniversary in a number of ways throughout the year. Cassidy will once again set out on an RV tour and the company will host an employee appreciation day. It also modified its corporate logo to include the 25th Anniversary. **FCW**

## HGTV

Continued from page 2

tile business, this home proves the company's commitment to the category. Tile used in the home included Briarcliff mosaic tile, Elements glass tile, Glass Essentials, Mixed Up and Glass Expressions. One of the many home

highlights was the hardwood staircase which featured Glass Expressions on the stair risers.

This year's home — which is 2,400 square feet with 1,000 square feet of outdoor living space — is located at the beach. Subtle references to the Florida coast give it its unique design. The home also marries function and the latest in technology to the fashion and sustainable attributes thanks to home planner Jack

Thomasson and interior designer Woodrum.

Energy saving and smart features include the living room fan which circulates warm air in the winter and has the potential to lower summer indoor air temperature by eight to 10 degrees Fahrenheit; three flat-screen living room TVs are programmable via the home's smart tablets; and, a kitchen faucet is activated simply by waving your hand below the spout.

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## NeoCon 2013

Continued from page 1

you have the opportunity to see more than 700 manufacturers in one place. NeoCon started as a furniture show and over the years introduced all of the other components that go into a commercial environment. So it's not just furniture and seating and casegoods, but files and storage and textiles and leather and carpeting and moveable wall systems and lighting and technology," he said.

One focus this year is the Outdoor Office with a major exhibit on the seventh floor reflecting changing working habits that include mobile devices and allow the freedom to work outside a traditional office space. "It's not just about putting benches on a deck within an office building; it's about creating spaces where people can truly work outside," noted Morton.

As the show has expanded, so too has the flooring sector. "When you look at some of the major manufacturers, they are expanding into resilient or hard surface flooring either organically or by acquisition. For example, Tandus was acquired by Tarkett, Patcraft has a new resilient product, Shaw has a resilient product. It's not just carpet anymore," said Morton.

Flooring exhibitors in the temporary space take up about 10,000 square feet of space — some 7,000 square feet of which is somewhat clustered together. "Flooring exhibitors on the eighth floor are naturally grouped together and leverage each other's traffic and enjoying that benefit. It's an exciting thing," Morton said.

Flooring suppliers in permanent showrooms have remained stable, according to Morton. "From a pure appeal standpoint what I get out of flooring manufacturers being at the show is this great sense of texture and color and new insights into the subjects that designers love."

#### Maintaining momentum

While the number of flooring suppliers at NeoCon has grown over the years, in recent history, it has been a result of a crushing residential market. Commercial business was at times the only bright spot and growth opportunity for some flooring suppliers. "Through the downturn, so many flooring manufacturers were frankly in pain as residential was the vast majority of many of their businesses. They looked to us to build and produce a great show and help maintain momentum in the contract market which typically can be higher margins and the ups and downs not as severe as in the housing market," Morton said.

Now, he said, as residential markets start getting stronger, he expects it to translate into commercial as well. "We absolutely feel a recovery. We follow a number of indexes for productivity in the contract world and those numbers are up for 2013. The other thing we have seen at architecture and design conferences this year — the majority of projects being worked on are commercial office, which hasn't been the case. That is a huge bright spot for the flooring industry and commercial overall. Companies are moving again and expanding again. Then you have this whole social design vernacular that is

contributing to more interactive and collaborative spaces in the work place and that's causing a lot of renovation. You are seeing that where the major design firms are billing their time," explained Morton.

Hospitality will become a major force in the next couple of years as well, he said. "Many of the hotel chains have not done a lot of renovation over the last couple of years because business travel has declined. We are now seeing projects by major hotels where hotels are being built or renovated."

Morton said that several major end-users such as Walt Disney World, Marriott and Hyatt are all pre-registered to be at this year's show. "That could turn into another real force. Designers are saying that's the second largest concentration of projects being worked on this year," he noted.

#### Culture of leadership

NeoCon has been at the forefront of sustainability but Morton said it is simply due to economics.

The Mart building was certified in 2007 as LEED EB Silver and is currently in the finalizing recertification process which should be completed by NeoCon. Morton said he expects at least Silver certification but hopes to outperform that level.

"When we got certified originally, it was in some of the softer issues around that. We've done a lot of things at the Mart that were sustainable before sustainable was cool and it was driven by the size of the facility because it was more efficient. We always had a fresh air cooling system and we have a 200 square yard ice farm in the building used to provide chilled water. It's not just because of our client base that we serve but because of the way the building is designed and we operate to be profitable," he said.

This year, the show is producing, along with the USGBC, a LEED exam prep. MMPI is also refreshing the green spot on the first floor of the building that is a permanent exhibit including a sustainability timeline, including efforts within the building, and featuring sustainable products from the tenants.

Last year, NeoCon did a back of the house composting program for food vendors at the Mart and this year the effort will be building wide so attendees will see that in the front of the house as well, Morton said.

Technology also plays a key role at the show. "One thing I'd love for attendees to know about is myneocon.com. This is the third year with this as a component of the show. It is the online component of the show and allows attendees to see products being show, plan their experience. They can tag products that they must see on the visit and set up appointments with manufacturers. That is a real big push for us — to continuously improve the online experience," said Morton.

Morton is also particularly proud of this year's keynote speaker line-up which includes architect Bjarke Ingels, founder of BIG (Bjarke Ingels Group) Michael Vanderbyl of Vanderbyl Design; Holly Hunt, president and CEO of Holly Hunt; and, Lauren Rottet, founder of Rottet Studio. **FCW**



## Coverings, yes – Atlanta, maybe not

Coverings, the premiere trade show for ceramic tile and stone, is one of my favorite events of the year. The show itself is beautiful — extensive and often extravagant displays of the world's most beautiful ceramic tiles, the latest in style, design and tech-

nological advances, all with the added benefit of natural stone making its presence felt everywhere on the show floor.

Then there's the international flavor to the show, which makes it feel somehow special.

Of course, it also affords the opportunity to meet with industry friends and colleagues that I might not get to see anywhere but Coverings. If that weren't enough, throw in a very robust and targeted educational program, hands on demonstrations, expert installations and show ownership that is dedicated to the benefit of the industry above everything else and it's no wonder Coverings has been such an ongoing success.

Enter Atlanta, the newest city in a series of attempts to broaden the reach and appeal of the show. More specifically, the Georgia World Congress Center, a concrete bunker of a building spread out over several city blocks, every one of which you feel as you navigate through the expansive, often confusing venue.

My first thought was "What a mistake this was." Being so close to Orlando, I'm not sure that Atlanta will attract any more visitors, nor a new and/or different set of visitors.

For those of you who have been in the industry as long as I have — 25 years this fall — and who remember Atlanta as the hub of the flooring industry trade shows, you'd be disappointed. Atlanta is not what it used to be, in spite of the city's efforts to revitalize the downtown area, even the once grand Marriott Marquis now seems quaint and out of date — and it is.

While I logged more miles walking this show than any other show I've been to (except maybe Domotex which is spread out over several buildings), even that got manageable by the end of the second day and I got to explore a little further.

The show itself was solid. As is typical of Coverings, day one was not really too busy, but by day two the pace had picked up and companies were happy with the turnout and activity on the show floor.

Coverings stayed true to its purpose of showcasing the industry's best and newest — and perhaps more importantly, communicating the building strength of its U.S. expansion and recovery. Besides the group tours of the Spanish and Italian pavilions, we got to hear firsthand from U.S. manufacturers about their recent and ongoing expansions. The mood was positive, as it should be for an exciting, aggressive industry poised for great growth.

In the end, Atlanta showed it can still be cool; and sponsored evening events were as grand and creative as always, but thankfully, next year the show goes to Las Vegas, then back to Orlando which is a much better fit.

— Santiago Montero

## Spring cleaning

The weather here in New York is finally beginning to turn warmer, the days are getting longer, brighter. I'm inspired when the season changes to do a spring cleaning of sorts — I go through closets, drawers, storage containers to discard old and weathered items and replace them with new. I do the same for my yard, installing new solar lighting, purchasing new planters, putting down fresh mulch. It makes me feel ready to take on the new season and everything that comes with it — I'm organized, I've got everything I need to do my jobs both here at work and at home to the best of my ability.

The same methodical reenergizing of your retail space should happen at least seasonally as well. Look at samples and merchandising units. Are they in good repair? What do your own floors look like? Are your walls in need of a fresh coat of paint? How do your store signs look? Even the smallest details should be viewed — is there a plant at the counter that needs to be replaced? If your RSA's wear any type of company apparel, that should be in good condition as well. Even your business cards should be updated — do they fully reflect your identity and call out things that maybe your neighboring competitor can't like special brands? All these little things count.

And then there are the back office concerns. Are you operating at the highest level you can there as well? Updated software and programs are a must and your process should be fully integrated.

Are you organized and ready to do your job to the best of your ability?

I have extra motivation this season as I plan for my daughter's high school graduation party. I want my guests to feel welcomed and cared for. I want to put my best foot forward.

I also like to put a personal touch to things that show my guests that I care about their experience — I craft a special playlist for my iPod; maybe I burn that playlist on discs for my guests to take home with them.

At retail, it's not just about making a good first impression but rather making a lasting one that says you care deeply about your business down to the smallest detail. It's another way of gaining the customer's confidence in your ability to serve her with great care and detail. A good experience means they will come back to you with their next flooring need, and the next as well.

What makes you special? What is the personal touch that you add to the experience customers have in your store? How do you show those that walk in your door that they are welcomed and will be cared for?

Think of ways that you enhance the customer's shopping experience. Again, it fuels that positive lasting impression and makes your customer feel good about spending her money with you. And she'll share that great experience with her nearest and dearest.

— Amy Joyce Rush



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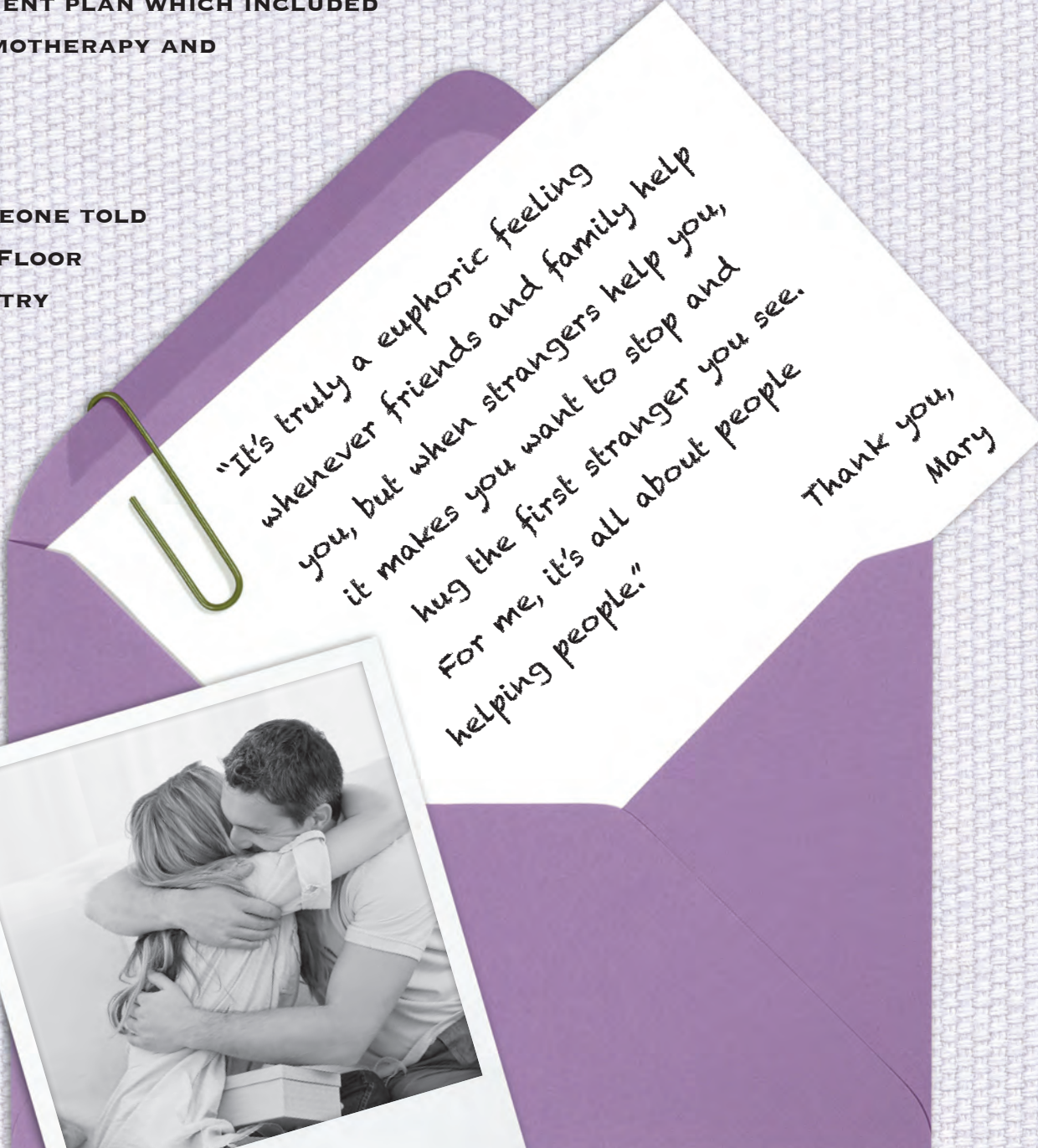
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*Thank you,  
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*Mary Bishop\*  
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\*The FCIF treats all of its grant recipients confidentially. Mary wanted to share her story with the public but asked that we keep their identity veiled. Her name has been changed

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