THEN-AND-NOW
Products star in TO showroom makeover Page 30

Real-life sales training: Storefronts at the forefront

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ARDEX FLEXBONE® delivers revolutionary uncoupling system innovation and a true single source solution backed by the comprehensive ARDEX SystemOne™ Warranty. No other company owns and 100% supports all the components within the installation including prep, membranes, mortars, grouts and accessories.

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**Coverings**

**CANADA'S FLOORCOVERING MAGAZINE**

**July/August 2016**

Vol. 41, No. 4

[www.coveringscanada.ca](http://www.coveringscanada.ca)

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IN GENERAL, THINGS ARE COOKING ALONG pretty well in Canada. Not so much in the States. As I write this column, the news coverage of the horror in Orlando is barely starting to subside, with lines being drawn, left and right, to exploit the tragedy for political advantage. I predict the Democrat National Convention in Philadelphia is going to be violence like we have not seen since the Democrat National Convention in Chicago in 1968. I think we can join the farmers this year and pray for cool weather and rain.

The marketing world is seriously overheated, and I can’t seem to take my eyes off it. Also in the news at prestime, Microsoft has purchased LinkedIn.

Seeking the way to the City of gold

It seems to me the course of human history has been defined from point to point by people on a quest. As my old history prof told it, human history is defined by war. I revolted at the time, since I could not accept that. However, it’s true, as far as it goes, but the wars were the result of something, and the study of that is where you see the quest. Columbus was on a quest for a passage to India. Ponce de Leon was on a quest for eternal youth. Julius Caesar was on a quest for, oh, let’s call it “change” when he crossed the Rubicon.

“Gaily bedight,” wrote Edgar Allen Poe, A gallant knight, In sunshine and in shadow, Had journeyed long, Singing a song, In search of Eldorado.

El Dorado: the lost city of gold. What one of us has not dreamed of the riches to be had for nothing, if only we knew how to harness “digital?” The promise is great: low cost/high reward/no infrastructure/no overheads. A true city of gold.

But where is the evidence? We can see that digital marketing has certainly created city upon city upon city of gold. To get there, you follow the map from Zuckerberg burg through Ma land and Bezosville to the Gates of Gates. The internet has made billions for a few.

But what about the “dot-com bubble” of the ’90s? The spam promises of the ’80s? What about the threat of cyberattacks, identity theft? How many of your peers have dedicated their critical, yet small, marketing resources to the will-o’-the-wisp of “digital,” only to be told by their cyber-advisors of the day that their low ROI is to be expected; you have to keep at it?

But he grew old— This knight so bold— And o’er his heart a shadow— Fell as he found No spot of ground That looked like Eldorado.”

Personally, I think there is value in the internet and its “digital” progeny. It is excellent for archiving and searching. (Of course, if you use it for archiving you better have a back-up in case The Cloud goes down or a hacker attacks.)

I also think the Worldwide Web (successor to UNIX) has an important marketing function. If we review its actual function in our businesses, we can see we have a Home Page, which we can call Reception. From there, people can usually find our contact information, get general information, see some examples of products and services, maybe see an award or two hanging on the wall, and so on. So in function, the company website is our showroom — as fancy or as plain as we like it. Which leads to the observation that all the money we have spent there is actually an infrastructure budget item, not marketing. We still need a driver to get people to visit our digital offerings, and that is as true for me, in publishing, as it is for you. So we keep following the promise.

Poe noticed this, and went on…..
And, as his strength Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
‘Shadow,’ said he, ‘Where can it be— This land of Eldorado?’

‘Over the Mountains Of the Moon, Down the Valley of the Shadow, Ride, boldly ride,’ The shade replied,— ‘If you seek for Eldorado!’

The poem is Eldorado. The direction is a bit more obscure.

Comment at www.coveringscanada.ca
SET the MOOD

MAPEI’s NEW color collections help to personalize your space

In an industry first, MAPEI has used color technology bundled with artistic knowledge to develop a new 40-color palette for its grouts, caulk and colorant divided into 5 color collections, each themed with a distinct personality.

Whether it complements or contrasts with the tile selection, the proper grout color can give personality and feeling to the final look of the flooring installation. MAPEI’s color collections simplify the search for the perfect hue, ensuring a better end result for the customer.

Scan the QR Code below to learn more about the new color palette for MAPEI’s grouts, caulk and colorant.
WHENEVER CUSTOMERS WALK INTO your showroom or retail outlet, wouldn’t you like to have helpful, knowledgeable sales reps there to provide them a positive experience that begins with an order and ends with an installation?

Naturally, the size of your business dictates what resources you have at your disposal for training up your next trusted, reliable staff member. The type of customer you have also makes a difference when it comes to training. Are they consumers, contractors, builders, designers or architects, or a mixture?

But if you have 900 Canadian employees like Olympia Tile International headquartered in Toronto, Ont., does, training resources need to be a considerable investment. At Olympia Tile, roughly 45 take care of its 37,000 square foot flagship showroom, covering inside sales and the order desk. Consumers are welcome, but the giant tile and stone store also caters to designers and architects, as well as its traditional clientele of contractors and builders.

Historically, the very first ceramic tile wholesale distribution operation in Canada was established in 1927 under the name Montreal Floor and Wall Tile. This company was merged in the late 1950s with Olympia Tile, which was established in 1956. Olympia now has more than 50 distribution, showroom and manufacturing facilities that occupy overall greater than 4.2 million square feet of warehousing.

Olympia Tile vice president George Gal says, “When we hire people for the showroom we have them shadow our top people for quite a while.

“We have a couple of people who are just training staff continuously — showing them what the product is all about and how to use the computer system. How to act with customers and what to say.” Behaviour is very important, like “the importance of a smile and service — it’s probably about three or four months of intensive training before we let them talk to a customer.” He notes that while the company doesn’t typically put former installers on the sales floor, staff at Olympia Tile are exposed to “continuous seminars on products and installation methods, product uses. How to install, where to install, what to install, all of that kind of stuff.”

**Vendors are resources**

Another hard-surface specialist, family-run Flesher Marble and Tile based in Calgary, Alta., was established in 1910. Early projects included the Calgary Courthouse, built in 1913. Since then, the company has continued to grow by offering the sales and installation of ceramic tile, granite and marble countertops and specialized furniture, epoxy coatings and bridge seals.

According to controller Claire Taylor, Flesher’s primary customers are commercial or commercial-based, but does “have a residential showroom that’s open to the general public.” In her
15 years with the company, she’s observed that Flesher has been fortunate to find sales staff who have a flooring background.

“We haven’t had to do too much training,” she says. “Most of them have either worked for an installation company or they’ve come out of another tile company.”

Coming out of a flooring background, it is easier for them “to keep up with the latest trends,” Taylor says. “They get product knowledge from the vendors or suppliers. We do train in-house with regards to invoicing and dealing with customers. For the most part they are kind of left to do their own thing to see what works best for them.

“Because we deal with a select number of vendors, we can usually get them to come in directly and deal with our estimators plus the salespeople.” It is then that applications are discussed, “does it need to be waterproofed, is it a tile that is indoors or outdoors?” adds Taylor.

**Question time**

Certainly knowing what to ask the customer is just as important as any knowledge that a sales rep might have. Jim Duffus, president of Wyze Flooring Solutions in Saskatoon, Sask., another family-owned and operated business with a commercial and institutional specialty, says there are a lot of misconceptions about flooring that need to be corrected.

Wyze provides sales and service for commercial tile and sheet, as well as residential LVT planks and tiles, hardwoods, carpet and stone and tile.

“I think there is way too much sold on the colour and design,” says Duffus, “and not enough after asking the correct questions to give the customer the proper product that they should have.

“This lady walks into my shop and she starts looking at this nice semigloss dark maple hardwood. I asked her if she really liked this hardwood, then I start asking her a bunch of questions. ‘How many kids do you have?’ ‘What room are you thinking about doing?’ ‘How big is it?’

“One of my last questions is ‘do you have any pets?’ ‘Yeah, I’ve got two dogs — a schizchu and an 80 pound golden lab.’

“So I said, ‘Ma’am, you don’t want this hardwood.’ She said ‘why not?’ I said ‘after a month this hardwood with that lab running around on it, it’s going to look like crap.’

According to Duffus, that wasn’t “what the lady in the other store told me.’ My reply was ‘did the lady in the other store ask you all of the questions that I did?’

The “other store” had not asked these questions, but for someone like Duffus, “she can believe who she wants to believe — someone who has been in the business for six months or someone who has been in it for 37 years.”

The problem, as Duffus sees it, is that advice being provided by some sales staff which is, “in a lot of these cases, people that aren’t getting the right training. So many of them now have gone through the interior design thing and that’s how they were trained — as interior designers.

“The focus and their sales is on the colour and the design, not on the product.”

**Teach and grow**

Josee Lefrancois, president of Mont-Royal, Que.-based Bamboo Design and Architecture, has a different training challenge to address. In 2015, it began the development of a qualified and diverse dealer network to build long-term relationships with its retailers all through an existing professional team.

The company, formerly known as La Maison du Bamboo (“sounded too much like a Chinese restaurant,” says Lefrancois) was established in 2006 as a distributor of quality bamboo products including flooring, plywood, decorative panels, veneer and bamboo composites for decks and patios. Maintaining a showroom open by appointment, its high-end customer base includes consumers, design professionals, cabinetmakers and contractors looking for eco-friendly products, says Lefrancois.

“If you want your business to work in bamboo you’ve got to coach people. Every retailer we start working with requires this. We spend up to two hours on some occasions just figuring out how people are getting into learning and asking them questions.”

Bamboo flooring products have had to fend off an inferior reputation, too. “Bamboo has been a victim of bad publicity because the product was brought in as cheap flooring and cheap paneling” that was not necessarily eco-friendly, says Lefrancois. She notes that her retailers have to be trained to recognize that the wave of “low price with low margin” product has to be avoided by consumers and that certifications such as FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), California air standards and Floor Score must be present. “You have to educate them.”

For bamboo retailers, Lefrancois and her team need to make sure they can inform consumers and designers about its benefits over hardwood, for example. “Regular hardwood you are not going to be able to install in a basement. You are not going to be able to install it straight on a radiant heat flooring. With bamboo, you can when its well manufactured, and we go into bathrooms and kitchens.”

The company’s managed growth and retail coaching seems to be working. In March 2016, expanded into the Ontario market.

Continued
Credibility of experience

Running a consumer retail outlet in the economically-challenged Maritimes poses its own set of recruiting and training problems, according to Glenn Burton, owner of Burton’s Flooring in the hamlet of Sydney Mines, N.S. The retail outlet serves consumers, local contractors and, frequently, designer-architects from nearby Sydney, N.S. “In our area (of about 23,000), it’s hard to find people for anything really. The West has drained a lot of the knowledge out of our area. For us, it comes down to in-house training. We look for individuals that we feel we can train and like what they are doing here, and hopefully they’ll last. It costs a lot to train people.”

The company carries and installs hardwoods, LVT, carpet and tile. “I’m an installer myself — or once was. I’ve done both (sales and installation) all my life for 25 years. All of the installers here, I could put them in the store and they could all sell here, for sure.

“Because most importantly the part they have is the knowledge of the installation part. And that’s kind of key in this business because if you can’t talk to someone about measurements — you at least need some kind of background in measuring — or a good math background helps.”

Adaptability is also a keen motivator for sales training in the flooring businesses, whether this is sparked by the introduction of new products such as luxury vinyl planking or competition from big box stores such as Home Depot and Lowe’s.

So, while Flesher Marble has been strictly a hard surface flooring provider for over a century, that has begun to shift and require another layer of knowledge to meet customer requests, notes Taylor.

“We’re slowly getting into the vinyl side of things. Our customers are starting to look for it so we are slowly getting into it,” says Taylor.

The same holds for Burton’s Flooring as well. “Today our installers have to be able to do more. If you’re just going to be a carpet installer today,” says Burton, “you’re not going to survive very long. You have to know more about the industry — you have to be able to install more products like LVT — it’s changing so rapidly.

“The same is being said for the sales side. You need people that are easily adaptable to different situations because here we run into so much with contractors.”

Canada’s flooring suppliers are somewhat divided between rural and urban, another factor that can play into the training equation. A company like Olympia Tile in a large city such as Toronto can specialize to a degree where one such as Burton’s Flooring on Cape Breton Island cannot.

“Out in our area consumers are relying on us because they don’t have the money to pay for that designer and they come to us for that design. We say this all the time, ‘we should be getting a fee for this,’” Burton laughs.

Knowledge and legacy

Distinguishing themselves from big box stores, the owner-operated flooring outlets specialize in personalized, knowledgeable service. “If you go to Home Depot you’re just going to get the sales pitch,” says Burton, “you’re not going to get the nuts and bolts in my opinion. Flooring is one industry that’s still owned by a lot of mom-and-pops in the Maritimes.

That nuts-and-bolts knowledge only helps the consumer. “A lot of customers are misinformed about LVT right now. It’s a very popular category as we all know, but the consumer is out purchasing product,” says Burton, “buying inferior wear surfaces, and again, this is the training that we try to give our employees. To know the wear layers, to know the differences of this finish versus that finish because the consumer really doesn’t know. Feeling the flooring thickness, they think they’re getting a good product, or paying way too much for some product, especially at the Home Depots of the world or big box stores, and not getting the quality.

“For me, being a small business owner, I wear so many hats every day — you learn over the years and try to pass that knowledge off to people,” says Burton. “I know what works here for us wouldn’t necessarily work in a big corporation in downtown Toronto. Here we know most of our population, so it’s more about knowing people and helping them with their issues.

“So we look for problem solvers, versatile people that can adapt to the situation, can put their hand to something even though it’s not their job today — whatever that may be.”
Introducing VersaBond®-LFT

Today's floors call for large and heavy tile, so use a trusted, everyday mortar specifically designed for the job. When you have tile 15” or longer on any side, don’t just ask for VersaBond, ask for VersaBond-LFT where you buy mortar.

For CUSTOM’s complete line of mortars for large and heavy tile, including MegaLite and ProLite, see our website. We know large format tile. Count on CUSTOM.
Wood products targeted by CSA emission standard
The Canadian Standards Association (CSA Group) has released its first edition of CAN/CSA-O160, a formaldehyde emissions standard for composite wood products such as MDF, tMDF, plywood and particleboard. The standard is intended to harmonize with the existing California Air Resources Board’s Airborne Toxic Control Measures (ATCM) 17 CCR relating to responsibilities of manufacturers and third party certifiers. The standard does not apply to curved plywood, hardwood plywood with a lumber core or non-composite core material, finger-jointed lumber and certain structural wood products made with moisture resistant adhesives.

The purpose of the standard is to limit formaldehyde emissions from composite wood panels offered for sale for use in Canada. It specifies the requirements for product sample collection, emissions testing, marking, and labeling, and sets maximum emission limits.

The standard will allow users to either comply with the standard labeling “Complies with CAN/CSA-O160” or participate in a certification program that would allow labelling as “Certified to CAN/CSA O160.”

Projects in Canada win at Ceramics of Italy competition

Now in its 23rd year, the internationally-juried Ceramics of Italy Tile Competition has announced six winning projects at Coverings 2016 in Chicago, Ill., that represent the competition’s goal of honouring use of Italian tile in North American architecture and design, included two from Canada. Sponsored by Confindustria Ceramica (the Italian Association of Ceramics) and the Italian Trade Commission, the competition attracted submissions in residential, commercial and institutional categories.

The institutional winner from Canada was from the Toronto, Ont.-based firm Ark for its UJA Federation Community Complex project in Vaughan, Ont. The tile manufacturer was Mirage, the distributor was Olympia Tile of Toronto and contractor was Concord, Ont.-based Calligaro Tile Co. The residential honorable mention honoured was Dubbeldam Architecture + Design of Toronto for its Through House project. The tile manufacturer was Casalgrande Padana, and the distributor was Stone Tile International and contractor Casalgrande Padana, both of Toronto.

Flooring TV ad takes on big-box retailers
Carpet One Floor and Home, a cooperative of floor covering retailers throughout the U.S. and Canada headquartered in Manchester, N.H., has recently launched a new advertising campaign directly attacking big-box retailers. While some might consider this a bold strategy, Carpet One sees this as a win for smaller home improvement retailers trying to compete with Home Depot and Lowe’s. Through the new campaign, Carpet One is said to be actively trying to educate consumers about the benefits of shopping for a new floor at one of their members’ stores. Many consumers are unfamiliar with how stressful and involved the flooring process is, and think they can either do it themselves or go to a big-box store to pick out the material. Through its ads, Carpet One is promoting the ease, discounts, and guided personal assistance that consumers would get when they shop at one of its outlets. The first TV spot can be viewed at: http://bit.ly/1X2MxXn.

Coverings show reports growth at 2016 edition

The 2016 Coverings Show during April in Chicago, Ill., had more than 25,000 industry professionals who attended, according to show management. This figure is an increase in overall attendance from the 2015 show, and is a 15 percent
THE BEAUTY OF NATURAL GRADATIONS IN RUBBER TILE.

A tonal study with a soft marbleized visual, Mesto Configurations™ rubber tiles can be used to create the effect of layered textural shifts, which are found in geology and other natural formations.
increase from 2009, the last year Coverings was held in Chicago. This year’s greatest attendance segment increase was held by distributors, which increased by 18 percent since 2009. Coverings 2017 will be held April 4-7 in Orlando, Fla.

FCICA announces new board members

FCICA, the flooring contractors’ association based in West Bloomfield, Mich., has announced that three new board of directors were elected for the 2016-2019 term of office, as well as a new vice chairman of associates elected to the executive board. The new vice chairman of associates is Don Styka, director of Technical Services of Chagrin Falls, Ohio-based Tarkett. The vice chairman of associates is elected by the associate members and serves a two-year term. Continuing to serve with the newly elected board of directors are J.R. Allred, coo of Athens, Ga.-based Dalton Carpet One, Chris Burke of BFC, Ltd. in Egg Harbor Township, N.J., and Bill Richards of Spectra/Shaw Commercial Division in Chatsworth, Ga., continuing terms expiring in 2017, and Graham Capobianco of Charlotte, N.C.-based Roppe Holding Company, Daniel Ortiz-Bacon of Allstate Floors in Jessup, Md., and Construction, and Seth Pevarnik of Aliquippa, Penn.-based Ardex Americas, continuing terms expiring in 2018.

Three industry vets honored with Legacy Scholarships

Elizabeth Swift Brown, Allen Harris, Jr., and Dona Musolf have been honored with Legacy Scholarships through the NWFA Education and Research Foundation based in St. Louis, Mo. NWFA Legacy Scholarships were developed to honor industry leaders who gave great time and effort throughout their lives to advance both the NWFA and the wood flooring industry. Brown cofounded Dallas, Tex.-based French-Brown Floors with her husband, F.E. (Von) Brown, in 1952. Over the years, she served as a founding member of the International Furnishings and Design Association, and president of the Greater Dallas Floor Covering Association. Allen Harris, Jr., with Harris Wood Floors of Johnson, Tenn., is the third-generation to lead the family business founded by his grandfather in 1902. Harris led the company’s merger with Tarkett International in 1983, expanding its product line to include engineered wood. Dona Musolf cofounded Lon Musolf Distributing of Waukesha, Wis., with her husband, Lon Musolf, in 1953. She served as both the company’s secretary and treasurer until her retirement in 1996, and is credited with much of the company’s long-term success.

Mohawk becomes a Google Partner

Calhoun, Ga.-based Mohawk is the first U.S. manufacturer as well as the first company in the flooring industry to become a Google Partner — a certification of excellence in digital marketing. Google Partners are said to be considered trusted online experts who are qualified and certified to manage the online marketing of other businesses. Mohawk already provides a comprehensive and successful suite of digital marketing tools to its retailers, the company says. This certification enhances those services, it adds. The heart of Mohawk’s digital efforts is the Mohawk Lead Center, a CRM system that allows retailers to capture highly qualified leads, follow up and remarket.

Online training

NWFA University announced

The St. Louis, Mo.-based National Wood Flooring Association has announced NWFA University, an online platform that gives individuals an opportunity to participate in wood flooring training when and where they want it. The NWFA University (www.nwfa.org/nwfa-universi-ty.aspx ) is comprised of individual learning modules lasting 15 to 20 minutes, with an online testing component. A series of modules will lead to badges that can be earned.

A badge is a digital representation of a learned skill, and contains content that can be shared on social media platforms, the association says. Badges will serve as prerequisites to hands-on training, which will allow for more time to develop hands-on skills during in-person training. A combination of badges and hands-on training will lead to certifications.

As students’ complete modules and
earn badges, their company will be prior-
itized in the NWFA’s “Find a Professional-
s” search tool on its consumer web site,
woodfloors.org. Those earning badges
move up in the search with each badge
ey earn. Those earning certifications
receive top listings, with multiple certifi-
cations at the top of the list. Career paths
for Installation certification and sales cer-
tification will be available at launch. Addi-
tional career paths will be added through-
out the year.

Wood Flooring Expo grows
by 10 percent
The National Wood Flooring Associa-
tion’s Wood Flooring Expo has continued
its growth trend for the fifth year in a row.
According to industry sources, the 2016
Expo, which took place April in Charlotte,
N.C., grew by 10 percent, with attend-
dance exceeding last year’s historic level
reached in St. Louis, Mo., the association
says. Information about the 2017 Wood
Flooring Expo, which will be held April 11
– 14 in Phoenix, Ariz., is available at www.
wfaexpo.org.

Laminate patent case award
worth over $1 million US
Unilin, headquartered in Wielsbeke, Bel-
gium, was recently awarded a $1.17 mil-
lion US judgment in compensation for the
patent infringement of Granada Kitchen
& Floor, Granada Wood & Cabinets, Inc.,
and NSL Trading Corporation — all of
Anaheim, Calif. — for past imports
and sales of approximately 600,000 m²
of glueless laminate flooring products
that infringed on Unilin patents. This final
judgment brings to a close the patent
infringement action that Unilin launched
in March 2014 against several California-
based companies involved in the import of
patent-infringing flooring products
and the individuals behind the compa-

ties. The company says it is also under-
taking several new actions against other
infringers in the U.S. and Canada.

NAFCD, NBMDA partner again
for 2016 annual convention
The North American Association of Floor
Covering Distributors (NAFCD) and the
North American Building Material Dis-
tribution Association (NBMDA), both of
Chicago, Ill., have extended their part-
tnership in 2016. The NAFCD + NBMDA
annual convention (www.distributorcon-
vention.org) will take place Nov. 1-3 at the
Hyatt Regency in Chicago, bringing to-
gether more than 700 distribution profes-
sionals representing the leading distribu-
tors in the U.S. and Canada. The tabletop
networking forum allows distributors
and manufacturers to connect face-to-
face and conduct meaningful business
planning. Semi-private tabletop booths
provide an ideal forum for senior execu-
tives and key decision makers to discuss
distribution plans and strategies for the
future while also reviewing past perfor-
mance. Meetings are coordinated by ap-
pointment to ensure a highly focused and
productive environment.
Mannington to raise prices on selected engineered wood products
Salem, N.J.-based Mannington Mills has announced that it would be implementing a price increase of up to 5 to 7 percent on selected engineered wood flooring products effective with shipments on July 1, 2016. Continued increases in raw materials, transportation and labor costs have made this increase necessary, according to the company.

WFCA, NAFCD team up on training initiative
Scott Humphrey, ceo of WFCA, and Kevin Gammonley, NAFCD executive vice president, have announced a new partnership arrangement between the two industry associations, World Floor Covering Association of Anaheim, Calif., and Chicago, Ill.-based North American Association of Floor Covering Distributors.

The first initiative planned by the two organizations will significantly increase awareness of WFCA research and training resources within the flooring retailer community, the associations say. The joint program will focus on NAFCD distributors promoting the 2016 WFCA Sales Training Camps to their retailer customers. The new partnership will expand its focus over time.

Tile sensor developer Vitrak awarded government contract
Charlottetown, P.E.I.-based Vitrak Systems has been awarded a contract from the Canadian Federal Government to supply its Stepscan gait analysis system to three Canadian hospitals. Stepscan is a patented pressure sensitive electronic floor tile system combined with proprietary gait analysis software. The system is able to capture and analyze the patterns of mobility and balance in patients as they move across the floor. The technology is able to measure under foot pressure distribution as well as many other movement parameters, such as a patient’s stride, sway/balance, and speed of movement.

Through a collaborative relationship with Veteran Affairs Canada, the Stepscan gait analysis flooring system will be used by rehabilitation specialists at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre (Toronto, Ont.), QE II Health Sciences Centre (Halifax, N.S.) and Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Hospital (Que.) in the assessment of Canadian war veterans suffering from mobility impairing conditions. Vitrak engineers and technical staff will be working closely with the hospital clinical staff in the collection and interpretation of data over the next eight months.

Del Conca USA double North American tile production capacity
In the two years since it opened its U.S. production facilities, Del Conca USA, a subsidiary of Del Conca Group in Italy, has put in motion plans to double its annual capacity of porcelain tile production from 32 to 65 million square feet. Even with excellent early indicators, this increase is happening even faster than had been forecasted, it was announced by Enzo Donald Mularoni, ceo of the Del Conca Group, at the 2016 Coverings trade show.

The expansion, with work expected to begin during the second half of 2016, and production to start in early 2017, involves a further investment of $30 million US both for construction and the purchase of new Italian technology. To date, the U.S. plant, located in Loudon County, Tenn., covers 320,000 square feet, but during the course of 2016 it will be expanded to cover 430,000 square feet. The new facilities will be dedicated to the production of large formats and tiles of increased thickness.
What design has done for me

A life transformed

When I was 19, I stumbled on the knowledge that there was an occupation called Design. This momentous discovery made me feel like I had won the lottery. Designing was something that I did instinctively, and if I could get paid for doing it, than I had found my life’s work. Even before I knew what it was officially called, I knew I had some talent for it. I’d been practicing since I was very young.

The circumstances of my youth were such that I spent a lot of time in church. The pews were hard and the sermons interminable. What’s a boy to do? I imagined the pulpit in a configuration that was more pleasing to my young mind and eye. Then the pews and the light fixtures overhead benefited from my reconsiderations. And, once I was done with the interior, there was a whole parking lot of cars that could only be improved by my design (daydreaming) ideas. This got me though some hard times (the pews).

As a young adult proprietor of a store, I imagined jewellery and clothes that I couldn’t buy from my wholesalers. So I sourced materials, I sketched up, or mocked up ideas, I found small short-run shops, and then what I had imagined showed up in my store. I came to loath retail, but my reflections on the satisfactions that I found in the activities of designing and making stuck with me. Once I realized that this was a legitimate occupation, my life took a turn for the better.

I don’t have the capacity as a writer to adequately describe the excitement that accompanied me to design school. I had gone to pre-secondary school in the northwest corner of Alberta and our curriculum wasn’t burdened with useless courses like art, so I felt myself to be at somewhat of a disadvantage. But I was determined and very motivated. I felt like I was absorbing my instruction throughout my whole being; I practically vibrated with what I was learning.

Whereas I had always been somewhat aware of my surroundings and curious about the material world, I now knew who had designed what, who had taught whom, who had painted what, why things were made the way they were and all sorts of other useful things. Nothing would ever again look as it had before I learned to see things with my educated eyes. It was easy for me to imagine myself becoming a member of this privileged group.

My life was expanded exponentially. Nothing I looked at, touched, tasted, or even thought about would ever be the same. My horizons were, literally, expanded. With my fellow students, I visited other cities, like New York and Washington. I went to the great museums and stores. I started acquiring design-specific books and I read all the design magazines I could find. My life was transformed.

Looking back on this now, I’m struck by how fortunate I was, to discovery an activity that meant so much to me. I was suited to it and it was, by wonderful coincidence, suited to me. I’ve managed to make by living by doing what I loved. This living wasn’t always easy or particularly remunerative, but there were periods what things clicked like I had imagined that they would and I thrived in every way. I’m not rich or famous, but I feel like I am represented by a respectable body of work. I have met and interacted with a very diverse set of characters, from the wise and generous to the mean and treacherous. I wouldn’t have it any other way. Because of the diversity of activities that are associated with designing things, and making them, and getting them to market, I’ve had to learn a great deal about a very wide range of occupations and skills. And I have been enriched by all of them too.

Something I had not anticipated, as the young don’t think this far ahead, was how fresh the world of design remains for me to this day. I regard much of what gets published by the design press as often a bit silly, but so what? It’s wonderful that the young have the energy to try new things, however doubtful the conclusions might turn out to be. I’m happy to still be able to, and want to, cheer them on.

Paul Epp is a professor at OCAD University, and former chair of its Industrial Design Department.
Grout provides the accent to every tile installation; a touch of color that can create subtle or dramatic contrasts that help shape the mood of a room. When trying to achieve a desired look, choosing the right grout color to accompany a tile can be just as important as the tile itself. This is why PROMA has formulated a selection of the most fashionable grout colors and all of the tools needed to help make your choice a successful one.

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The Colors of Success.
Accessibility for those with disabilities

Are you totally compliant?

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) came into law in 2005, and has continued to have a significant impact on private, public and not-for-profit businesses in Ontario. Organizations should be considering whether they have been compliant with the AODA, as there are significant monetary consequences for failing to do so. Although the government of Ontario initially focused on education, rather than enforcement, recently it has begun conducting spot audits levying fines against organizations that are found to be non-compliant.

The AODA develops, implements and enforces standards to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities. It should be noted that the disabilities covered under the AODA go beyond those of a physical nature that may be readily noticeable. The application of the legislation is also broad, applying, for example, even to employers with one or more employees or volunteers, as well as any organization that provides goods and services, offers accommodation or facilities, or owns a building. Even those businesses without a public facing operation, such as manufacturers and wholesalers, are subject to the AODA.

The AODA, along with the Customer Service Standard Regulation and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, both of which are associated with the AODA, seek to make improvements in specific areas, including Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation, and Design of Public Spaces.

Taken together, the legislative framework described above works towards the ultimate goal of Ontario being fully accessible by 2025. The path of implementation toward that target date includes staggered system of benchmarks to help Ontario organizations gradually achieve full accessibility in a timely but reasonably-manageable manner, but with severe penalties for noncompliance.

Your business should be on its way

The first significant deadline under the AODA occurred on January 1, 2012, by which date all organizations were required to create an accessibility policy with respect to providing services to those with disabilities, among other limitations, and to train all individuals in connection with that policy. There are further obligations depending on whether the organization is classified as “Small,” having less than 50 employees, or “Large,” having more than 50 employees. Small organizations, with 20 to 49 employees and Large organizations were required to file a compliance report before the end of December, 2012.

January 1, 2014 marked the second significant deadline. By that date, certain requirements were to have been achieved in the areas of employment, information and communications, transportation and the design of public spaces. Some highlights of those requirements include that Small organizations are expected to have prepared policies and procedures on how to deliver goods and services to people with disabilities. Moreover, as of that date, Small and Large organizations are required to post a Notice on their website if there is a disruption in facilities or services typically used by disabled people. Additionally, if an organization creates or significantly reworks its website after January 1, 2012, it will have to incorporate those features that make it accessible. Large organizations are required to develop and implement further accessibility policies and a multi-year accessibility plan detailing how the organization will achieve compliance. The details of the plan and strategy must be available on the organization’s website. Additionally, Large organizations must incorporate accessibility issues into the design of their space.

As of December 31, 2014, Small organizations, with 20 or more employees, and Large organizations are required to file a second report indicating that they are still complying with the standards under the Customer Service Standard Regulation. Large organizations must also file a report indicating that they have developed plans and policies to meet the statutory requirements. Large organizations have the additional requirement of filing accessibility reports every three years.

As of 2015, Large organizations are expected to have trained all employees with respect to the provisions of the Human Rights Code that pertain to persons with disabilities and to have in place a system for receiving and responding to feedback with respect to the training policies and procedures that must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Small organizations
are by now expected to have develop and implement accessibility policies describing how compliance will be achieved. Meanwhile, all organizations that utilize any electronic terminals or kiosks must make the same functional for those persons with disabilities.

2016 requirements
As of January 1, 2016, there are many standards that need to be in place, and hopefully your organization has complied with the requirements. At this point, Small organizations, are expected to have provided training in connection to the Human Rights Code, and must have a process for feedback that is accessible to persons with disabilities, similar to the requirement for Large organizations commenced during the previous year. Large organizations are expected to have trained all employees with respect to the provisions of the Human Rights Code that pertain to persons with disabilities and to have in place a system for receiving and responding to feedback with respect to the training policies and procedures that must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

The Regulations under the AODA provide that Large organizations must comply with requirements to modify existing human resources policies in order to explicitly consider accessibility issues as they relate to recruitment, accommodation, performance management, career development and return to work processes.

Building requirements
The AODA has also made new accessibility amendments to the Ontario Building Code, which have been effective since January 1, 2015. These new requirements are intended to substantially enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities in both public and private spaces. However, for the most part, the amendments do not affect buildings that are already in existence where no renovation work is planned. Similarly, houses, townhouses and duplexes remain unaffected, with the exception of smoke alarm requirements. The amendments apply to newly constructed buildings and existing buildings that are to be extensively renovated.

In order to understand the effect of the accessibility legislation, consider that, on its own, the Ontario Building Code requires a barrier-free path of travel through most building types. However, new amendments have added requirements such as a requirement for power door operators at entrance doors of all buildings and amenity rooms in multi-unit residential buildings, as well as increased door width and modified ramp dimensions. Building and public spaces must also include surface indicators at the top of stairs and platform edges to assist those with visual impairments.

The amendments have also affected multistory buildings, as elevator access to all floors is required for most new buildings, as well as assembly buildings such as theaters and community centers, places of worship, care buildings, in addition to commercial and retail buildings. Residential and office buildings over 3 stories in height and over 600 square meters in building area will be subject to the same standard. There are some exceptions, including restaurants, whereby they will not be required to provide access to upper floors if the same amenities can be provided on the lower floor.

Although the requirements for washrooms that are set in the Ontario Building Code, already included that they must be barrier free and provided in public spaces, the AODA has added, for example, requirements for power door operators at the entrance of the washroom, amended mounting height and location requirements of towel dispensers and dryers, required fold down grab bars, L-shaped grab bar, and increased floor area in the barrier free washrooms stall. Additionally, all new buildings will now require a universal toilet room and, in new multistory buildings, at least one for every 3 floors, and each universal toilet room must have an adult change table, except in buildings under 300 square meters.

The AODA views renovations as an opportunity to increase and enhance accessibility. However, simply because renovations are occurring does not mean that the AODA and the Regulations will apply. Small renovations affecting under 300 square meters of building area will not activate the requirement to incorporate the amendments now included in the Ontario Building Code. Further, existing buildings that are not undergoing any renovations, are not affected by these requirements. However, newly constructed buildings or buildings that are undergoing renovations that affect more than 300 square meters of building area, are obligated to include universal washrooms, and are impacted by the new requirements.

The last word
The AODA, together with the Regulations and the Ontario Human Rights Code, demonstrate a determined effort by the Ontario government to create an Ontario that is fully accessible, and it is essential that your business ensures timely compliance with the requirements, as they gradually unfold until 2025.

The above is just a cursory review of provincially-regulated organizations' and service providers' obligations in providing a barrier-free accessible space, whether on a day-to-day basis, or in completing renovations to their existing infrastructure. Further information and detailed reports can be found at www.aoda.ca. The best advice for achieving and remaining compliant with the AODA is to seek competent legal advice regarding your organization’s responsibilities.

In order to avoid incurring serious penalties for non-compliance, seek legal advice from specialized counsel before regulatory enforcement is at your door.

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New standard, old installation method key to success

Cork tile

By Christopher Capobianco

I’ve been involved with cork flooring for the past 15 years, some of that time as a technical support consultant for two cork companies, and some of that time in commercial sales, which I’ve been doing since 2007.

Cork flooring comes as traditional cork tile that is glued down, and as engineered planks that are installed the same way as laminate or engineered wood floating floors. However, traditional cork tile that is glued to floors or walls has been around for almost 100 years and a lot of those conversations I have are about the right way to specify, install and maintain cork tile.

As challenging as it was, I was proud to be the chair of the volunteer ASTM task group that created the new industry standard, ASTM F 3008, Standard Specification for Cork Floor Tile. Industry standards for any type of consumer product are consensus documents, so members of the industry and users of the product agree with the language before it is published. Standards are a vitally important way to make sure that the product being purchased is manufactured properly, and also go a long way to help clarify the different classifications within a product category. This helps a designer or end user make a decision on which product to use and compare one brand to another. Here are some examples from ASTM 3008, which are very similar to the wording of other ASTM resilient flooring standards (i.e. vinyl, rubber or linoleum).

Section 4 (Class and Type) includes Class I Homogeneous and Class II Heterogeneous. Either can be specified as Type A, unfinished, or Type B factory finished. These product classes are defined in Section 6: “Homogeneous cork tile shall be of uniform structure and composition throughout, consisting of cork granules thoroughly and uniformly bonded together.” This is a very durable material that can be sanded and refinished. On the other hand, “The pattern of this [heterogeneous] tile comprises a veneer layer of cork and a base layer consisting of cork granules thoroughly and uniformly bonded together. The pattern of this tile need not extend throughout the entire thickness of the tile.” This is an important point, especially when floors are being specified for commercial use. Heterogeneous cork may not be recommended for heavy traffic, or may have additional coats of finish applied to the new floor and regularly during the life of the floor.

Section 7 (Physical Properties) calls out test methods (such as squareness, thickness, size, density, resistance to curling and flexibility) that can be used to determine when a question of product quality comes up. Section 8 (Performance Requirements) specifies tests for durability such as resistance to rolling chairs, indentation, shrinkage, abrasion and chemicals.

So, this new document will certainly help in deciding what kind of cork tile to specify and also help dealers and installers understand the product better. But what about installation? Well, there are decades old methods that still work best for a successful cork tile project. Before you get started, site conditions are critical. The manufacturer’s guidelines and ASTM F 710, Standard Practice for Preparing Concrete Floors to Receive Resilient Flooring are required reading for building temperature and humidity, product acclimation, substrate preparation and concrete moisture testing. If you’ve read my Coverings columns for the past seven years you have seen a lot written about the importance of concrete moisture testing. With natural products like cork and wood, it is even more important! Don’t install the floor if the substrate is not dry, flat and smooth, and don’t even deliver cork tile to a space that is not at the same temperature and humidity as it will be when the space is in use.

Adhesive selection and application is another important part of a successful cork installation. Talking to the experienced cork installers in Europe and here in the U.S. made me a bit old fashioned as far as cork adhesive. The traditional method uses a water based contact adhesive that is applied to the back of the tile and also to the substrate. Because contact adhesive provides an instant bond,
this method really holds the tile in place without curled edges. The tile can be coated a day ahead of time, and some companies coat the tile at the factory. The adhesive is applied with a paint roller and allowed to dry. The tile is set in place and a rubber mallet or a roller is used to make “contact” between the two adhesive films. I prefer the mallet method. Large areas of the substrate can be coated at one time and since the tile is set into dry adhesive, the installer can work on top of the newly installed floor and the floor can be walked on immediately. Well over 95 percent of the cork tile failures I have seen were caused when a manufacturer or installer decided to use a trowel-applied adhesive instead of the contact method. Don’t make that same mistake!

Although classified as resilient flooring, cork is more like wood with regard to handling and maintenance. Most tile today us pre-finished with polyurethane and it’s not uncommon to add another coat or two of urethane to a new floor for extra protection. From that point, maintain like a wood floor. Make sure furniture has proper glides and take care to protect the floor from damage. Use walk-off mats to keep dirt off the floor and window coverings to minimize fading in bright sunlight. For cleaning, sweep regularly and damp mop as you would for a wood floor. Wet mopping is not a good idea.

As far back as the 1920s, millions of square feet of cork flooring were installed in North America, but cork use fell off as other synthetic materials grew in popularity. For the past 15 years or so, cork has reemerged. As cork flooring continues to grow in popularity, flooring dealers and contractors who understand this product can become cork specialists. They will be the ones who get the orders while others are intimidated or unfamiliar with this beautiful, environmentally friendly material.

For more information and photos of cork forests, factories and floors, Visit my Facebook page: facebook.com/corkdorkny/

Christopher Capobianco has been in the floor covering industry since the 1970s in various roles including retail and commercial sales, technical support, consulting, journalism, education and volunteer work. He currently is part of the sales team for Spartan Surfaces in New York City. You can reach him via christopher@SpartanSurfaces.com.
New dimensions require new standards

Tiles get bigger

By Bill Wright

One of the biggest changes and challenges in the world of tile is the use of very large porcelain sheets, or slabs. The TTMAC together with the TCNA, ANSI and several tile manufacturers have been cooperating for the last 18 months to create a North American standard to outline the use of these sheets.

This new standard, American National Standard Specifications for Gauged Porcelain Tiles and Gauged Porcelain Panel/Sheets A137.3, serves as a reference standard for manufacturers, buyers, specifiers, installers and building owners and users of large-gauged porcelain tile and porcelain slabs/panels. This standard is also a reference for the manufacturers of such products.

These specifications describe the minimum physical properties of Gauged Porcelain Tiles and Gauged Porcelain Tile Panels/Sheets and back layered Gauged Porcelain Tiles and Gauged Porcelain Tile Panels/Sheets manufactured to a specific nominal thickness. ANSI A137.3 includes the criteria for acceptance and methods for testing before and after installation, as well as their markings and certification and the definition of terms relating to these products.

New revised definitions

Back-Layered Gauged Tile or Tile Panel/Slab: A gauged tile or tile panel/slub with a material, commonly mesh, that has been attached to its back after firing for the purposes of reinforcing. Back-layered material thickness must be 20 percent or less than the tile’s or tile panel’s/slab’s thickness.

Gauged Tile or Tile Panel/Slab: A tile or tile panel/slub that has been manufactured to a specific nominal thickness, and for which its thickness characteristic is largely associated with how it is installed and/or used. Gauged tiles and tile panels/slabs can be used in wall or floor applications depending on manufacturer’s recommendations.

Nominal Thickness: This is the approximate thickness of a tile or tile panel/slub, expressed by the manufacturer in millimeters to the nearest tenth for general reference.

Tile: A ceramic surfacing unit, usually relatively thin in relation to facial area, having either a glazed or unglazed face and fired above red heat in the course of manufacture to a temperature sufficiently high to produce specific physical properties and characteristics.

Tile Panel/Slab: A ceramic tile of size greater than or equal to one square meter. A product less than one square meter shall be regarded simply as a tile.

There is also a brand-new installation standard. ANSI A108.4 Interior Installation of Gauged Porcelain Tiles and Gauged Porcelain Tile Panels/Sheets by the Thin Bed Method bonded with modified dry set cement mortar or improved modified dry set cement mortar. Included in the standard are the following topics:

- The outlines for installing on wall, ceiling and floors.
- The required substrate flatness (6 mm in 3 m) maximum tolerance.
- The acceptable types of substrates to install over.
- The types of mortars that are acceptable and the proper application methods for them.
- The allowable lippage (0.8 mm) criterion.
- Joint size and movement joint placement.
- Material handling requirements

Note that a new exterior standard has as yet been issued; please consult the manufacturer for recommendations.

Practical experience with large slabs and panels is still relatively limited and evolving. As success is based on the input and cooperation of many parts to a common goal, it is strongly suggested that manufacturers and suppliers work closely with the specifiers and installers to educate, create, develop and plan a lasting installation.

The Terrazzo, Tile and Marble Association of Canada was founded in 1944 to promote standardized installation techniques and to provide technical resources.
Cersaie, the International Exhibition of Ceramic Tile and Bathroom Furnishings, is back for its 34th edition. Held in the Bologna Exhibition Centre from September 26-30, the show will attract tens of thousands of visitors, industry professionals, designers, journalists and consumers from all over the world.

To navigate the show, visitors and exhibitors can download the free exhibitors catalog app “Cersaie” available for tablet and smartphone from Google Play or the App Store.

Cersaie exhibition halls include dedicated areas for: ceramic floor and wall tiles; non-ceramic flooring and wall-covering products; sanitary installations, bathroom furnishings, fireplaces, ceramic stoves and tiled kitchens; raw materials and equipment for ceramics; and, materials and tools for installation, as well as showroom displays for ceramic products.

This year Cersaie continues its festival of architecture and design into its program of events. Introduced originally in 2009, the cultural program “building, dwelling, thinking” has hosted hundreds of speakers, predominantly from the world of building design, emerging Italian and international architects and designers, university professors and intellectuals. Dozens of technical and broader cultural themes have been addressed, from architecture through to design and ceramics.

Cersaie’s third collective 1,500 square meter B2B exhibit — dubbed Cer-Sail this year — will be inspired by classic Greek and Latin ports, places of trade and cultural exchange, points of transit and meeting venues where the sea forms the backdrop to socialization and everyday life.

From September 28 to October 1, the city of Bologna will become part of the international network of design-related events with the second edition of Bologna Design Week, a diverse networking platform and cultural itinerary about the propulsive power of design for innovation and promotion.

The event will be organized in the city centre during Cersaie, and will offer its visitors an itinerary that will touch design offices, retail spaces and clubs where famous and emerging designers will present prototypes and products to highlight new trends and create new scenarios.
PRODUCTS

Epoxy-based grout and adhesive

Okapox royal from Kiesel is a universal epoxy-based grout and adhesive for walls and floors. The product is formulated to be non-sagging and non-slumping in joints and is available in contemporary colours. It is suitable for commercial and residential applications, as well as an adhesive and grout that is mechanically stable and chemically resistant. The product can be used as a coloured adhesive in high stress areas, for interior/ exterior and submerged installations and as a rapid set system solution by adding Okapox accelerator.

http://en.kiesel.com

New colors and species for hardwoods

Mirage has announced the addition of two new colors to its Sweet Memories collection: Treasure and Tree House. Treasure is an ash grey with slightly darker accents. Tree House is a brown shade fused with hints of grey to create a taupe color. The new colors are available on Handcrafted Red Oak in Classic technology in 3-1/4 and 4-1/4 in. widths, in engineered technology in 5, 6-1/2 and 7-3/4 in. widths and in Lock technology in 4-5/16 in. width. They are also offered on Handcrafted White Oak, R&Q in engineered technology in 5 and 6-1/2 in. widths. Aged Yellow Birch has also been added as a new species for the collection, available in Classic technology in 4-1/4 in. width in the colors Praline, Nougat, Gingerbread and Black Jelly Bean.

www.miragefloors.com

Porcelain stoneware inspired by fabrics

Canvas is the new Phorma brand ceramic series from Sichenia. The series has a modern surface in ceramic with a fabric effect inspired by ancient tapestries and noble furnishing fabrics, and offers a solution for those who want to dress space with style, creativity and elegance, the company says. Rope, Tobacco, Avio, Silver and Pearl are the light colors that make up the collection’s color palette. The tiles, made in the traditional square and rectangular sizes (60 x 60, 30 x 60 and 10 x 60 cm), offer high resistance to strains, are easy to clean and are distinguished by their resistance to fire, the company adds.

www.sichenia.it/collections/canvas/

Spray adhesives reduce installation labour

Mapei has announced Ultrabond water-based acrylic adhesives for carpet tile and resilient flooring that are spray-applied, which allows installers to do their work standing up instead of kneeling to complete the job faster than when using trowel-applied adhesives. Ultrabond Spray 360 is designed for the installation of solid vinyl tile, luxury vinyl tile, vinyl composition tile (VCT) and vinyl plank; all of these types of flooring can be set as soon as 15 min after adhesive application. Ultrabond Spray 810 can be used for the installation of vinyl-backed carpet tile, providing excellent tack for secure flooring placement, generally within 15 to 30 min.

www.mapei.com

Luxury flooring collection adds 35 SKUs

The PermaStone luxury flooring collection from Tarkett has been updated with 35 new SKUs, made up of 3 woods, 8...
stones and four hybrid designs. The new wood design, called Borealis Pine, is a broad-washed pine in 6 x 48 in. planks available in with a rolled edge. The Sand Stone is available in 12 x 24 in. and 16 x 16 in. paver format sizes. Another stone design, Rush, offers hints of quartz, granite and slate, and is available in 12 x 24 in. and 16 x 16 in. sizes. Repose is a pattern which combines the look of concrete and rustic oak for a hybrid design. The 12 x 24 in. and 12 x 12 in. rolled edge tiles can be installed separately or mixed together for a modular look. Repose also comes in 6 x 48 in. rolled edge planks.

www.tarkett.com

Eight new luxury vinyl flooring looks

Mannington has expanded its Adura line of luxury vinyl flooring with eight new looks, each with a range of options in design, color, size and installation. Customers can choose from a variety of tile and plank sizes that are designed for stand-alone use or mixing. All of these new looks have Mannington’s ScratchResist wearlayer, a patented performance coating with aluminum oxide that keeps floors looking newer longer by resisting everyday scratches. The line is also FloorScore certified, complying to strict indoor air-quality standards.

www.mannington.com

Hardwoods reflect historic craftsmanship

Artistic Timbers hardwood from Armstrong includes two new collections — TimberCuts solid and TimberBrushed engineered floors. TimberCuts hardwood, a modern reflection of historic craftsmanship, is crafted from premium lumber and showcases authentically applied sawn marks with dramatic flair, the company says. For weathered charm that never goes out of style, it adds, TimberBrushed hardwood features texture that highlights the natural richness and deep grain of white oak, in 10 colors.

www.armstrong.com
**Plank flooring for commercial applications**

Machu Picchu, is suitable for the kitchen, dining room, living room, bedroom, bathroom and basement. Each plank measures 180 mm wide, 1220 mm long and 5.5 mm thick. The interlocking method is an angle-to-angle configuration. The planks can be floating and are radiant heat certified.

www.beaulieuflooring.com

**Inlay luxury matting collection**

Mats Inc. has introduced the Luxtria Precision Inlay luxury matting collection. Providing a twist on traditional graphic inlay matting products, the company says, the matting combines the moisture wicking and cleaning benefits of entrance matting with the luxurious appearance and feel of plush carpeting. Colors are made from nylon fibres and are available in ten colors for logos or creating custom designed mats. Luxtria colors pair with the company’s Chicago Collection or Seattle Collection for base colors to achieve stylish mats for entrances and other interior spaces, it adds.

www.matsinc.com

**Warm tiled floors up to 70 percent faster**

Schluter-DITRA-HEAT-TB from Schluter-Systems is said to be the first electric floor warming system with an integrated thermal break to overcome the challenge of the mass of typically cool concrete immediately below the heating cables. The thin thermal break on the underside of the membrane allows the system to warm tiled floors up to 70 percent faster over concrete substrates, by directing heat to the tile, not to the subfloor, the company says. The all-in-one system is also said to mean faster and simpler installation as the membrane, heating cables and thermal break are all combined in a single layer.

www.schluter.ca

**Luxury vinyl plank from virgin PVC**

Beaulieu Canada has introduced luxury vinyl plank made from virgin PVC. The Globe Trotter collection, with place names such as Berlin (shown), Rio De Janeiro and

**Fibre acoustic and insulating underlayment**

QuietWalk from MP Global Products is a fibre acoustic and insulating underlayment for laminate and floating wood floors. The underlayment is odorless,
hypoallergenic and VOC-free, as well as third party certified for low emissions, enabling it to contribute in the LEED category of Indoor Air Quality and conforms to the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) – CA Section 01350. The product meets or exceeds IIC and STC sound ratings, dampens ambient sound in the room it is installed in and helps minimize impact and airborne sound from traveling into the room below. In addition, its randomly air-laid filaments create a capillary effect to cushion the floor, absorb sound and help floating floors sound more like fastened wood. www.quietwalk.com

Wide plank engineered hardwood

The French Oak collection of wide plank engineered hardwood from Fuzion Flooring has been announced. Smoked, multi-stained and hand-textured, the collection will bring rich beauty into any emulated design style, the company says. Specifications include: a three-layer solid-core structure; 1/8 in. (3 mm) or 1/16 in. (4 mm) dry sawn face wear layer; 9/16 or 5/8 x 7.5 in. or 8.5 in. x RL (up to 73 or 86 in.); 4 sided bevel edge detail; hand scraped and wire brushed finish, UV or oil finish; gloss of 5- to 15-degree luster level (non-oil); T&G, staple, glued down or floated installation; on, above or below grade suitable location; radiant heat compatible, except hickory (follow instructions); and, E1 CARB II & Floor Score certification. www.fuzionflooring.com

Subfloor leveling system

Comprised of a thermoplastic rubber compound, the Roppe subfloor leveler is said to be flexible and easy to work with, yet strong and durable. Subfloor leveler features and benefits include: contains 100 percent post-industrial waste, which may contribute to the LEED Green Building Certification System, and meets FloorScore criteria; available in 48 in. lengths in two depths 12 in. (304.8 mm) and 18 in. (457.2 mm), and four thicknesses: 1/8, 1/4, 3/8 and 1/2 in.; no curing time; and, installation can be directly over concrete, wood or steel subfloors. www.roppe.com

Stone materials have broad origins

Petrae series from Ceramiche Refin is said to be a rich and heterogeneous collection of stone materials with varied origins, several hues and traits, all elegant and with outstanding graphic designs in line with the latest trends. The series features several sizes (60 × 60, 30 × 60, 45 × 90, 22.5 × 90 cm) and thicknesses, including the outdoor version OUT2.0 (2 cm). The Savoie Ash variant in the series results from France, namely from Haute-Savoie. Pacific Grey is based on several types of gneiss extracted from the pacific coasts of Canada. The Italian Alps are the reference for the Malench Gold stone from the valley of Valmalenco. Flammé, with its shades ranging from very dark, almost black colours, to vivid grey hues, comes from Belgium. Guyana, prompted by quartzite, comes from the mountains dividing Brazil from Guyana. The calcareous stone of Muschelkalk Brown comes from a Franconian region in southern Germany. www.refin-ceramic.com
Current business highlights

- The value of residential building permits in Canada rose 4.8 percent to $4.4 billion in March, a second consecutive monthly increase. Gains were posted in seven provinces, led by Ontario, British Columbia and Nova Scotia. The largest decline in residential construction intentions was reported in Alberta. — Statistics Canada

- Investment in new residential construction totaled $3.8 billion in March, up 9.7 percent from the same month a year earlier. At the national level, higher spending on apartment and apartment-condominium buildings, which rose 19.9 percent to $1.4 billion, and single-family dwellings, which increased 5.9 percent to $1.9 billion, contributed the most to the advance. Investment in row houses also registered an increase, rising 9.2 percent to $384 million. — Statistics Canada

- Since 1996, the secondary rental market — housing not purpose-built for renting — has consistently accounted for almost half of rented homes in Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs). The secondary market accounts for an even higher percentage of the rental market in Canada as a whole than in CMAs collectively. In 2011, more than half of renter households in Canada lived in homes in the secondary market — an estimated 2.2 million out of 4.1 million households. — Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 1.7 percent in the 12 months to April, after increasing 1.3 percent in March. Excluding gasoline, the CPI rose 2.0 percent year over year in April, following a 1.9 percent increase in March. — Statistics Canada

- Pulp mills in Eastern Canada have become more competitive following sharply declining wood costs over the past four years. In fact, wood costs reached their lowest levels in 15 years in the 1Q/16, according to the North American Wood Fiber Review. — Fordaq

- U.S. real gross domestic product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 0.5 percent in the first quarter of 2016, according to the advance estimates of the national income and product accounts. In the fourth quarter of 2015, real GDP increased 1.4 percent. — U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

- In March 2016 compared with February 2016, seasonally adjusted production in the construction sector fell by 0.9 percent in the euro area 19 (EA19) and by 1.4 percent in the EU28, according to first estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. — Fordaq

- U.S. sales of new, single-family houses in April 2016 were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 619,000, according to estimates released jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is 16.6 percent above the revised March rate of 531,000 and is 23.8 percent above the April 2015 estimate of 500,000. — U.S. Department of Commerce

- Canadian exports of goods and services are projected to see growth of 2 percent in 2016. All sectors will see growth with the exception of three: energy, fertilizers, and chemicals and plastics. The forecast for broad-based growth, such as 5 percent rise for forestry and 14 percent for consumer goods, is supported by growing U.S. demand and a weaker Canadian dollar. — EDC Economics

- For the third consecutive month, the demand for design activity increased according to latest Architecture Billings Index (ABI) from the American Institute of Architects (AIA). April’s ABI score was 50.6, which was down from March’s score of 51.9, but any score above 50 signifies increased billings. — AIA

- According to ConstructConnect.com, the top three construction projects in Canada in April ranked at 950, 540 and 500 million square feet. Number one in size is the Minto Westside Condominium and Retail Building, Phase One, in Toronto, Ont., at $153 million, then the Giant Tiger Distribution Centre in the Township of Edwardsburgh, Ont., at $75 million, and finally the Central Park Ajax Condominium and Retail Building in Ajax, Ont., at $81 million. — ConstructConnect

- The CD Howe Institute reports that 11 percent of Canadian households have mortgage debt that is more than 500 percent of their disposable income and will experience financial distress when interest rates rise. This same study shows how vulnerable we are: 20 percent of households have less than $5,000 available to deal with a job loss or an emergency, and 10 percent of households have less than $1,500. — CD Howe Institute

- According to data from the 2011 National Household Survey, about 360,045 couples, or 4.6 percent of all married and common-law couples in Canada, were in mixed unions (at least one spouse a visible minority). Of that number, 305,075, or 3.9 percent of all couples, were composed of one person who was a member of a visible minority and one who was not, while 54,970 couples (0.7 percent of all couples) involved two persons from different visible minority groups. — Statistics Canada
# EVENTS

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<td>The International Surface Event East</td>
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<td>March 21 – 23</td>
<td>Domotex Asia ChinaFloor</td>
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<td>April 4 – 7</td>
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**Transformed showroom inspires customers**

Show and awe

TAKE A TIRED BUT SUCCESSFUL showroom that targeted contractors and turning it into a destination for architects, designers and consumers was a bold decision for Olympia Tile International at its flagship outlet in Toronto, Ont.

“We’ve made it twice as big,” said Olympia Tile International vice president George Gal. The formerly 16,000 square-foot showroom now features over 37,000 square feet of space open to the public.

Project designers of the project, and co-founders of II By IV Design of Toronto, Dan Menchions and Keith Rushbrook worked with Olympia Tile to meet its updating and expansion goals. “This was a renovation of an existing space with construction phased in over a period of 18 months beginning mid-2013. Given the size of the space and high-demand nature of Olympia Tile’s business, they could not afford to completely shut down during the renovations,” says Menchions.

“Working within a building of this sheer size there were some obvious challenges we faced, which included lighting, HVAC and space planning, so that the volume of the space was intuitive to navigate.”

The design cues that II By IV Design took were decidedly modern to accommodate Olympia Tile’s traditional hard surfaces. “The overall aesthetic is contemporary; we drew inspiration from high-end retail fashion and European art galleries to create an upscale aesthetic that would appeal to individual home owners and the A & D (Architecture and Design) community,” says Rushbrook. “Previously Olympia Tile’s clientele had a primarily builder/construction focus.”

According to Rushbrook, “A large variety of ceramic, porcelain, glass and natural stones in many styles, shapes, sizes and finishes are displayed throughout the showroom — somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 different collections in total.

Menchions notes that the previous surfaces were a mismatch collection of porcelain tiles in different sizes and colors, as well as slate tiles and mosaic — there was no consistency and it felt disjointed.”

Gal and Olympia Tile are quite satisfied with the project results. “It’s mainly an architectural design community but we also have the public coming in,” Gal says.

“Of course they are extremely impressed and feel very comfortable — and awed by it as well. That evolves into and translates into sales.”

*The finished Then-and-Now project is featured on each issue’s cover. Please submit project suggestions to news@wimediainc.ca.*
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