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**Bamboo still viable**

Strand-woven products lead the way, but style, quality and proper installation is what will make or break the category going forward.

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**CAUSE MARKETING:  
GIVING BACK  
INCREASES PROFIT**

By Jenna Lippin

**C**ause marketing—a method that involves cooperative efforts of a for-profit business and a non-profit organization for mutual benefit—has become standard practice in the American marketplace, mainly because these types of campaigns resonate with consumers. In fact, the 2014 Nielsen Do Well By Doing Good report noted that 42% of North American consumers

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**USFloors granted patent for COREtec technology**

By Ken Ryan

**F**ive years after initial development and three years after filing for a patent, USFloors has received U.S. Patent #9,156,233 for its COREtec technology.

The eagerly anticipated patent covers all USFloors engi-

neered flooring products with a WPC core and veneer top layer with or without an attached backing.

Piet Dossche, president and CEO of USFloors, told FCNews the wait was well worth it. “How many times in a lifetime do you have the chance to create something completely new?

The process took a long time; we’ve been challenged many times and each time we were successful in defending it.”

Dossche said the patent confirms the unique innovation of COREtec and reinforces the recognition of its intellectual property. “We are not looking to keep this all for USFloors and monopolize it. Quite the opposite. Our intention remains

strong to work with those companies who respect our IP and are committed to growing this



brand-new flooring category in a quality-focused and profitable way while vigorously protecting it from destruction caused by low-quality introductions coupled with low-ball pricing.”

COREtec technology provides an array of unique benefits that combine the best features of LVT and laminate. It’s easy to install like laminate but 100% waterproof, which means it will

not swell or expand when exposed to moisture. The product’s rigid construction hides subfloor imperfections, provides a smooth visual surface and eliminates the waviness—known as telegraphing—associated with traditional glue-down or solid-locking LVT. This construction also allows for installation

directly over an existing ceramic tile floor without having to fill in grout lines. Because it is virtually inert, it will not expand or contract under normal conditions, therefore there is no need for expansion gaps every 30 feet in large rooms. Superior dimensional stability eliminates the need to acclimate the floor prior to installation as well.

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National Floorcovering Alliance

**Members weigh in on subcontractor/employee issue**

By Steven Feldman

CORONADO, CALIF.—When the 42 members of the National Floorcovering Alliance met here last month, they were updated on some of the most critical issues facing all floor covering retailers, not the least of which was how the recent Department of Labor (DOL) guidance as to what constitutes an employee vs. independent contractor could affect them.

The DOL directive emphasized that a worker who is “economically dependent” on the employer should be treated as an employee. By contrast, to be regarded as an independent contractor, workers must be in business for themselves. The thought is this guidance will make it harder for flooring dealers to use subcon-

tractors for installation. Dealers often prefer to use independents because contractors aren’t eligible for overtime pay, unemployment insurance or workers’ compensation, and they pay all Social



Prospective member Rich Mandel, Sterling Carpet & Flooring, Anaheim, Calif., is flanked by Doug Jackson, VP, sales and marketing, Tuftex, and Randy Merritt, president of Shaw.

Security taxes compared with employees, who split that cost with employers.

Jeff King, counsel to the

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**Armstrong CushionStep includes designs that are a hybrid of stone and wood, which help meet the 'stone plank' trend.**

## Re-emergence of sheet vinyl

HOW STYLE AND DESIGN ARE REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

By Jenna Lippin

As luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and plank (LVP) rose to flooring fame in recent years, other flooring options, including sheet vinyl, have been forced to step up their game. Many vinyl manufacturers have succeeded at designing sheet products that some consumers find even more desirable than their exceptionally popular sibling.

In fact, it can be argued that the widespread appeal of LVT has actually benefited sheet vinyl as designers have sought to coordinate new sheet product with LVT options. IVC US, for example, will be able to “cross coordinate” tiles and planks with a new sheet line being developed at its new manufacturing facility in Dalton, according to Tressa Samdal, design development manager of sheet vinyl.

The company is assessing the customer, particularly the “new and fresh” millennial generation, given their significant buying power. “This generation isn’t familiar with sheet,” Samdal said. “So they don’t have any preconceived notions. They have plenty of desire for fresh things, a lot of linear and patterned looks. There is a connection to a ‘modernization of vintage.’ This group also has a connection to organic. They are very attracted to color.”

Kaye Gosline, creative director, residential, for Tarkett, also believes there is a generational aspect to maintaining sheet vinyl appeal. The company’s sheet product, FiberFloor, provides a number of visual and construction options, helping deliver more mass appeal. “FiberFloor can become a fashion item. I look at baby boomers who need to sell that mega mansion and sell to Generation X because right now they have the money to buy large suburban homes. FiberFloor is a great way to put down a new

kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, etc., and give a lift in style and design. If that young couple is smart they’ll embrace that—easy to clean, install and perfect for kids and pets. When they are tired of it, they can just get another design. It’s not as costly as trying to rip up a stone floor you’ve spent thousands of dollars to install.”

In order to create sheet vinyl designs to be embraced by all corners of the market, suppliers are enhancing their design capabilities, investing in people and technology that can create the most unique yet realistic visuals. At Congoleum, vice president of design Doty Horn finds it imperative to track trends across the market, allowing the company to be on top of things. “When you are in with the trends you don’t only see popular looks but a forecast of what’s to come. That makes us more innovative.”

With those trends Horn said she has seen a lot of “texturized, natural materials, which will be the engine that feeds our system. But the pattern on pattern and embossing trends are coming back. It takes a familiar texture and puts it into pattern. We can do that much more readily with sheet than in tile. We can also lock it into a design pattern on the floor so it’s easy to roll out. In [tile] you have to work out the pat-

tern before you install it; with sheet you have the luxury of laying out the design. In sheet you roll it out, have embossing texture and fidelity in print married together—it’s the winning combination.”

Steve Roan, sales and marketing director, North America, BFS USA, makers of the Beauflor brand of cushion vinyl, also noted the rise of the embossing trend. “It’s pretty amazing; the heavy deep embossing gives wood grain tones.” In the production process, “you can lay an inhibitor on certain parts of the vinyl in the design so when



**IVC US' Flexitec sheet product is designed based on consumer preferences, providing options that meet the tastes of all shoppers.**

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