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No longer relegated to the “green” corner of the showroom, bamboo is making a bid to go mainstream.
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The aftermath of Hurricane Matthew has left many roads in disrepair, disrupting service deliveries for distributors in the Southeast.

HURRICANE MATTHEW DISRUPTS EAST COAST DISTRIBUTION

By Ken Ryan

The impact from Hurricane Matthew wreaked havoc on several flooring distributors operating in the Southeast U.S., with wholesalers reporting service disruptions before the storm’s arrival on through its departure.

Communities from central Florida up through Virginia have experienced problems ranging from substantial beach erosion and blackouts to homes made uninhabitable due to major flood-

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NFA celebrates 25th anniversary in grand style

SNEDEKER RE-ELECTED TO SERVE HIS SECOND TERM AS GROUP PRESIDENT

By Steven Feldman

PALM BEACH, ARUBA—Against a backdrop that some say is only rivaled by paradise, the 42 retailers that comprise the National Floorcovering Alliance gathered here for their semi-annual summit to celebrate its silver anniversary. And the next 25 years will begin the way the first 25 ended: with Dave Snedeker, division merchandise manager, Nebraska Furniture Mart (NFM), as president after being elected to a second term. Should Snedeker serve his entire two-year term, he would become the first NFA president to serve four years since Gary Cissell, who coincidentally served in the same capacity at NFM as Snedeker.



As for the rest of the board, Jim Walters, Macco’s Floor Covering Center, Green Bay, Wis., was elected vice president; Ian Newton, Flooring 101, Ventura County, Calif., was elected treasurer, while Kelly Taylor, Ambassador Flooring, St. Louis, remains secretary. Ryan Bechtold, Contract Furnishings Mart, Portland, Ore., and Zac Akin, Akin Bros., Oklahoma City, will serve their last of three years as board members at large.

When asked what this board’s goals for the next two years, Walters told *FCNews* the idea is to build on the accomplishments of previous boards in terms of vendor programs that bring value to the group—“More

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CarpetsPlus gets first look at Destination concept

By Ken Ryan

PITTSBURGH—All buying groups use networking opportunities and best practices to educate their members. CarpetsPlus Colortile is going one step further with its biennial summit meetings where one member retailer hosts other floor cover-

ing dealers in a show-and-tell format.

This year SP Floors & Design Gallery of Canonsburg, Pa., unveiled the group’s first fully furnished Destination showroom. Introduced in 2015, Destination started as a carpet boutique within the showroom and expanded to include hard surfaces and displays that emphasize fashion and color.

Stacey Pape, owner of SP Floors, reflected on the implementation of the Destination format. In building her store—a former Ethan Allen showroom—she wanted to create an environment that was more fun and enjoyable for customers. “We wanted something different, something people would talk about—a showroom that was off the wall



A seamless floor layout helps SP Floors’ customers easily navigate from one area of the showroom to another.

and bizarre but when put together it is pretty neat.”

SP Floors spans 12,000 square feet, including warehouse space. The Destination portfolio includes 10 displays featuring banners such as Color Destination, Performance

Destination, Fashion Destination and Design Destination. CarpetsPlus dealers have the option of taking on as many displays as they choose or none at all—it is up to them. In creating a more fun environment for

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dear david

Weeding out the rotten apples in the workplace

Dear David:

The very first week I hired my “rotten apple” I knew it wasn’t going to work out. I was so enamored with what she could do for me that I lost sight of what she could do to me. After nearly 13 months of declining performance and increased negativity, I finally decided to let her go. On her way out she told the other employees the company was going down and to look for a new job because I had no money to pay them. Of course, all of this was a lie. How do I protect myself from this disaster occurring again in the future?

Dear Frustrated Owner, Every workplace has negative people who erode morale. They’re not always easy to pick out of a crowd, but they can do tremendous damage over time. Most of the time these folks don’t make the big mistakes that call attention to themselves. They’re frequently pretty good at their jobs, so they’re not called on the carpet too often. But like

ASK AN EMPLOYEE WHO REFUSES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HER ATTITUDE IS A PROBLEM TO PARTICIPATE IN A ROLE PLAY WITH YOU.

a computer virus, their acidic personalities eat away at the goals—and ultimately the bottom line—of the company. So who are these people? They’re generally the employees who:

- Continually find things to complain about.
- Back stab, spread gossip and start rumors that pit employees against each other and even the boss.
- Undermine your authority with a barrage of criticism.

Allowing employees with bad attitudes to continue their behavior without consequence can have multiple effects. Coworkers who experience the employee’s bad attitude firsthand may suffer low morale or a negative attitude. There’s also the risk of lowered productivity among employees, which affects the bottom line. Even worse, customers can be offended when exposed to an employee with a



DAVID ROMANO

bad attitude.

As the owner of a small business, it’s critical that you take a proactive approach and find out how to stop the employee from wreaking havoc on your organization, employees and customers.

Step 1. Observe and document instances of each employee’s bad attitude so you can refer to it later. Don’t wait too long; do it immediately. Speak to the employee in private. Tell her you have noticed her negative attitude and provide examples if necessary.

Step 2. Ask the employee to explain her reasons for the bad attitude and listen carefully for the reasons. If she’s upset over a situation at work, try to help her solve it. If she can’t tell you why her attitude is negative, explain that her behavior is unacceptable and that you expect her to change it. Advise her of the consequences—verbal warning, written warning, suspension or separation—if she continues to exhibit a bad attitude.

Step 3. Ask an employee who refuses to acknowledge that her attitude is a problem to participate in a role play with you. Tell her to act as the supervisor while you pretend to be her. Use material from your notes to illustrate her negative attitude. This may help her realize the impact of her behavior upon others.

Step 4. Implement disciplinary action or provide support to the employee as needed. Praise her if she’s able to successfully change her attitude; if not, then make a move quickly to turn her loose if you couldn’t turn her around. Every owner needs an effective strategy to deal with bad employee attitudes. The stakes are too high to just let things slide.

David Romano is the founder of Romano Consulting Group and Benchmarkinc, a group that provides consulting, benchmarking, recruiting and software solutions to the flooring, home improvement and restoration industries.

Sheet vinyl demonstrates its

By Ken Ryan

The resilient flooring category has been dominated in recent years by the headline-grabbing success of luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and lately WPC. Meanwhile, sheet vinyl continues to forge ahead despite being one of the most underappreciated products in the market today. However, its worth is not lost on its legion of proponents.

“When you look at resilient sheet on an installed cost basis and add in the performance attributes, it’s the best value on the market,” said Dan Natkin, senior director of residential products, Mannington. “It’s waterproof, highly scratch resistant and has visuals that cannot be achieved in other categories at the same type of value price point.”

Eric Erickson, vice president of marketing for Beauflor, agrees. He also cited other positive attributes of sheet, namely the product’s increasingly realistically looking visuals. “It is sometimes hard to tell the difference from LVT to sheet. Cushion vinyl has a great performance story, superior sound absorption and is truly the best waterproof product out there.”

According to Amie Foster, product director—sheet vinyl, IVC US, sheet represents a strong ticket item that provides retailers

with some of the best margins available in flooring. “It is a value for the consumer as well, as she can add design, performance and comfort without sacrificing her budget or compromising her wants for her home.”

Executives cite sheet for its durability, low maintenance and

a year in builder business—roughly two-thirds of its overall business.

Retail remains a strong segment for sheet vinyl within specific regions in North America because it offers the triumvirate of design, durability and value. “Given that sheet vinyl checks

the box on all three of these factors it continues to be a product of choice by consumers,” said Matt Savarino, senior product manager, resilient sheet, Armstrong Floors. “Property management/multi-family also is a strong segment of the market due to the fact that a property owner can offer their customer an extremely durable product with a leading design.”

If there is one area where sheet trumps LVT it would be hospitals and assisted-living facilities in which monolithic surfaces are required. Emergency rooms, for instance, require flooring that can be

heat welded and flash coved to create an aseptic space. Homogeneous sheet products are regarded as the ideal solution in these environments.

Glass-backed sheet gaining share

For several years now, glass-backed sheet has been taking share from felt-backed products. That trend is expected to continue. As Natkin stated: “There are two reasons driving this: One is consumer perception; glass-backed sheet has a heavier hand and higher perceived value. The other is it is more forgiving on the installer. Finding good vinyl installers is becoming increasingly difficult and the lay flat nature of glass makes it easier to expand the installer base.”

IVC’s Foster added that fiberglass sheet continues to grow in the multi-family arena, thus further displacing felt-backed sheet. She said felt’s strongest channel is single-family builder but there is some movement toward glass in this segment as well. “That could be devastating to felt-backed goods.”

However, not everyone is bearish on felt. Kurt Denman, chief marketing officer/executive vice president of sales, Congoleum, acknowledges that fiberglass has managed to take a considerable amount of the market share. However, he said, “I think we are seeing a swing back to felt based on limitations of fiberglass on what the product is



Congoleum’s ArmorCore is designed specifically for residential builder and multi-family property owner applications.

strong value proposition

really capable of [achieving]. Limestone-based felt, for example, is a very dense, more robust product—the most versatile product in the market. It doesn't have limitations on seaming. It adds to the value proposition.”

Armstrong, for its part, continues to manufacture both glass-backed and felt products depending on the application. As Savarino explained, “we ultimately want to help the customer

choose the best solution for her space. Fiberglass offers distinct benefits versus other structures, including ease of installation, comfort under foot and water resistance. While we do forecast the shift from felt to fiberglass to continue, we continue to bring industry leading designs to our felt structures because we know there are still segments of the market and consumers that want a felt product. When a felt-backed

Mannington's Union Way is a brick design sheet vinyl product that captures the urban renewal trend of salvaged architectural materials.

product is installed correctly, it is the most durable vinyl sheet flooring solution out there today.”

Ongoing innovations

Today's sheet vinyl is manufactured using highly sophisticated techniques, complex methods



Beauflor pushes innovation with cushion vinyl

As one of the leading players in the sheet vinyl flooring category, Beauflor offers a wide and varied selection of cushion vinyl rolls and vinyl planks that are suitable for both commercial and residential applications.

Its cushion vinyl, manufactured at a state-of-the-art production facility in Wielsbeke, Belgium, has drawn raves for its realistic and natural visuals. Also noteworthy are the products' performance and maintenance attributes. Eric Erickson, vice president of marketing for Beauflor,



Beauflor's new Blacktex line has a new backing that allows it to be loose laid up to 400 square feet.

cited the sound absorption and waterproof properties as among its leading attributes.

Beauflor's new Blacktex line features a new backing that allows the 16 mil wear layer product to be loose laid up to 400 square feet. According to the company, it will not tear and needs minimal subfloor prep. Beauflor recently revamped the entire line with new looks and colors. Beauflor is also launching its new Avenues collection, with a width of just over 16 feet and built on a construction it says will not tear.

and precise systems. The rotogravure printing process is the most commonly used method, offering unlimited possibilities in pattern and design to make the visuals as realistic as possible. This includes experimenting with inks, printing techniques and embossed in register technologies.

Armstrong looks at innovations from two standpoints: solutions and shopping experience. Regarding the former there is Stratamax, which is made of 70% limestone. “In addition to structure improvement, manufacturers are always looking at ways to improve the wear layer of the product to keep the product looking newer, longer once installed,” Savarino said.

At Mannington, the newest innovations revolve around creating visuals that are not achievable in other categories. A prime

example is Centennial, launched in both felt and glass to celebrate Mannington's 100 years. “The visuals in this collection are a nod to the past with some modern flare,” Natkin stated. “In particular, our Filigree and Penny Lane products are rocketing off the shelves.”

Congoleum's ArmorCore, a heterogeneous sheet product ideal for light commercial as well as residential, features a “no-buckle” guarantee that has been a big success among builders. Denman said Congoleum is seeing robust growth with ArmorCore in a segment of the business where everyone is saying it is flat at best. Moreover, he believes it's a clear sign the company is taking market share. “You would think a company 130 years old would not have any more tricks up its sleeve. However, there are many more tricks lurking up that sleeve.”