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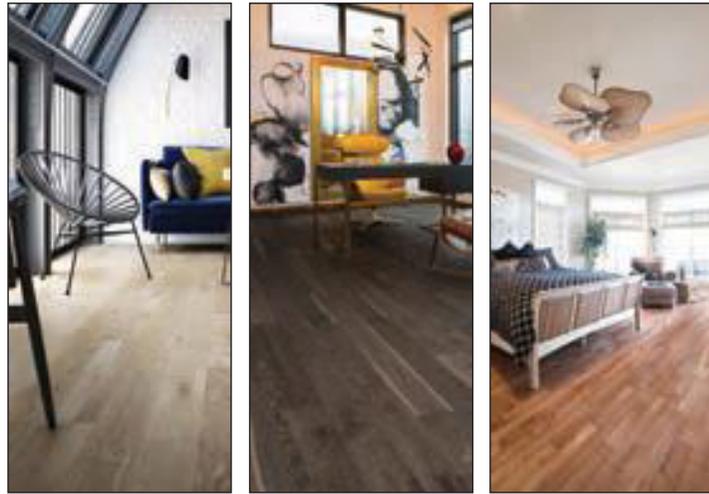
New formats, tile sizes and technological advances are providing retailers with a host of innovative new products to present to consumers.

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Eye on Canadian hardwood



SUPPLIERS PLACE BIG EMPHASIS ON QUALITY, STYLE

By Reginald Tucker

If there is such a thing as a strategic regional advantage when it comes to the utilization of natural raw materials, Canadian hardwood suppliers believe they have it. Not only are the country's vast forests known for churning out some of the cleanest, clearest maple species available, but the wood flooring manufacturers that process these logs in their state-of-the-art factories maintain a steadfast, methodical approach to product quality. Coverage starts on page 8.

First-half report

Early rally puts flooring dealers in driver's seat

By Ken Ryan

Despite a lackluster first quarter for some retailers—and an unexpectedly soft April for others—the consensus among flooring dealers is the first half of 2018 fared better than expected.

Not surprisingly, the resurgence is tied to red-hot product categories. While the LVT category and its super sub-segments continue to drive growth, dealers say there has been strong activity from two unlikely heroes—carpet and laminate.

“Both categories are strong for us this year and, I believe, well into the future,” said Dave Snedeker, division merchandise manager—flooring, Nebraska Furniture Mart. “Both categories are viable

in our markets and offer great values for our customers.”

Sales of residential carpet have been trending up in the first half of 2018, a sign of a better economy and willingness



Nebraska Furniture Mart has experienced surging sales activity from two surprising product categories: carpet and laminate.

among consumers to invest in better goods, observers say. Billy Mahone III, manager of Atlas

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Floors & More

Retailers challenged to leave comfort zone

By Ken Ryan

ENGLEWOOD, COLO.—“Peak performance” was the aptly named theme for Floors & More's 2018 summer convention, held against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. Peak performance was also appropriate for the over-

all health of the group, which between Big Bob's Flooring Outlet stores and Floor to Ceiling/Floors & Kitchens Today experienced 12% to 14% growth in 2017, and 2018 is shaping up to be even stronger.

Sales are up and so is new membership, which has spiked 16% in 2018. Those numbers do not include the pending list of verbal commitments. As founder and CEO Vinnie Virga explained, “We don't count them unless they are signed, but the general outlook is very positive. The future looks incredibly bright.”

Floors & More, according to Virga, appeals to independent flooring dealers “because we have



Vinnie Virga, left, founder and CEO of Floors & More, with Mike Cherico, vice president, during the group's summer convention.

answers that you don't get from other places. For example, our whole digital program is superb—no one is close. Another thing: No one understands the efficacy of traditional media like us, which is to say that traditional methods

like TV and radio are not efficient anymore.”

To that end, Floors & More at convention announced plans to eschew TV and radio from its marketing and advertising strategy, with implementation to start in January 2019. In its place, according to Virga, will be “new-school” methods focused heavily on digital.

Compared to other buying groups, Floors & More is the outlier in the way it

fully embraces non-flooring categories, thus the “More” in Floors & More. Virga estimated that while Big Bob's is roughly still 80% flooring, Floor to Ceiling retailers are closer to 60%-40%

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lisbiz strategies

Is your call center the weakest link?

Every business has someone answering the phone; technically, this is your call center. Your call center is a crucial personal connection your customers have with your business. There's a company I often do business with called Harry and David. They are an American-owned, premium food and gift producer and retailer. Their employees are so well-trained, they almost act as your party planner. They even go back into old catalogues and look up specials for you. Nice, huh?

How many times have you called a business but were frustrated by the person who answered? Did you have to ask them their name? Did they sound like they were put out by your call? Did you feel they were multitasking and you weren't part of their important conversation? You might have felt you were actually being rude by interrupting their day.

AS THE OWNER, IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DETERMINE HOW YOU WANT YOUR PHONES ANSWERED AND TO MAKE SURE IT GETS DONE THROUGH YOUR MANAGEMENT-COACHING SYSTEM.

What I'm reporting is way too common and it's a huge financial drain on business, maybe even your business. Unless you are actually monitoring the calls, the only feedback you ever get from your employees is someone called and needed information. You don't get a sense of the emotions between the caller and your staff. It's just as important to know what's not said.

It's because we believe everyone inherently knows what to say on the phone that the call center gets overlooked. However, phone skills are a highly valuable tool to have in your employees' skill set. Call-center training will give your employees these skills.

Teaching your employees these valuable skills will make them more confident, improve sales and help gain new customers while retaining your current clientele. A more confident



LISBETH CALANDRINO

employee is also one who is happier, and happier employees will produce more happy customers. This will lead to higher productivity throughout your organization. A business needs to gain customers, not lose them.

So, what is a good call-center strategy? As the owner, it's your responsibility to determine how you want your phones answered and to make sure it gets done through your management-coaching system. I suggest using my SMARTER system, which is an updated version of the SMART system. As a refresher, SMART is commonly attributed to Peter Drucker's Management by Objectives concept. I have improved the SMART acronym to include "Evaluation" and "Review." Having metrics you can evaluate and review with your employees will ensure they reach their highest potential.

If turnover is keeping you awake at night, getting your call center up to speed will fix that. The use of a monthly service to monitor your calls may be a profitable consideration. Oftentimes, it's important to have another way to look at your problems. Call-center monitoring gives you another avenue to keep up on the vital signs of the health of your business. I had a client in New Jersey who set up a monitoring system to listen to her calls. We would discuss the content and the emotional consequence of the conversations. She said listening to the calls exposed what was going on between her employees and customers.

These are things I have in my bag of tricks gained over decades of fruitful experiences from business owners like you. I've worked with the best and the worst and, like you, I know the difference.

Lisbeth Calandrino has been promoting retail strategies for the last 20 years. To have her speak at your business or to schedule a consultation, contact her at lcalandrino@nycap.rr.com.

Eco-friendly materials give

By Nicole Murray

In keeping with offering customers a more environmentally friendly flooring package, underlayment manufacturers are developing the latest acoustical, sound-absorbing products out of various recycled materials, including fibers and rubber tires—to name a couple. These eco-friendly underlayments often tout low volatile organic compounds as well as indoor air quality and Greenguard certifications.

What's more, these products are being created for various types of flooring—providing environmentally conscious options for all consumers. Following are a few of the latest green underlayments to hit the market.

Diversified Industries

The Floor Muffler One line from Diversified Industries is made from recycled rubber and tire crumbs. The product boasts high acoustical properties and is ideal for multi-unit, multi-floor and high-rise applications.

With Floor Muffler One, "sound travel, especially from floor to ceiling, is minimal; this gives multi-unit homes the illusion they are living in their own space with a sense of privacy," said Colleen Gormley, national marketing coordinator.

What's more, Floor Muffler One comes with an optional moisture barrier for below-grade

applications. It can also be floated or glued down as well as put on top of all substrates and under all types of flooring.

"This is a fan favorite because it requires the installer to only bring one underlayment to the job site as opposed to many," Gormley explained.

Also new is Diversified's Eco Natura Elite, which is constructed in the U.S. from recycled needled fiber. It is ideal for applications such as hospitality markets



DriTac's latest eco-friendly polyurethane underlayments are part of the company's Total Sound Reduction System.

where temperature stabilization is a key consideration.

DriTac

DriTac Impact 8301 and Double Impact 8302 are the company's latest eco-friendly polyurethane underlayments. The products complement the manufacturer's adhesives, are compatible with radiant-heated floors and are part of the company's Total Sound Reduction System.

DriTac Impact 8301 is 1mm thick and works best with LVT and resilient products. Double Impact 8302, which is 2mm thick, is geared toward wider boards and thicker materials such as hardwood or laminate flooring. Both products have very low VOCs, are hypoallergenic and are mold, mildew and bacteria resistant. They also boast high impact isolation and sound abatement with respect to typical floor to ceiling sound travel.

"Our entire package is green from top to bottom," said Wade Verble, vice president of underlayment and business development. "There is only one source to question for any issues, and because there is no ability to finger point another source, issues [are kept to a minimum]."

Ecore

Ecore has combined its environmentally friendly underlayment, EcoSilence, and new luxury vinyl tile collection, Attain, to create AttainSilence, a resilient flooring system available in five configurations. The aim is to solve common acoustical challenges associated with multifamily or hospitality environments.

Then there's EcoSilence, available in 2mm and 5mm thicknesses—ideal for wood—and also a 10mm option, which works best under tile. The underlayment is created by turning ground-up recycled rubber truck tires into underlayment.

"Rubber is the perfect material because its quality never fades," said Bob Racioppi, director of sales commercial products portfolio. "So instead of existing in a landfill forever, the material is being put to good use."

EcoSilence can be installed under virtually any type of finished flooring, has a crack isolation up to 1/8-inch and is compatible with radiant heat flooring systems.

Healthier Choice

SoundSolution and OmniChoice are acoustical underlayments made with soy-based polyurethane as well as other natural, recycled resources. Both products are Greenguard Gold certified for indoor air quality, contain anti-microbials and are hypoallergenic.

"These underlayments are protected from top to bottom," said Andrew Stafford, director of marketing. "The microbials are infused while the products are in a liquefied state, which means it

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dealers ammunition to sell

is practically impossible for mold, bacteria or mildew to grow after the flooring has been installed.”

Sound Solution is best used with laminates, engineered woods and hardwoods; and OmniChoice is designed to go under ceramic, stone, vinyl and wood. In addition, both OmniChoice and SoundSolution come with a “never crush” guarantee, which states the products will maintain 90% of their thickness. Consumers are also given the option of adding a Vapor Bloc, which is a laminated moisture barrier for an extra layer of protection.

MP Global

Quiet Walk Plus is the latest iteration of MP Global’s signature Quiet Walk brand of underlayments. The product made from small pieces of blue jean, carpet, cotton and polyester fibers, which are often too short to use in the manufacturing process and would have otherwise ended up in a landfill.

“We have developed a patented process of repurposing what normally would have been deemed as trash into a high-performing underlayment product,” said Deanna Summers, marketing coordinator. “MP Global is repurposing 20 tons of raw materials a day because what others see as garbage, we see as a flooring opportunity.”

Quiet Walk Plus also touts acoustical features, compression resistance, moisture protection and longevity. It is also certified for low chemical emission and has just recently been Indoor Air Quality certified with Greenguard and Greenguard Gold standards.

“This material can be nailed, floated or glued down, and it can be paired with a range of products including vinyl planking or WPC products,” Summers explained.

Schönox

Schönox’s signature “manmade gypsum” technology is twice as hard as concrete, doesn’t promote the growth of mold or mildew, and doesn’t shrink or crack, according to the company. This technology can be poured over all types of substrates and is found in Schönox’s AP and APF leveling compounds.

Products containing the synthetic gypsum leveling compounds have been verified for LEED credits including low-emitting material, building reused and recycled content. Another benefit is a minimal

amount of dust emits when poured into a barrel.

“There is less mess and less time spent because this technology is made to go over the worst of the worst,” said Doug Young, executive vice president.

Schönox’s Hybrid Active Dry technology combines the speed and temperature tolerance of cement with the versatility of synthetic gypsum to form a fast and strong underlayment.

AP Rapid, which contains this technology, can be poured up to ½ inch. The product has low

shrinkage and allows for flooring to be laid down approximately six hours after it’s poured.

WE Cork

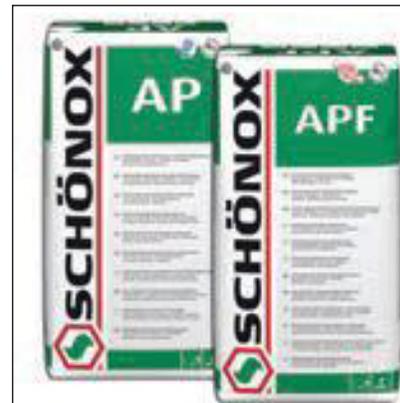
WE Cork’s Warm & Quiet and Warm & Quiet Plus are made of cork from the bark of trees, which means these products have no off gassing, renew themselves every nine years and are moisture resistant.

Warm & Quiet is an ¼-inch thick and is lighter than rubber underlayment of the same size weight. It is best used under lam-

inates or in situations where thermal installation and sound control is required.

“You won’t hear residents walking or high heels clicking,” said Ann Wicander, president. “This product can even make a fake floor sound real. The density absorbs the reverberation of footsteps so the sound does not travel within the room or from floor to ceiling.”

Warm & Quiet Plus is ¼-inch thick and should be paired with



Schönox’s AP and APF products contain the company’s signature manmade gypsum technology.

laminates and hardwood floors. It is best suited for multifamily and second-story applications.

INSPIRED BY INNOVATION

ONE UNDERLAYMENT DOES IT ALL!

Redesigned for use under floating, nail and glue down flooring applications!

QUIETWALK Plus

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