



# FCW FLOOR COVERING WEEKLY

The Industry's Business News & Information Resource

Vol. 54

No. 2

A HEARST BUSINESS PUBLICATION

MARCH 28, 2005

\$4.00

**FCW FLOOR COVERING WEEKLY**  
The Industry's Business News & Information Resource

**Today's Main Event**  
Granville receives Good Design Award

**Today's News**  
New products, market news, and more

**Marketplace**  
Product listings and company profiles

**Home Depot Eyes China**  
Home Depot, the world's largest home improvement retailer, is looking to expand its presence in the Chinese market.

**Today's U.S.A.**  
Surya Twar, Surya Rugs

**Product Focus**  
Sofia 2005

**Special Advertising Section**  
A special section featuring product information and company profiles.

## March meeting madness

### Floors to Go dealers reap rewards

By Steven Feldman

[ORLANDO, Fla.] It's been three years since the folks at Floors to Go purchased the assets of Abbey Carpet and the results speak for themselves. The group has grown from 135 members to 225. Group purchases have vaulted from \$12 million to \$70 million. The number of approved suppliers has tripled to more than 100.

But those are just numbers. Impressive as they may be, the real

gauge is judging how far Floors to Go has come lies in the membership. Take Rohr's Interiors in Flagstaff, Ariz., for example. Once upon a time the retailer's profit margin hovered at around 20 percent and its average ticket was between \$1,500 and \$2,500, according to Shirley Rohr, co-owner. Today its profit margin is around 30 percent and the average ticket is somewhere between \$8,000 and \$12,000.

"It's turned out to be one of the best things we've ever done," she

said. "With Abbey's purchasing power we now have a bigger selection of products. Plus, we're able to get into the higher end like never before."

For Rohr, joining a group was not an option, but which group to join was. In the 1990s the dealer was competing against top 50 retailer Baker Bros. "When you're a little dealer the big companies often don't want to put their samples in your store because they think you won't be able to do the volume," she said, knowing that if she ever wanted se-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## FCW website gets new look, features

Floor Covering Weekly has restructured its website, [www.floorcoveringweekly.com](http://www.floorcoveringweekly.com), to focus on more unique content and timely information. Visitors will find the redesigned site offers a new, clean look and better features.

The site focuses on the latest news and will be updated daily with company news, economic information and industry happenings. Along with daily breaking news briefs, [floorcoveringweekly.com](http://www.floorcoveringweekly.com) will feature an "interview of the day" and a main article. The latter could be a major news story or a pertinent feature. Users will also find content exclusive to the Web, which will include—but not be limited to—full-length articles that appear in FCW in an abbreviated format. As well, all articles will be archived.

"We want to give visitors a reason to log on to our site early and often throughout the day," said Steven Feldman, executive editor, FCW. "It's been a number of years since we launched our old site, and I know visitors will be very pleased to find our new site with improved content, organization and visual presentation."

One new section is the Economic Update. Here, visitors can expect to find information on key economic indicators as soon as the government releases them. This includes consumer confidence, housing starts and sales, building permits, retail sales and other indicators FCW readers find in our By the Numbers section.

Over time, [floorcoveringweekly.com](http://www.floorcoveringweekly.com) will host regularly scheduled and moderated real-time chats with key industry figures. Here, you will have the opportunity to ask challenging questions of those who shape the industry. There will also be audio capability for interviews, surveys and other enhancements.

The features that have been the hallmark of [floorcoveringweekly.com](http://www.floorcoveringweekly.com) over the years will remain prominent on the site. These include major news articles from the most recent issue of FCW, editorials, columns and exclusive interviews, as well as our fully searchable *Product Source Guide*, which puts you in direct contact with manufacturers and distributors.

Visit [www.floorcoveringweekly.com](http://www.floorcoveringweekly.com). We're sure you'll agree we've given you reasons to return. **ENR**

## FCICA serves up high dose of education

[SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico] If you attended the Floor Covering Installation Contractors Association's (FCICA) annual conference earlier this month expecting to see installers on their knees laying floors, you would have been disappointed.

But if you wanted to rub shoulders with flooring contractors representing more than \$800 million in annual



It wasn't all work in San Juan. New FCICA chairman Jonathan Stewart with vice chairman of associates Michelle Swinarski.

chasing groups; we're not trying to leverage our power

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## NeoCon West 2005: Designers converge in L.A.

By Julie Goodman

[LOS ANGELES] It may have looked like a gamble last year when Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. (MMPPI) moved its Neocon West commercial design show out of the cavernous Los Angeles Convention Center and onto an exhibit floor on its own property, the Los Angeles Mart. But as it turns out, the more intimate space proved to be well suited to the small show, held here in March every year.

Some highlights from convention: **Focus on residential**—This year NeoCon West 2005 exploded into an added dimension of residential design, which highlighted the installation called "Fine Living: The Loft Life." Designed by L.A.'s Shimoda Design Group, the installation featured a model of a downtown Los Angeles loft for a trendy but fictional couple.

Indeed, some residential designers were scouting the show. Clarisse Dunn, owner of the newly launched

Healing Spaces in Pasadena, Calif., was looking for hard-to-find green resources and installers. She found help at the Interface space, where its residential InterfaceFLOR product line of recyclable modular carpet showcased new Spring 2005 designs by Liora Manné as well as its "Heartfelt" eco-friendly wool and hemp carpet tile.

**Focus on flooring**—Floor covering exhibitors reported satisfactory traffic, and more than one noted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## Hanley Wood on the block?

By Lesley Goddin

Hanley Wood has been shopping around—but not for another trade show or magazine. Rather, it's been looking for a new owner.

Vernon Suller & Associates Communications Partners III (VSSA), the New York City-based private equity affiliate of media industry merchant bank Veronis Suller Stevenson—which owns Hanley Wood, LLC—recently began exploring the sale of Hanley Wood Corp.,

owner of Surfaces and StonExpo.

Observers say VSSA's interest in selling Hanley Wood appears to be in keeping with the investment practices—not a statement on the health or success of the company. "It is the normal course of business in private equity, that once a property is acquired to hold it for a five- to seven-year window of time," said Vince Giorgi, president, Summit Accounts for Hanley Wood LLC. He noted that's when private-equity companies look to get a return on investments. (VSSA acquired Hanley Wood in 1999, five years ago, placing it within

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FLOOR COVERING WEEKLY, 50 Charles Lindbergh Blvd., Suite 100, Uniondale, NY 11553

# New installation materials make setting light and fast

By Lesley Goddin

With a bevy of tile and stone styles and formats readily available for consumers, much of the emphasis today is aimed at making installation materials both easier to work with and better performing.

Following is a sampling of products designed to do just that:

**Thinsets:** Several companies decided to lighten up this year — the weight of their thinsets, that is.

Both MAPEI and Custom Building Products introduced thinset mortars that weigh a fraction of some traditional mortars. A 25-pound bag of MAPEI's Ultralite polymer modified thinset mortar has the coverage capacity of a 50-pound bag. Custom Building

hours — as opposed to 20 hours as with some traditional mortars. The mortar combines acrylic spray-dried polymers and hydraulic cement to form a fast bond with ceramic and natural stone tile. iFlex Fast Set carries a heavy-duty commercial floor rating.

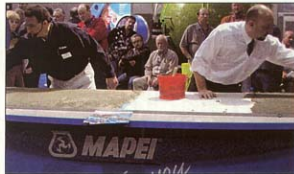
Laticrete International recently showed off its MultiMax Multipurpose Thin-Set Mortar, a cementitious formulation designed for ceramic tile and stone installations (commercial and residential, indoors or out). Reinforced with Kevlar and MicroBan antimicrobial, the mortar features non-sag perfor-

mance and adjustability on walls — even with porcelain and all types of 12 x 12 tiles on veneers and facades. Plus, MultiMax is engineered for use as a medium-bed mortar for installations requiring up to 3/8-inch-thick applications without slump or sag despite the weight of the tile or stone.

#### Great gains in grout

MAPEI offers UltraColor Plus Grout, which features High-Hydrated Cement Technology (HCT) for fast curing and consistent color while eliminating

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



MAPEI's Ultralite mortar provides 100-percent more coverage per pound than some traditional mortars, the company claims.



Laticrete's MultiMax Multipurpose Thin-Set Mortar offers non-sag performance on walls.

Products' CustomLite line offers products that weigh up to 40-percent less than competitive, cement-based products and include mortar, grout and self-leveling underlayment, the company said. MegaLite Crack Prevention Mortar incorporates this technology and comes in an easy-to-carry package with a built-in handle.

With Easy Glide Technology, MAPEI's Ultralite spreads "like cake frosting," as described by Mike Micalizzi, technical services director. Its enhanced dynamic properties mean no-sag wall installations of 24 x 24 tiles. Plus, it's fortified with BioBlock to discourage mold and mildew growth.

Custom's MegaLite packs crack-suppression properties into a lightweight package. Engineered with minimal shrinkage for bonding porcelain and glass, it's flexible enough to isolate cracks up to 1/8 of an inch and has high tack to reduce sagging on wall applications. MegaLite is protected by MoldGard technology to resist mold and mildew.

TEC put speed into its fast-set version of iFlex crack isolation mortar. iFlex Fast Set is a single-component modified polymer mortar that allows contractors to crack isolate up to 1/8 of an inch (3mm) and set tile and grout within four

May 3 - 6, 2009 Orlando, Florida USA  
**coverings**  
The ULTIMATE Tile, Stone & Flooring Expo

## IT'S TIME TO SELL MORE TILE AND STONE

When it comes down to it, that's the main reason to attend Coverings, isn't it?

*"This is my first time attending Coverings. It's definitely the place to be for anyone who sells tile or stone. I may still go to the Las Vegas show for my carpet needs, but for tile and stone, I'm coming to Orlando and Coverings."*

Larry Bagart  
On Glaze Tile  
Mystic, CT

Sure, there is a lot to see, do, eat, drink, watch, play and all that other good stuff. But those are just trimmings.

What is important is that tile and stone sales continue to grow at double-digit rates. More than four times as fast as carpet. And you should be getting your share.

The typical tile and stone customer doesn't cut corners. She wants the best she can afford. She'll pay for luxury.

Coverings has the tile and stone styles she wants. The same styles you need to offer in your showroom.

Opportunities for increasing your tile and stone sales don't come much better than this.



EXHIBITORS



THE ULTIMATE  
TILE & STONE EXPERIENCE

It's time to register for **coverings**  
Register online today at [www.coverings.com](http://www.coverings.com)

tomorrow. "We encourage dealers to utilize their special-terms promotions strategically throughout the year, such as around special sales events and holidays," heiler said.

From a loyalty perspective, a private-label credit program provides access to data to help merchants understand their customers and create loyalty offering that is appropriate or them. "Obviously, loyalty can be wrapped around the private-label credit card," said Catherine Wilson, vice president of marketing, CitiFinancial. "But it is only valuable if you understand your customers and what's important to them."

The ultimate success of credit programs, experts say, rests squarely on the shoulders of retail salespeople. If salespeople understand the financing solutions that can offer, it makes it easier for them to concentrate on what they do best — serving the customer.

"By knowing the customer's overall objectives, design preferences and short- and long-term plans, salespeople can use financing to complement their recommendations," GE's Pittman said. "This information helps them suggest the right product within a wider price range and educate the consumer about how a line of credit that doesn't tie up her major credit cards may be right for her for current and subsequent purchases." **FC**

## Installation

Continued from page 7

efflorescence. UltraColor Plus also features BioBlock and is polymer-modified for added strength and flexibility. The new grout has Drop Effect technology that prevents water, dirt and grime from penetrating grout joints, instead beading up on the grout surface. UltraColor Plus also offers easier application and fast setup, paired with longer open times.

Prism SureColor polymer-modified grout from Custom is part of the CustomLite line, offering unprecedented color consistency, according to the company, as well as stain resistance and MoldGard mold and mildew inhibitor. It features a creamy consistency that makes it versatile enough for joints from 1/2-inch to 3/8-inch, streamlining the need to have sanded and non-sanded grouts on a job.

Laticrete showed off the new SpectraLOCK PRO, with all the same ease-of-use and performance features as the original SpectraLOCK epoxy grout, but now also with leading edge performance for residential and commercial use. The new formulation offers greater workability in hot weather, and an open time of up to 80 minutes, together with increased stain and chemical resistance and reduced haze potential. The easy-mix formula creates stronger and more durable grout joints, the company said. The grout comes in the same color palette as original SpectraLOCK with 40 lifestyle colors and five Dazzle options. **FC**

## Software

Continued from page 9

### Floor Right

**What it does:** Takes a company from initial site measurement through financial statements. Handles all types of products and floor plans, invoicing, POS, inventory and accounting. **Price:** Three-user system averages \$9,500

**B2B compliant?** Yes (via VenCom) **What customers say:** "We moved to Pacific Solutions four years ago, and it has made us more efficient and profitable. It's so user friendly because it's written by people in the industry to address our needs." — Bruce Adams, president, Goldsmith Lombardo Floors, West Hartford, Conn.

### QFloors

(866) 563-0140  
www.qfloors.com

**Segment(s) served:** Retail  
**Standout product:** QFloors  
**What it does:** Handles inventory, sales, accounting, payroll, taxes, job costing, bar-coding, roll-tag printing and formatted retail pricing formulas. **Price:** \$2,900-\$9,900  
**B2B compliant?** Yes  
**What customers say:** "It's a very simple program — easy to use and teach. It's very comprehensive and takes care of all the things we need it to do for our business." — John Brody, President, Floorz LLC, Naples, Fla.

### RFMS

(800) 701-7367  
www.rfms.com

**Segment served:** Retail, builder, commercial, multi-family, wholesaler  
**Standout product:** RFMS Measure  
**What it does:** Fully integrates with RFMS' suite. This in-home solution allows estimators or salespeople to enter and process orders from a customer's home, post deposits, generate receipts and e-mail or synch the order. **Price:** Under \$7,000 for full suite  
**B2B compliant?** Yes  
**What customers say:** "RFMS helped to better organize my company. It gives us every report we could possibly want and more." — Jim Marano, president, Capital Carpet and Tile, Florida

### VenCOM B2B

(270) 384-4058  
www.vencomb2b.com

**Segment(s) served:** Retail  
**Standout product:** VenCOM B2B  
**What it does:** Can be used as a standalone or be seamlessly integrated with compatible accounting systems. Features its own interface, including storage and instant access to product catalog, automatic price updates, color lists, invoices, ship notices and real-time purchasing. Also includes a comprehensive transaction log.  
**Price:** \$895 annually  
**B2B compliant?** Yes  
**What customers say:** "It is so easy to learn and so fast — transactions can literally be done in under 10 seconds. VenCom captures an entire price catalog, and since we've used it we have never had a pricing error." — Jim Creamer, CEO, Potomac Floor Covering, Dulles, Va. **FC**

## GE Consumer Finance Retail Sales Finance

# Floor covering financing doesn't have to be a balancing act.

Running your business can seem like a high wire act. But getting great financing for your customers has never been easier. GE Retail Sales Finance is a leader in the floor covering industry. We offer unique programs sponsored by manufacturers and buying groups that won't leave your business out on a ledge.

### What's New?

- Reduced everyday rates
- Customers can make payments online and access their account information
- Credit lines over \$30,000 available

### Plus...

- A wide variety of extended financing options
- Credit of sales within two business days
- Fast, easy processing of applications and sales
- Automated systems to help insure that the credit line meets the initial purchase amount

Visit us at Surfaces booth #G2456



imagination at work

For more information call 1 800 244 7354

FC\*CCA  
1 888 254 7071 or  
1 800 230 3539

