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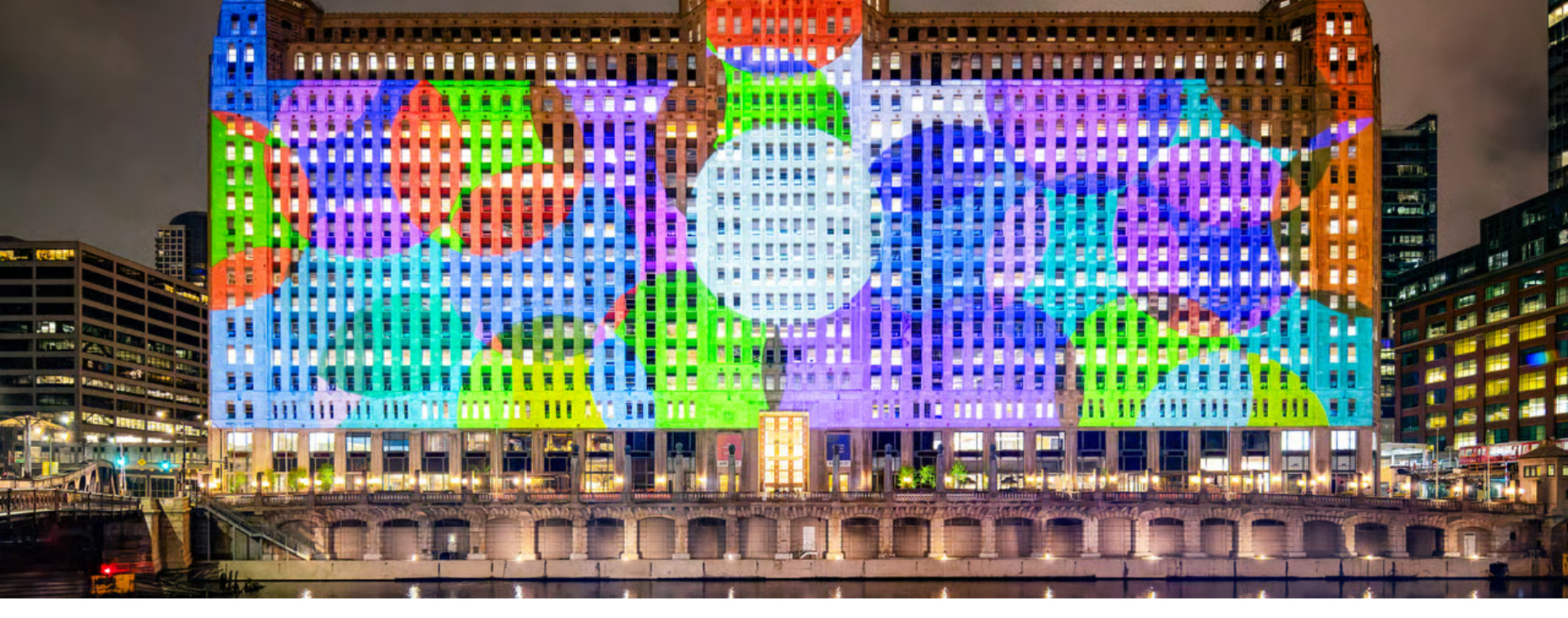
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Chicago Gears Up for June's Dynamic Commercial Design Duo: NeoCon 2025 and Fulton Market Design Days



Perkins&Will will feature Art on The Mart. Photo: Angie McMonigal.

For commercial flooring professionals, Chicago in June has become a destination for trendspotting, networking, and product discovery. This year, the Windy City will host two major design events simultaneously: the venerable NeoCon celebrating its 56th edition at The Mart (June 9–11) and the second annual Fulton Market Design Days (FMDD) (June 10–12) in Chicago's thriving design district.

NeoCon 2025: Expanding Beyond Showrooms

NeoCon, the premier exhibition for commercial design, continues its evolution from traditional product showcase to immersive experience. This year's event will welcome over 50,000 attendees to The Mart for a robust program that extends well beyond showroom floors.

For flooring professionals, several exhibits merit special attention. The "Material Intelligence: Destination NeoCon" installation (Booth 7–5067) offers a tactile exploration of innovative materials, finishes, and components—perfect for those seeking cutting-edge flooring solutions with insights on durability and sustainability metrics. The Café Lounge by Armstrong Flooring provides both a stylish respite and demonstration space showcasing functional applications.

Sustainability remains central to the commercial design conversation, with the Metropolis Sustainability Lab on floor 11 highlighting products driving positive environmental change. The ReWritten pop-up (Suite 1130) embraces circularity with repurposed furnishings and materials—a growing movement affecting specification decisions across all product categories, including flooring.

A spectacular addition to this year's event is "Currents of Chicago," a breathtaking Art on The Mart projection created by Perkins & Will, one of Chicago's oldest and distinguished architecture and design firms, that will illuminate the building's massive 2.5-acre south facade. Debuting June 5, this cinematic display celebrates the visible and invisible forces shaping the city—from water and wind to data, infrastructure, and design—set to Chicago house music by West Side producer Aniko Thomas. The nightly show can be viewed from the Chicago Riverwalk and marks the third consecutive year of alignment between Art on The Mart and NeoCon.

Fulton Market Design Days: Chicago's Rising Design Destination

Running concurrently with NeoCon, the second annual Fulton Market Design Days will transform the neighborhood into a design playground. After drawing 40,000 professionals to its inaugural event last year, FMDD returns with an expanded program featuring pop-ups, exhibits, and activations from over 35 leading design brands.

For flooring professionals, this venue is particularly significant as major manufacturers including J+J Flooring, Milliken, Mohawk Group, and Tarkett have established showrooms in the district rather than at The Mart. These industry leaders will be showcasing their latest commercial flooring solutions exclusively at Fulton Market Design Days.

The event organizers have prioritized logistics between venues this year, with complimentary shuttles and rickshaws running between The Mart and the Design Days Welcome Center, making it easier to maximize time at both events.

Bridging Two Design Destinations

The strategic overlap between these events creates a unique opportunity for flooring professionals to experience the industry's full spectrum in a single trip. While NeoCon offers the efficiency of a centralized exhibition, Fulton Market provides direct access to major flooring manufacturers who have chosen to establish their presence in this growing design district.

Making the Most of Chicago Design Week

For flooring professionals planning to attend:

1. Register early: Both events require registration at their respective websites: neocon.com and fultonmarketdesigndays.com
2. Prioritize Fulton Market for flooring: With major flooring brands J+J Flooring, Milliken, Mohawk Group, and Tarkett showcasing exclusively at FMDD, allocate sufficient time for these showrooms
3. Schedule strategically: Use Monday to explore NeoCon, Tuesday to bridge both events, and Wednesday to focus on Fulton Market showrooms
4. Leverage transportation options: Take advantage of the complimentary shuttles between venues to maximize time at both locations

Chicago's June design week has evolved into much more than a traditional trade show—it's now a multifaceted exploration of commercial design's future across multiple venues. For flooring professionals navigating specification decisions in an increasingly complex marketplace, these complementary events offer unparalleled access to products, insights, and connections that will shape commercial interiors for years to come.



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How to Dominate Flooring Sales: The Art of Listening Before Selling


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How to Dominate Flooring Sales: The Art of Listening Before Selling

By Gary Scheidker



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I spent my first 26 years in the flooring industry at my family's retail business. During that time, I did whatever was needed. I installed and estimated during the day and covered the sales floor at night and on weekends. Most of that time, I worked alongside long-time sales professionals who loved what they did. The most productive salespeople asked a lot of questions and listened to the customers' responses to qualify their needs.

Remember, for most people, flooring is a major purchase that they may only do a few times in their lives. They look to you as a flooring professional to give them advice based on their needs. This attention to detail helped them not only make that sale but they also had fantastic repeat and referral business. The best ones even had customers stop in for a visit occasionally.

If you have an eye for design, you can take it even farther by providing decorating advice. One of our consistent top performers was our marketing manager. She worked on the sales floor when she had time because she enjoyed it. She was very poised and sophisticated, so customers were eager to get her advice. Looking professional goes a long way to getting your customer's respect.

I recommend asking about their family makeup and other things that could affect the flooring selection. These are a few questions you may want to consider asking your customers. Naturally, the customer's age will need to be factored in when the time comes.

- How many people live in your home and what are their ages? Large families with young children require flooring that can handle the traffic and additional maintenance that will be required.
- Do you have any pets and what are they? Some pets can damage or destroy some flooring products.
- Are there any wheelchairs or scooters used in your home? The stress from wheelchairs and other motorized scooters can damage some flooring.
- Are you full time or part time residents? This is typically a question for older people or affluent residents. Leaving a home unoccupied can destroy some floor covering products especially if the home is not maintained under HVAC control with consistent temperature and humidity. Advising seasonal residents to install a humidistat on the HVAC system to prevent humidity from building in the home can prevent many failures.
- How long do you plan on keeping your home? This can greatly influence the amount of money they are willing to spend on flooring.
- What is your current floor covering and how long has it been down? This will give you an idea of your customers' expected flooring life cycle and how well it is maintained.
- What do you like about your current flooring and what don't you like about it? This will give you guidance on which direction to go or avoid.

Using the information they provide will enable you to make recommendations that your customer will love for years to come.

I recall one instance where one of my mentors was talking with a customer who selected something that would not perform well with their large family and multiple pets. He simply told the customer, "I won't sell that too you." The customer was clearly shocked and asked why he didn't want their business. His reply was perfect. He said, "I really like you folks, and I don't want to sell you something you won't be happy with." He explained that their selection would not perform as desired with their family and pets. Instead, he recommended a less expensive product that was more suitable. The customer agreed and followed his recommendation.

He always started by asking the customer questions about their family and pets. He used the information they provided to point them in the right direction when it came to product selection. In addition, the design of the home can play into long term performance of the flooring.

Direct sunlight exposure can be problematic for certain flooring types. One of the most common issues with LVT/LVP is expansion and gapping caused by the flooring being rapidly heated by the sun and cooled when the exposure ends. This issue can easily be avoided by recommending a product that is not sensitive to temperature fluctuations. Carpet can fade from sunlight so a solution-dyed yarn may be a better choice. Hardwood can change color in direct sunlight depending on the species and if it is stained or natural. We typically see this where furniture or rugs are placed.

It is not always about price. Customers' long-term satisfaction is key for repeat and referral business. As my dad would say, "The quality is remembered after the price is forgotten."



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Natural Finishes and Classic Patterns Make a Strong Comeback

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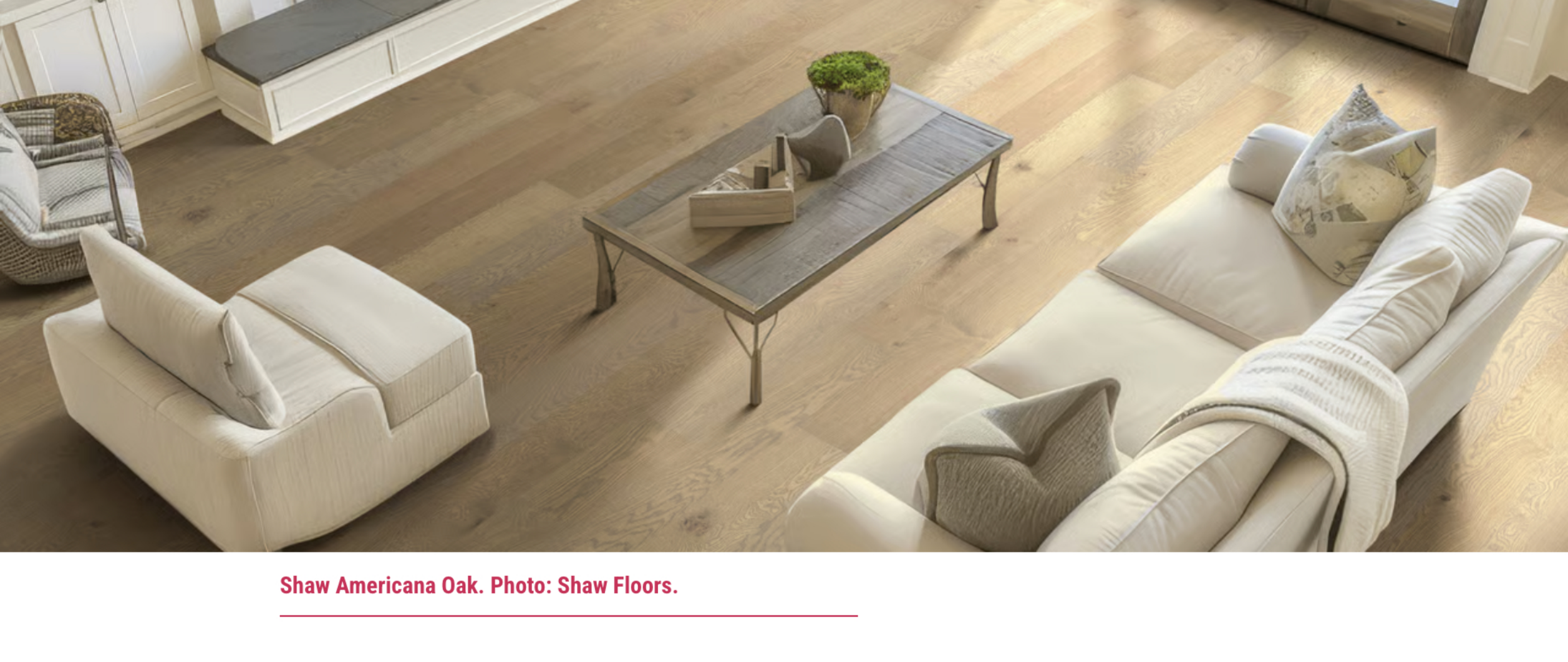


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Natural Finishes and Classic Patterns Make a Strong Comeback

By Tanja Kern



Shaw Americana Oak. Photo: Shaw Floors.

The wood flooring industry is experiencing a significant shift back to natural wood colors and finishes, while darker stains and heavy character options are declining in popularity, according to insights shared at the National Wood Flooring Association's (NWFA) 40th anniversary Expo held this April in Charlotte, North Carolina.

One of the most notable trends is the resurgence of classic patterns, particularly herringbone and chevron installations. Steve Brattin, NWFA board chair and owner of SVB Wood Floors, observed this cyclical nature of design preferences: "We're starting to see some of those classic, medium brownish tones starting to come back. It's funny how we go through these trends and they almost repeat themselves, just like herringbone and chevron. We were doing tons of that in the '90s, then it faded away, and we moved into a lot of pattern work. Well, now we're back into this herringbone/chevron again."

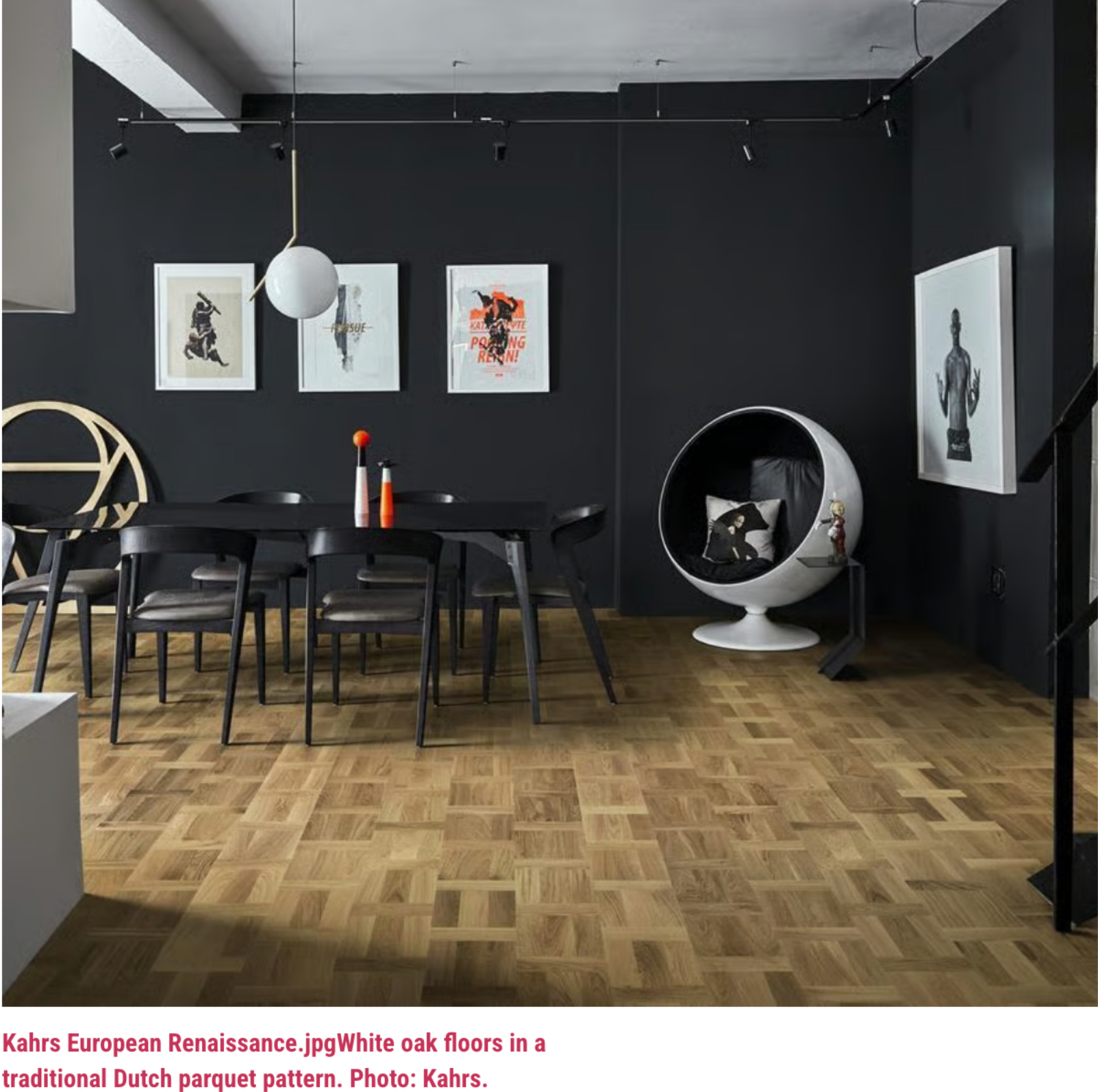
This observation was echoed by Kevin Whaley of AHF Products, who noted a marked change in consumer preferences: "One thing I certainly do see is the consumer's willingness to try patterned floors now where we've tried and tried and just not been able to do it. But we've sold quite a bit of inventory of herringbone floors in the U.S. now, so people are stocking it."



Woodura Herringbone 2.0 offers a clean aesthetic for contemporary spaces. Photo: Bjelin.

According to Libby White Johnston, NWFA VP of media, "Longer, wider boards remain in high demand. Engineered with boring continues to grow, and white oak remains the dominant domestic species." Industry data indicates that nearly 70% of NWFA members expect demand for white oak to increase further.

The market is currently dominated by installations in the three- to five-inch plank range, but pattern installations are gaining significant traction.



Kahrs European Renaissance.jpgWhite oak floors in a traditional Dutch parquet pattern. Photo: Kahrs.

In response to these evolving consumer preferences, manufacturers are adapting their product lines:

Kährs has introduced European Renaissance, a collection offering traditional Dutch parquet aesthetics with simplified installation. The collection features impressive 7.5-foot-long by 7.5-inch-wide planks that cover over four square feet at a time, addressing both the pattern trend and the industry's installation labor challenges.

Bjelin showcased its innovative Woodura Herringbone 2.0, which combines timeless patterns with modern technology. The product utilizes patented Woodura surface technology to maximize raw materials while creating floors that are three times stronger than traditional engineered wood. This versatile flooring supports multiple installation patterns, including traditional herringbone, double, triple, ladder, and block patterns.

Happy Feet International is taking a strategic approach with a streamlined engineered wood line featuring nine carefully selected colors. CJ Johnson, co-owner, explained: "We want to service wood well with lower SKUs, but deep inventory." The company is planning to reduce its vinyl plank offerings while expanding its wood collections, with future releases to include half-inch products at various price points and eventual expansion into higher-end goods.

AHF Products is making a strategic move into the unfinished market, leveraging improved manufacturing technology that allows for more precise milling and better vertical integration. Whaley explained, "We're very close to being completely vertically integrated without owning land," noting that this gives AHF the ability to provide select and better products for the unfinished market while maintaining good margins on number one and number two grades as pre-finished products.



The Anderson Tuftex Metallics collection is created with a stain infused with metallic powders for a slight shimmer. Photo: Anderson Tuftex

Industry Outlook and Challenges

The NWFA's 2025 industry outlook is largely positive, with more than 60% of members expecting sales increases this year, and approximately one-third anticipating steady performance.

However, labor challenges persist as a significant industry concern, with nearly 60% of members reporting difficulty finding skilled workers. This has driven manufacturers to develop products that simplify the installation process.

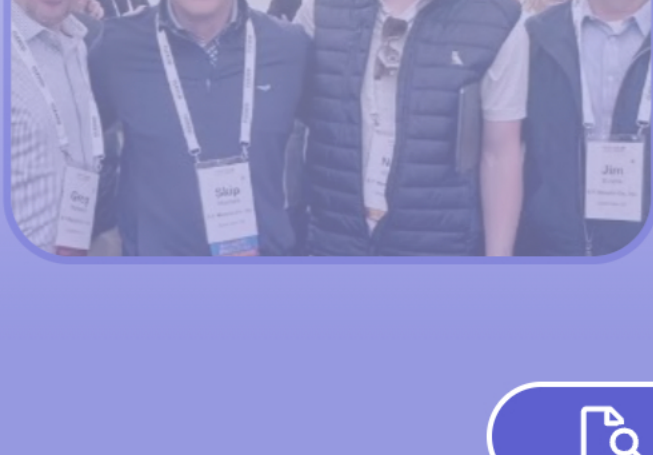


Bruce Unfinished Hardwood allows homeowners to achieve their perfect color match. Photo: Bruce.

Competition from wood-look products continues to impact real wood sales, with approximately 70% of members citing aggressive marketing and lower price points as factors. Despite this challenge, more than 80% of members report successfully positioning real wood as a premium product.

Interestingly, Brattin noted a positive trend in Kansas City, where builders are moving away from LVP products in basement installations: "We're starting to do a lot of prefinished engineered glue downs in these basements, and unfinished engineered glue downs. We're seeing a lot more hardwood on the basement side. On some of these new construction houses now, we're getting that additional 1,000 square feet down in the basement level."

As the wood flooring industry continues to evolve, manufacturers and contractors who understand and adapt to these shifting consumer preferences will be well-positioned for growth in the coming years.



NEXT ARTICLE

How Starnet Members are 'Future Proofing' Their Businesses

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How Starnet Members are ‘Future Proofing’ Their Businesses

By Tanja Kern

In today's rapidly evolving flooring industry, forward-thinking business leaders are implementing strategic initiatives to ensure long-term success.

Mark Bischoff, president and CEO of the Starnet Worldwide Commercial Flooring Cooperative, frames the challenge clearly: "The lesson I've learned in business is differentiation only works until technology overcomes it." This tension between established business models and emerging technologies sits at the heart of future-proofing.

"Our companies are special, different, and have high customer intimacy until someone gives them an app or a technology solution that makes that differentiation null and void," Bischoff explained, highlighting how quickly competitive advantages can evaporate.

According to Bischoff, the solution isn't choosing sides but maintaining balance by offering commercial flooring contractors technology tools and differentiation. "This dual approach recognizes that while member companies have built legacies on relationships and service, technology 'wipes the screen every few years,'" he said.

At the recent Starnet Annual Meeting in Carlsbad, California, members shared their approaches to building resilient enterprises in an increasingly competitive market. Read on for highlights of those conversations:

Rick Jones, Creative Flooring Markham, Ontario, Canada

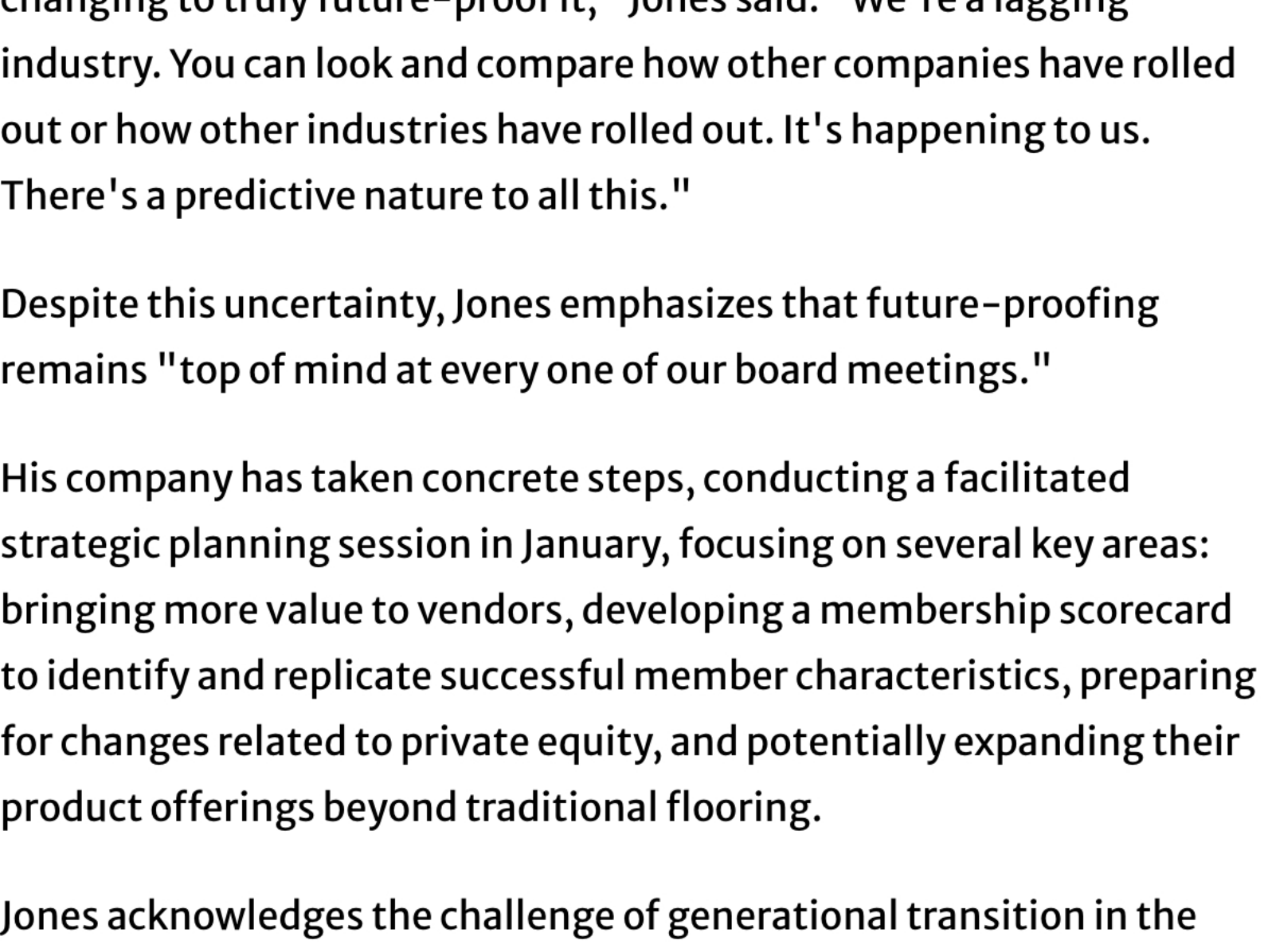


Photo: Juliet Neely, Rick Jones and Leslie Krajewski of Creative Flooring in Markham, Ontario, Canada. Photo: Floor Trends & Installation.

Rick Jones, owner and president of Creative Flooring in Markham, Ontario, brings a multi-dimensional perspective to future-proofing. His company, which has been in business for more than 20 years, delivers commercial flooring solutions while also operating a residential business under the Carpet One Floor & Home brand.

"I don't know if there's any way right now with how our industry is changing to truly future-proof it," Jones said. "We're a lagging industry. You can look and compare how other companies have rolled out or how other industries have rolled out. It's happening to us. There's a predictive nature to all this."

Despite this uncertainty, Jones emphasizes that future-proofing remains "top of mind at every one of our board meetings."

His company has taken concrete steps, conducting a facilitated strategic planning session in January, focusing on several key areas: bringing more value to vendors, developing a membership scorecard to identify and replicate successful member characteristics, preparing for changes related to private equity, and potentially expanding their product offerings beyond traditional flooring.

Jones acknowledges the challenge of generational transition in the workforce: "It's a new culture. I don't think the next generation is going to stay and have one career anymore." This shift in workforce expectations requires new approaches to talent retention and development: "How are you going to get them to stay and see this is a long-term thing?"

Jones exemplifies career evolution within the industry, having progressed from "warehouse to helper, ran crews, built an installation company" before assuming his current leadership position. His diverse background mirrors the kind of adaptability companies need to cultivate.

The Creative Flooring team reflects this commitment to future-proofing through succession planning. "Once you're in flooring, it kind of gets underneath your skin," said Leslie Krajewski, account manager, Creative Flooring. This passion for the work highlights the importance of engaging the next generation emotionally, not just professionally.

"This is what my teammates and I are here to figure out—where we're going to take this in the future and how we're going to get it to the next level," Jones said. "We've got different ages and generations here, and how we're going to make more for everybody."

Lonny Peck, Floor Systems & Design Columbus, Ohio



Photo: Lonny Peck, owner and president of Floor Systems & Design, and America's Floor Source CEO Michele Vermette. Photo: Floor Trends & Installation.

Lonny Peck, owner and president of Floor Systems & Design in Columbus, Ohio, is riding a wave of success. After a record-breaking previous year, his company is on track to match or exceed those impressive results. With over half of their business coming from the booming healthcare sector in the Midwest, Peck has positioned his company in a growth market.

"Floor Cloud has been a big one, that's helping us to be more professional, and obviously helps us with risk management," Peck explains, highlighting how technological adoption is central to his future-proofing strategy. His company recently transitioned its base system and continues implementing newer software pipeline technologies as they become available. Peck's approach to talent remains straightforward but effective: "You hire good people and keep doing what we're doing."

Michele Vermette, America's Floor Source Columbus, Ohio

Michele Vermette, CEO of America's Floor Source in Columbus, Ohio, places significant emphasis on developing future leadership. His company has strategically invested in cultivating talent among its younger staff members.

"We've invested a lot in that second generation, so we're fortunate to have a lot of folks in their thirties and forties that we've given extra responsibility to," Vermette shared. The leadership team, including Vermette, Founder and Chairman Jason Goldberg, and President Mike Stinnette, have mentorship to prepare the company for continued expansion.

Like his industry colleagues, Vermette recognizes the importance of technological advancement, noting that they've added technologies in multiple areas of the business.

Dave Triepke, Universal Metro Santa Fe Springs, California

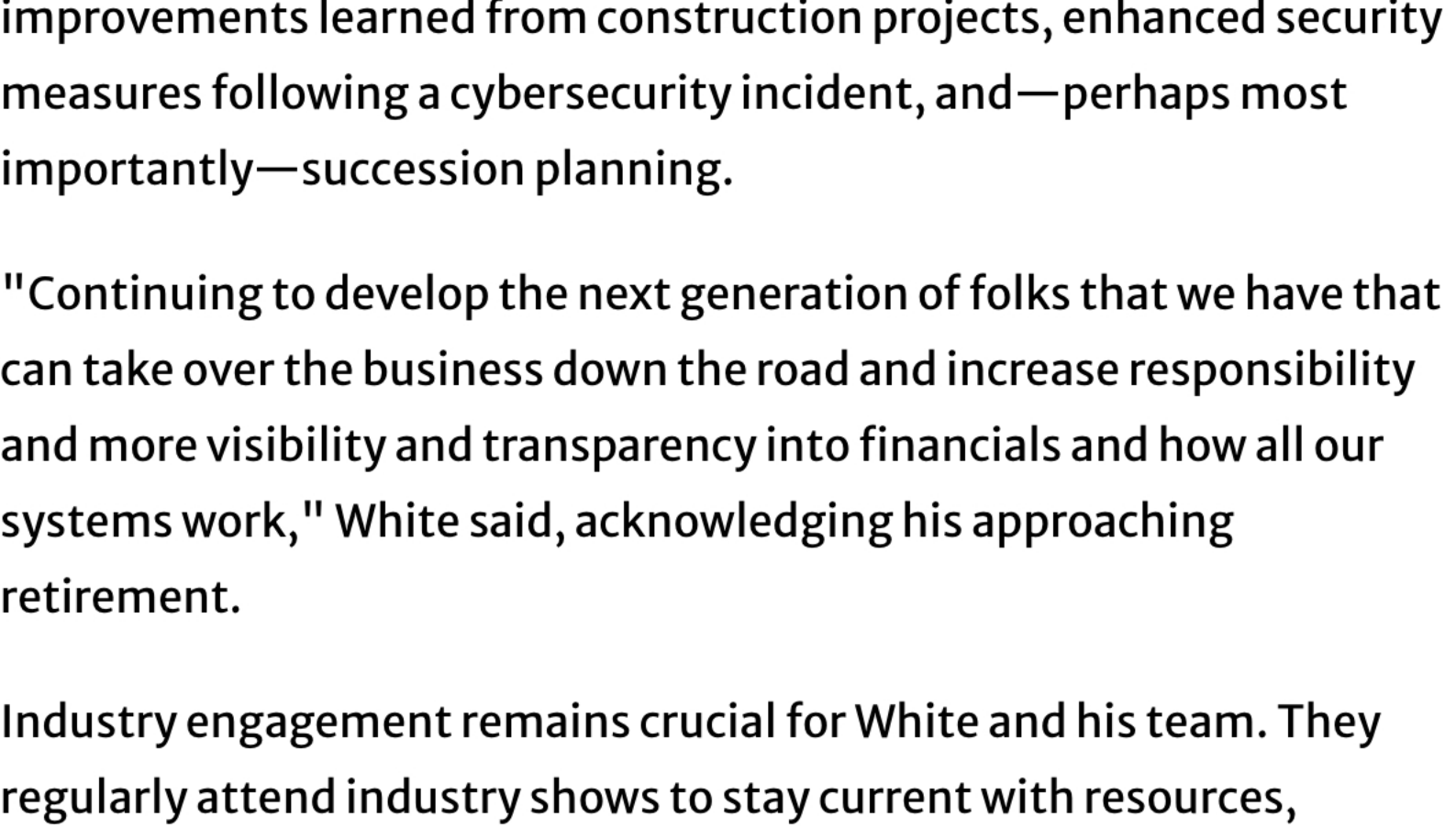


Photo: Universal Metro CEO Dave Triepke. Photo: Floor Trends & Installation.

Dave Triepke, CEO of Universal Metro in Santa Fe Springs, California, is taking a bold approach to talent acquisition as a cornerstone of his future-proofing strategy. "We're moving from hiring necessarily in the industry to recruiting outside the industry," Triepke said, highlighting a shift from traditional industry-focused recruitment.

This approach prioritizes character and potential over technical experience. When evaluating candidates, Triepke focuses on three essential qualities: "Humble, hungry, smart." This framework helps identify individuals with the right mindset, regardless of their flooring industry background.

"Are they hungry? Do they want to work?" Triepke asks, emphasizing the importance of motivation—a quality he finds particularly relevant given industry challenges. His approach also values both "street smart and book smart" intelligence, recognizing that academic credentials alone don't guarantee success in the flooring business: "You can be really book smart but you just don't connect the dots."

By recruiting motivated individuals from outside the industry and teaching them the business, Triepke is building what he calls "a sustainable company for years to come."

Paul White, Paul White Co. Portland, Maine

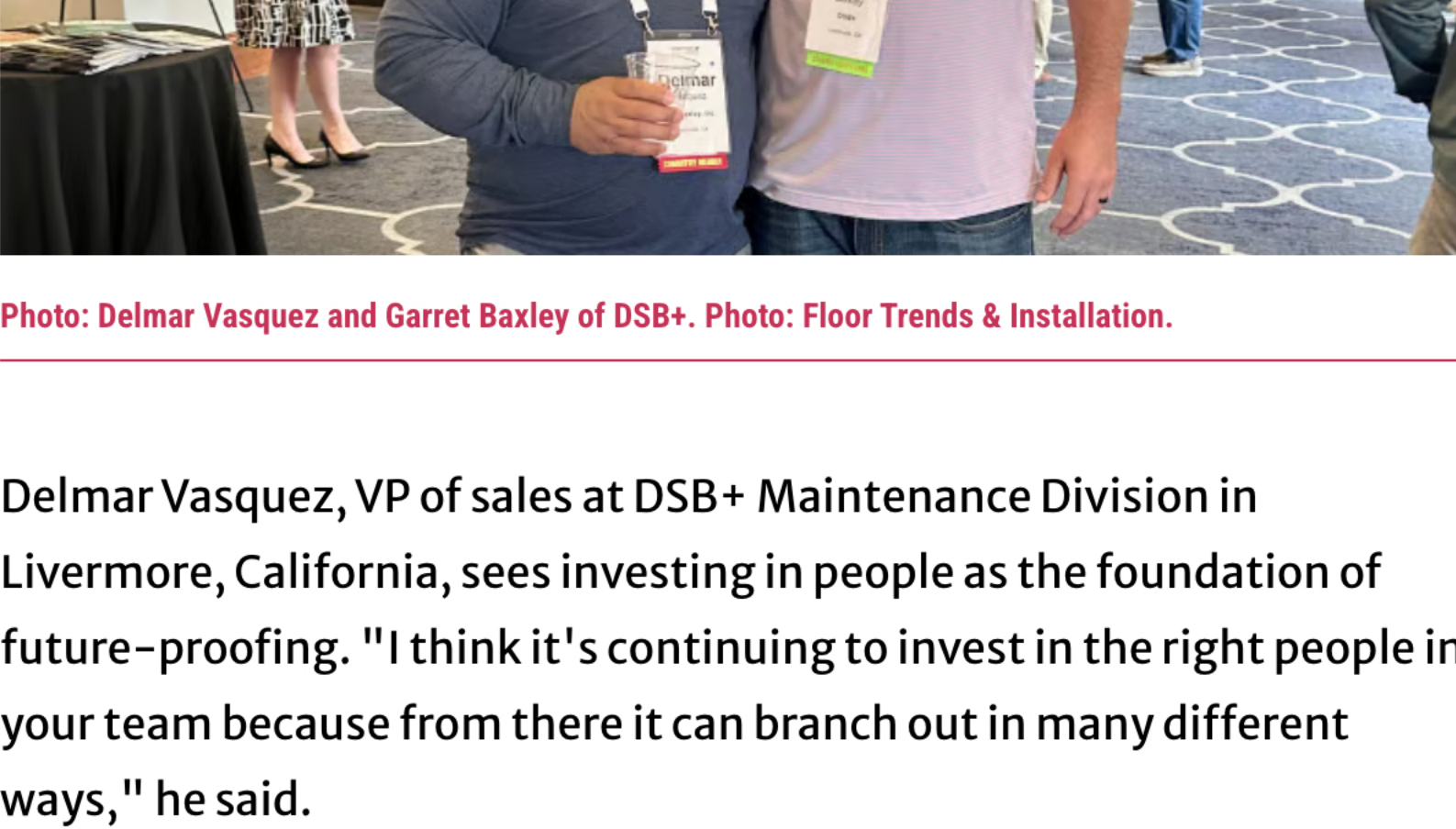


Photo: Paul White, CEO of Paul White Co. Photo: Floor Trends & Installation.

For Paul White, CEO of Paul White Co. in Portland, Maine, future-proofing means returning to fundamentals while planning for tomorrow. After a period when business flowed freely, White's company has recalibrated its approach.

"We appreciate the opportunities we get and going back to our roots, towards better customer service and performance," White noted, emphasizing renewed focus on competitive selling and consistent follow-up.

White's comprehensive future-proofing strategy includes facility improvements learned from construction projects, enhanced security measures following a cybersecurity incident, and—perhaps most importantly—succession planning.

"Continuing to develop the next generation of folks that we have that can take over the business down the road and increase responsibility and more visibility and transparency into financials and how all our systems work," White said, acknowledging his approaching retirement.

Industry engagement remains crucial for White and his team. They regularly attend industry shows to stay current with resources, technologies, and installation products, ensuring the company remains at the forefront of innovation while preparing for its next chapter.

Skip Mancini, B.T. Mancini Co. Milpitas, California

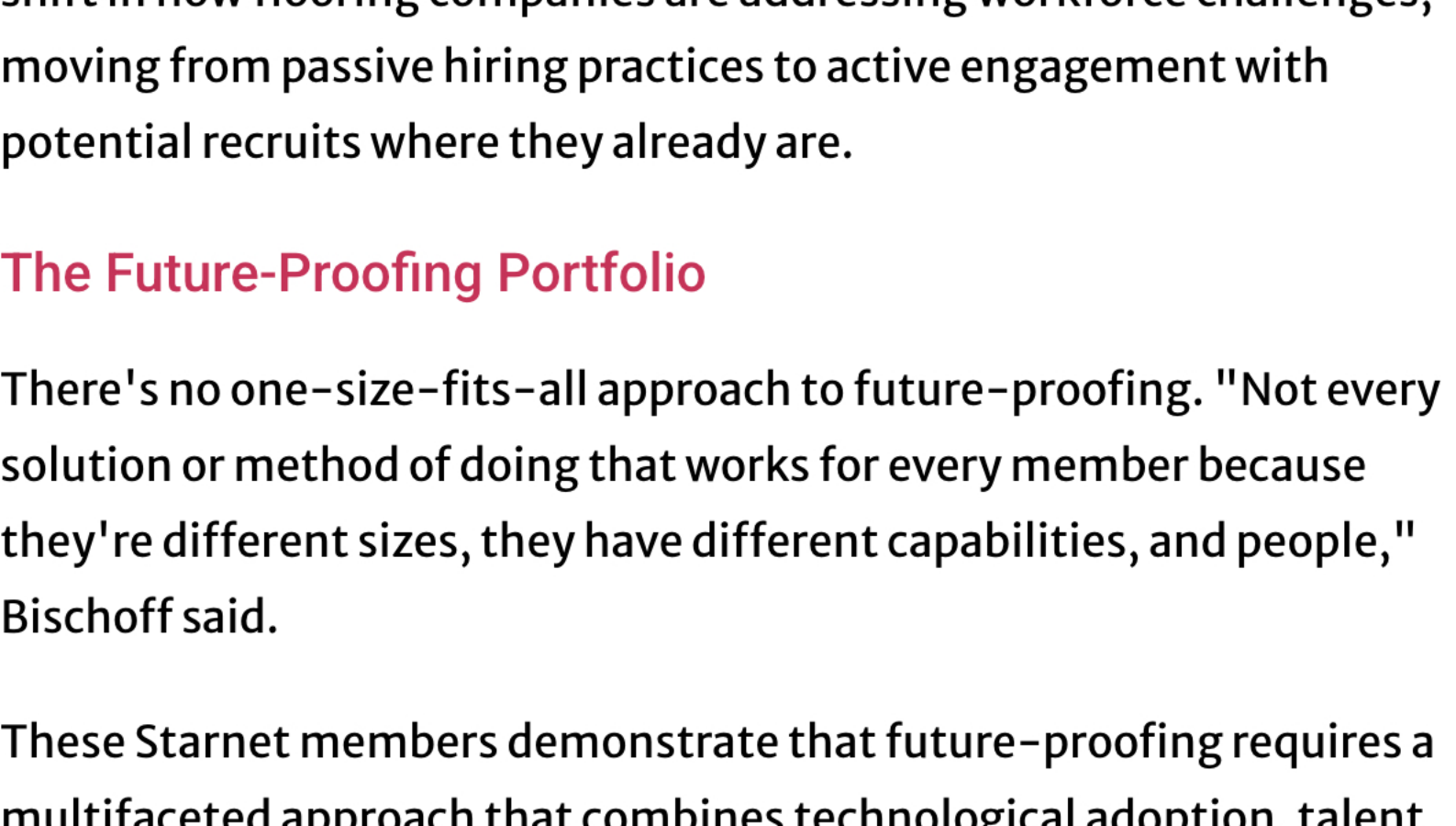


Photo: B.T. Mancini & Co. team. Photo: Floor Trends & Installation.

Skip Mancini, president of B.T. Mancini Co., Inc. in Milpitas, California, focuses on creating organizational capacity as his path to future-proofing. "Trying to build depth in the company so that we can grow, and that the people that we're building depth with can step in and help in that growth," Mancini explained.

When asked how his company develops this bench strength, Mancini outlines a straightforward approach: "A lot of training, giving people responsibility, looking for people that can be future leaders." This talent-focused strategy ensures the company has the human capital necessary to expand and adapt to changing market conditions.

Delmar Vasquez, DSB+ Maintenance Division Livermore, California



Photo: Delmar Vasquez and Garret Baxley of DSB+. Photo: Floor Trends & Installation.

Delmar Vasquez, VP of sales at DSB+ Maintenance Division in Livermore, California, sees investing in people as the foundation of future-proofing. "I think it's continuing to invest in the right people in your team because from there it can branch out in many different ways," he said.

This investment extends beyond compensation to encompass a holistic approach to team development. He emphasizes the importance of evaluating the return on investment across the entire organization: "For us, it's like our ROI on our team. And it's not just a salesperson, it's the person that's always behind the office."

This approach recognizes that sustainable success depends on creating the right organizational culture, which sometimes requires difficult personnel decisions. "If they're not the right teammate for the culture of the company, then there are some decisions that need to be made," Vasquez noted, highlighting the business imperative of maintaining the right team dynamics.

Tobi Anderson, Custer Flooring Grand Rapids, Michigan

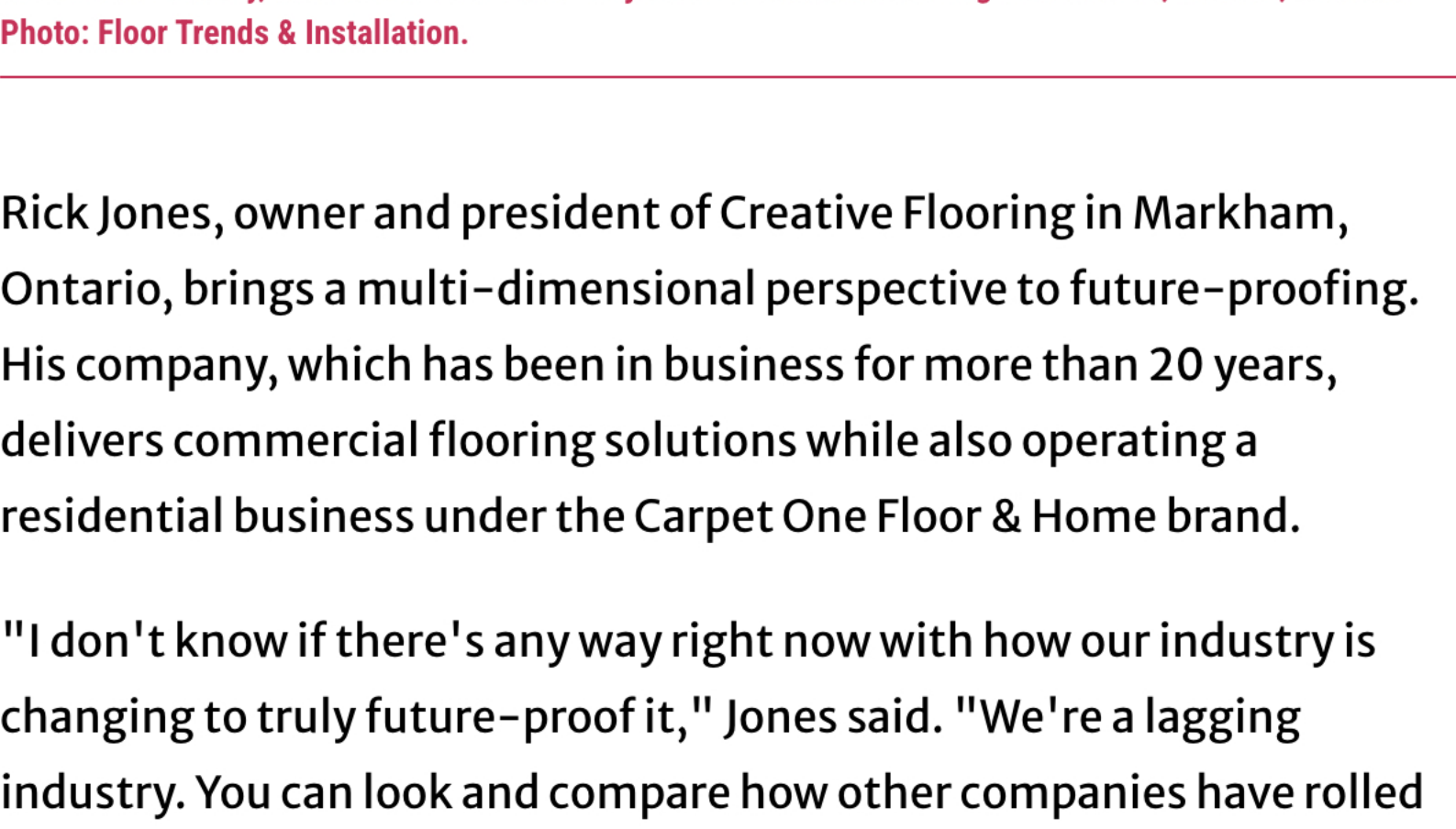


Photo: Lisa Speet and Tobi Anderson of Custer Flooring. Photo: Floor Trends & Installation.

Tobi Anderson, VP of flooring and corporate sales at Custer Flooring in Michigan, highlights talent acquisition as a critical component of future-proofing. When asked about her strategy, Anderson points to "training young talent" as a key focus.

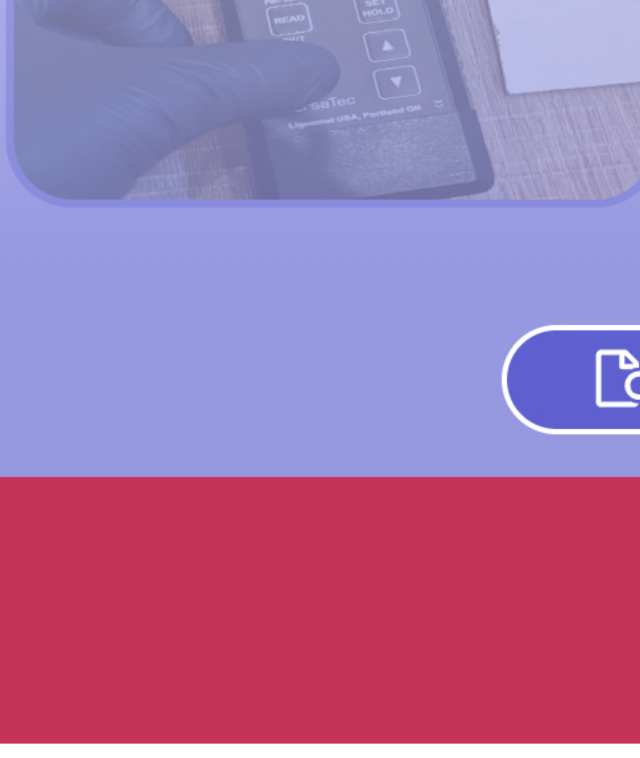
Her company is actively working to attract new generations to the industry by engaging with "college students who are interested in business or sales." This approach recognizes the need to appeal to candidates seeking both professional development and advancement opportunities.

While Anderson acknowledges that historically recruiting young talent has been challenging, she notes that they've recently had some interest. The company has adapted its recruitment strategies, implementing more proactive approaches such as job fairs and talking to people on job sites to connect with potential candidates. This grassroots approach to talent development represents an important shift in how flooring companies are addressing workforce challenges, moving from passive hiring practices to active engagement with potential recruits where they already are.

The Future-Proofing Portfolio

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to future-proofing. "Not every solution or method of doing that works for every member because they're different sizes, they have different capabilities, and people," Bischoff said.

These Starnet members demonstrate that future-proofing requires a multifaceted approach that combines technological adoption, talent development, market focus, and succession planning—all while maintaining the core values and relationships that built their businesses in the first place. And as Jones points out, looking to other industries that have already navigated similar transitions may provide valuable insights into the flooring industry's evolution.



NEXT ARTICLE
Tracking Moisture Problems in Luxury Vinyl Tile Floors with Pinless Moisture Meters

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Tracking Moisture Problems in Luxury Vinyl Tile Floors with Pinless Moisture Meters

By Grete Heimerdinger

Luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and plank (LVP) flooring have become popular due to their durability, water resistance, and visual appeal. These synthetic floor coverings are designed to withstand heavy foot traffic and moisture exposure—unlike wood, they do not absorb water. However, while the planks themselves are waterproof, moisture-related issues such as edge curling, warping, loosening, or discoloration can still occur. This often leaves installers and inspectors asking: Is moisture the problem?

Moisture Problems: Not in the Floor Planks, But Below

It's important to understand that LVT flooring issues rarely originate in the vinyl material itself. Instead, moisture becomes trapped *beneath* the planks, often due to:

- Inadequate subfloor drying
- Missing vapor barriers
- Poorly sealed exterior walls
- Plumbing leaks or broken pipes

Because LVT is impermeable, moisture that accumulates underneath the flooring cannot escape.

How a Moisture Meter Helps

Pinless moisture meters, like the Ligno-Scanner SDM from Lignomat, are vital for diagnosing hidden moisture issues under LVT floors. The meters use dual-depth scanning technology to detect moisture levels without damaging the floor.

When checking out moisture issues in materials other than wood, inspectors can still use a wood moisture meter. The inspector typically begins by establishing a baseline moisture value from a known dry area. Then, measured values are compared to the baseline value for dry.

In LVT flooring, this base value for the Ligno-Scanner SDM, BW or VersaTec is around 3.0 to 3.3. When areas show higher readings—such as 5.5 or above—there is strong evidence of underlying moisture buildup.

In comparison, areas showing values around 3.1 had no visible defects. The correlation was clear: the higher the moisture reading, the more severe the damage.



For example, in one inspection, edge curling was visibly confirmed using a ruler placed across the planks. Moisture readings at that spot with a Ligno-VersaTec from Lignomat showed a value of 5.5. Photo: Lignomat.



In comparison, areas showing values around 3.3 had no visible defects. The correlation was clear: the higher the moisture reading, the more severe the damage. Photo: Lignomat.

Moisture Challenges with Luxury Vinyl Floors

Since the introduction of LVT floor planks several years ago, experience over the last few years has shown, that LVT and LVP floors can be susceptible to moisture-related problems, installation errors, and temperature fluctuations. Although the planks themselves are waterproof and, unlike wood, do not absorb moisture, they still expand and contract with changes in temperature. As with wood flooring, proper installation must include expansion gaps to accommodate movement.

Moisture problems underneath the floor planks can start when the subfloor has too much moisture at the start of the installation. Problems could also come from insufficiently dried concrete underneath the floor planks, lack of a proper vapor barrier or from poorly sealed exterior walls, which allow excess moisture to be absorbed into the building. Additional sources of moisture include water spills, plumbing leaks, or broken pipes.

While LVT and LVP do not absorb water, this characteristic also prevents moisture exchange between the space above and below the floor. Consequently, any moisture that accumulates beneath the flooring becomes trapped. For example, a carpeted floor may not have shown any signs of moisture problems, but when replaced with vinyl flooring, moisture issues may suddenly surface, since vinyl does not allow any evaporation.

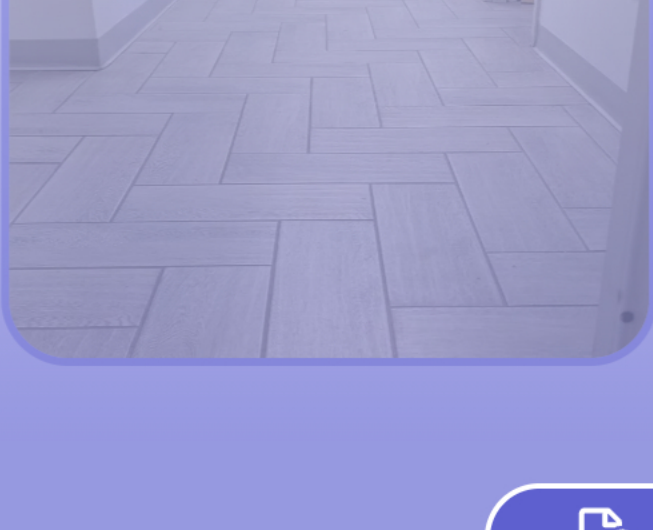
Condensation: High humidity levels increase the risk of condensation forming on the underside of vinyl planks, especially with temperature changes. For instance, at a room temperature of 72°F and 90% relative humidity, condensation can begin if the temperature drops just 3°F to 69°F. In such conditions, condensation is often followed by mold growth.

Detection of Moisture Problems in Materials Other Than Wood

When moisture problems occur, a moisture meter is used to assess the problem. Measuring moisture in wood is straightforward: the user selects the appropriate wood group setting on the meter and takes a reading. If no settings are given by the meter manufacturer or a combination of different materials is measured, a dry area of the same material composition is first measured to establish a baseline value. All subsequent readings are compared to this baseline—higher values indicate higher moisture content.

This method was used in the case discussed above. A baseline value of 3.3 was established, and all readings above this level indicated increased moisture and correlated with greater floor deformation.

Moisture meters are essential tools for diagnosing these issues.



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The Hidden Challenges of Ceramic Tile Patterns


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Tile Tip



BY SCOTT CAROTHERS
 DIRECTOR OF CERTIFICATION AND
 TRAINING FOR CTEF

The Hidden Challenges of Ceramic Tile Patterns

Many installers have found themselves in this situation. The consumer and/or designer have selected a tile for their project based solely on color and design. All is well until the pattern is selected, which in this case is a standard (straight) herringbone. This is where the selection and design issues begin as we shall see.

ANSI A108T, Standard Terminology of Tile Assemblies, System Modularity states: Tiles of various nominal dimensions are sized so that they may be installed together in patterns with a common specified joint width.

According to ANSI A108.02–4.5.3.1, if the design professional specified a modular pattern utilizing tiles that are not manufactured to be installed in a modular pattern, it is the responsibility of the design professional to verify system modularity and specify the grout joint size for the pattern based on the actual tile size. If the specified grout joint width is not possible due to size variations in the actual tile supplied for installation or because of the site conditions, the tile contractor shall be permitted to reasonably adjust the pattern. Tile shall not be field cut to size to accomplish modular patterns in any circumstance.



At first glance, this herringbone pattern seems acceptable. However, closer inspection reveals misaligned long-side grout joints that drift rightward, compromising both the pattern's visual integrity and proper installation standards. Photo: Scott Carothers.

For a tile to be installed in a pattern, such as a standard herringbone, the first item to be verified is the size of the narrow end of a rectangular tile in relation to the long side. Place several narrow end tiles perpendicular to the long side until reaching the end of the long-side tile. If the first and last tiles are flush with each end and the tiles in between are tightly stacked, the tile is not modular and should not be considered. If the tiles are placed in a similar fashion to the above and there are equal spaces for grout joint, this tile is modular and can be installed with slight joint width adjustments to accommodate the naturally occurring differences in a calibrated tile. Additionally, the space in between the perpendicular tiles will also be the grout joint size for the project.

As seen in the attached image and, it appears to be okay, but a closer look demonstrates the problem. The long side grout joints do not align. Since the tile installed here is not modular with the narrow ends being too wide, the grout joints are pushed to the right. In this case, the tile is running or creeping to the right and even the best efforts to bring it back to the layout line are futile. The only adjustment that can be tried is to make the grout joint size on the long side narrower. This may help the long side joint alignment, but the irregular joint sizes will be very evident to the end user and the installation will most likely be considered a failure.

To alleviate this situation, the installer needs to take the lead in this process. When the tile is selected, the installer should “dry lay” the actual tile to be installed on a flat surface, as directed above, for the consumer and/or designer to view. If equal-sized grout joints are seen, the job is good to go only after getting written approval from all involved parties. If not, a different tile needs to be selected. At this point, the installer should not submit to the pressure of those involved saying, “You are the tile professional; you should be able to make this work. Right?” The preliminary legwork may seem beyond the duties of the installer, however, if the installer installs the non-modular tile, he or she will most likely bear the cost of the replacement. Think about it before saying, “Okay, I will give it a shot.”



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BUYERS GUIDE PREMIUM LISTINGS

Video: Creatas Video+ / Getty Images Plus.

Welcome to the floor covering industry directory including manufacturers and distributors of floor covering materials as well as installation products and tools needed to complete the job. This directory includes all types of floor covering products from adhesives, mortars and underlayments to wood flooring and carpet. The FLOOR Trends & Installation Buyer's Guide is designed to provide you with sources for these important products. Below is a sampling of some of the companies featured in this year's directory. We invite you to click on the logos below to learn more about each company's offerings.

To check out the entire list of companies and products, visit our [online directory here](#).



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