INTRODUCING THE NEW BADGE
FOR SMART, DURABLE AND RESPONSIBLY
MADE RIGID CORE FLOORING

The fastest growing flooring category is now becoming the most rigorously tested and quality assured. Introducing the ASSURE CERTIFIED™ program—specifically created for rigid core LVT. Applicable to all WPC and SPC constructions, ASSURE CERTIFIED™ upholds manufacturing standards and tests for indoor air quality, performance, heavy metals and ortho-phthalates. From now on, rigid core quality will be easy to see. Just look for the ASSURE CERTIFIED™ badge. To learn more, visit RFCI.com/AxureCertified. Manufacturers, contact SCS Global directly to start your certification process.
In reality, the rigid core category is still in its infancy – the first Coretec product was shown in a small booth during The International Surface Event in 2013, according to founder Piet Dossche.

Since then, the category has seen rapid expansion in innovative new formats – starting as WPC (Wood Plastic Composite), then the even heartier SPC products (Stone Plastic Composite) and, today, additional hybrid formulas that include different veneers. Technology too has greatly improved the look of these products to where, from a short distance, you can’t tell the difference between these vinyl products and real stone or hardwood.

So much has changed, in fact, including how we address the category as a whole. When we first came out with a Guide about these new performance-driven products two years ago, it was referred to as Multi-layer Flooring. Today, we call it Rigid Core.

No matter what you call it, there is still so much to understand about what these products have to offer. Just a few things to think about as you walk your customer to a rigid core display:

**Listen & Learn**

Customers today are coming in asking for some form of “waterproof” product. Make sure that what they are gravitating to will really meet their needs – both aesthetically and from a lifestyle point of view. Even within rigid core, there are products that are tougher and provide enhanced dent protection and there are products that provide more comfort underfoot, too.

Be sure you’ve clearly qualified what it is your customer is trying to achieve. Once you’ve determined that, the fun begins because today’s visuals are realistic and beautiful, and there is certainly something for everyone’s style tastes.

**Sell Stories**

The cool thing, really, about these products is what they can stand up to. They are kid-friendly, pet-friendly and even water-friendly. There are so many great stories to tell on the selling floor!

Today, there are many providers within the rigid core segment. So there are lots of products available, with lots of promises. It’s a great asset to the retailer but also the greatest challenge.

As always, FCW’s Floor Covering 101 Guides are pure in content so you can be armed with everything there is to know about a category without the distraction of a specific brand pitch. But we do make ample room for understanding how to sell a specific collection as well here in our carefully crafted advertorials – inside this book there is education on how to sell 16 different brands on the market. If you have it on your selling floor, it is likely on page here. So, once you master the category basics, dive in to better know the particular product you are selling.

**Sell Responsibly**

There are indeed great stories to tell but, as an RSA on the frontlines, you need to be careful of what you promise – don’t oversell. It will surely come back to haunt you and your store. Because, while these products sure do perform, they aren’t indestructible. So, know what the product can realistically withstand and what is covered under the warranty, no matter the maker.

**Sell Profitably**

With so many players in the game today, pricing can be all over the place. And we hear, time and time again, that while rigid core is selling strong in volume, not everyone is standing up to the value and pricing that will sustain this category for the long term. Maintain a high margin so that this category can continue to create excitement for your store.

In the words of Piet Dossche, “Profit is not a dirty word.”

-Amy Rush-Imber
COREtec’s Triple Threat

Grande boasts style, comfort underfoot & a waterproof core

By Mallory Cruise-McGrath

[Dalton] COREtec Grande, created to offer consumers a WPC product that delivers the desirable visual of engineered hardwood and the performance of vinyl, is the latest addition to the brand’s impressive product portfolio. Backed by the innovation that has made COREtec The Original so successful, Grande ups the ante with its extra wide and long planks in realistic hardwood visuals and a waterproof core.

“COREtec The Original has gone to great lengths — 82 inches in fact — to create an awe-inspiring floor that will set you apart in grand fashion,” said John Crews, director of product design for COREtec. “Bold in beauty and design, this unique and innovative floor comes with all the benefits expected from The Original. Each massive Grande plank is 100 percent waterproof, kidproof and petproof, and will stand up to life’s real messes in style.”

Indeed, according to Crews, COREtec Grande is the largest, widest, thickest waterproof WPC floor that is currently on the market. “COREtec Grande is made to simulate engineered wood flooring in all its attributes. The extra thick WPC construction, with its foamed core, creates an unsurpassed comfort level and sound abatement,” he explained.

PROVEN PERFORMANCE
COREtec Grande features a 30 mil wear layer enabling it to offer the same durability found in COREtec The Original without compromising the crisp and clear visuals of its designs.

“Grande products feature an even thicker core (9 mm) to provide more comfort, optimal sound absorption and ultimate stability,” said Crews.

Naples, Florida-based Hadinger Flooring is a committed COREtec dealer and has already bought stock of COREtec Grande.

“With the 82-inch boards, 30 mil wear layer, thicker core, cork back and clean bright colors, we believe this product will be a home run for us,” said Hadinger vice president Chris Cosentino, adding, “We even decided to add some colors to our expansive stock selection so that we can offer our customers a full range of LVP (luxury vinyl plank) products from entry level all the way to Grande. We are excited to see where this collection goes.”

In addition to its cork underlayment promoting warmth underfoot, COREtec Grande floors feature an easy-to-install angle-tap locking system that allows floating installations to be completed in hours rather than days.

“WE BELIEVE THE GRANDE LINE WILL DO GREAT IN OUR AREA OF NAPLES, FLA. FIVE OF OUR TOP 10 SELLING SKUS FROM CORETEC ARE PART OF THEIR PREMIUM LINE SO WE ALREADY DO QUITE WELL UP-SELLING THE PREMIUM PRODUCTS.”

— CHRIS COSENTINO, HADINGER FLOORING

COREtec Grande, shown above in Goldin Oak, combines the performance benefits of COREtec The Original with authentic aged hardwood visuals and large plank formats.

GRAND DESIGN

[Dalton] COREtec Grande offers consumers the perfect option for upscale visuals in a WPC platform and massive plank format. Featuring 10 oak visuals, the collection features an expansive color palette ranging from light and natural to rich and dark. COREtec Grande, seen above in Petronas Oak, takes inspiration from aged hardwood.

“Even amongst the cooler and gray tones in the collection, Grande is authentic to the core,” said John Crews, director of product design for COREtec.

COREtec Grande’s realistic looks are created using the latest technology and innovation.

“Enhanced painted bevels and embossed-in-register technology create ultra-realistic visuals in this thick WPC plank that looks and feels like real hardwood,” said Crews. “Richness, clarity and depth inspired this collection and Grande allows for an expressive wood grain featuring all COREtec benefits.”

The collection is well-suited to meet the design aesthetics of Hadinger Flooring’s customers, offered company vice president Chris Cosentino. “COREtec really nailed the coastal colors that are popular in our area with this line,” he said. “Cleaner, longer, lighter products tend to sell very well in Naples and this Grande line fits right into that niche.”
COREtec The Original has gone to great lengths – 82” in fact, to create the largest WPC plank currently available in the market. This new curated collection of ten oak visuals is joining our Premium XL Collection, and provides all the durability and performance COREtec is famous for. Help your customers be Magnificent. Impressive. Grande.

- **82” planks** – longest WPC planks on the market
- **30 mil wear layer** and overall enhanced **15mm thickness**
- **Enhanced painted bevels** and E.I.R. Technology for added realism
- **Extra thick attached cork backing** results in quieter, warmer floors

See the full Grande selection coming soon to COREtecFloors.com
Breaking it down

Rigid core’s construction layer by layer

By Kacey Perinelli

Rigid core flooring, also referred to as multi-layer flooring (MLF) due to its layered construction, is the fastest growing category in the market today, thanks in large part to continued innovation within the segment. While this innovation is a positive — leading to new ideas and increased market share — when a category changes so rapidly, it can be difficult to keep up with the ins and outs of the segment’s nuanced terminology.

The rigid core category began with the introduction of Coretec The Original, a WPC (wood plastic composite) floor, in 2012. Since then, the category has taken share from every other segment and adding formats such as SPC (stone plastic composite) and MGO (magnesium oxide) as well as hybrid constructions.

What does it actually mean to say a product is a “rigid core floor” and how can you stay ahead of all the various acronyms, layers and terminology in this robust category? Here, experts in the industry addressed some of the differences for FCW.

WPC Composition

What makes up a WPC floor? There are indeed multiple layers, and these layers themselves can vary by manufacturer to manufacturer. For example, noted Natalie Cady, director of category for Coretec, the company’s Coretec The Original WPC features five layers: UV acrylic finish, wearlayer, luxury vinyl design layer, Coretec WPC core and an attached cork underlayment.

Much of the difference is in the cores.

Steve Ehrlich, vice president of sales and marketing for Novalis, explained, “WPC, also known as wood plastic composite, is a flooring with a polymer-based extruded core using a foaming agent.”

Because of its foamed core, WPC flooring has generally been known to be quieter and softer underfoot. “WPC ... derived its name from initially being comprised of reclaimed wood materials such as wood flour with a ... core that is dense but also provides a softer [feeling] underfoot than its other rigid counterparts,” said Phenix’s senior vice president of product and design, Jason Surratt.

Surratt added that though this was the initial construction of WPC, the composition has changed slightly as the product has evolved, “Today, the product more typically uses wood like plasticizers and is differentiated by its expanded PVC core.”

Engineered Floors’ hard surface category manager, Ana Torrence, noted WPCs core may make it prone to damage. “WPC is a foamed core with a high percentage of vinyl. It is less dense than SPC and therefore easier to indent and less stable,” she said.

SPC Composition

For SPC too, each manufacturer may have different layers on the same stone polymer core. Noted Cady, Coretec Pro SPC has six layers: UV acrylic finish, wearlayer, luxury vinyl design layer, SPC core, balancing layers and an attached cork underlayment.

Novalis’ Ehrlich said, “SPC or stone plastic composite is also composed of a polymer-based extruded core. However, in SPC minerals such as limestone or calcium carbonate are used with no added air, so WPC is a lighter product than SPC.”

Shared Yon Hinkle, vice president product management for Armstrong Flooring, “SPC is comprised of limestone, polyvinyl chloride, and plasticizers.” He added SPC is thinner and denser than its WPC counterparts, giving it greater dimensional stability. This stability, he said, makes it a good choice for installation in commercial applications. “Unlike WPC flooring, SPC does not have a vinyl layer between the design layer and core — the design layer is attached directly to the core — so resilience and comfort underfoot are not comparable to WPC products,” said Russ Rogg, president of Armstrong Flooring.

MAKING A PROMISE

WHAT EACH CONSTRUCTION CAN OFFER THE CONSUMER

By Kacey Perinelli

When the consumer is shopping for a new floor, she is likely less concerned about the particular product construction (WPC, SPC, MGO) and more concerned with the floor’s aesthetics and performance. Therefore, it is important to qualify her needs and pick the product that best satisfies those.

“Having a conversation with the consumer about their lifestyle is essential to ensure RSAs suggest a product with the performance attributes and styling that matches their expectations and offers them a floor they will love for years to come,” noted Jeff Francis, director of category management – resilient for Shaw Floors. Shaw has consciously moved away from “confusing and inconsistent acronyms” in favor of simplifying the consumer conversation, Francis said.

He added Shaw offers flooring in all formats of rigid core including mineral core to ensure no matter the consumer’s needs or budget, the company has a floor for them.

And Jeff Cole, technical sales manager for Beauflor advised it is important not to overload customers with too much information or “technical jargon” about rigid core products. “The RSA should make sure they listen to the customer and get a clear understanding of their flooring needs and priorities.” For example, Cole said, SPC may be better for a home with kids and pets thanks to its durability, while WPC can be a better choice if comfort underfoot and sound absorption are of concern.

“Once you understand the customer, you can narrow your selection down to only products that meet their needs and then explain the difference between each category, so you can be transparent in why you are recommending one category over the other,” Cole added.
of Metroflor Corp.

SPC came to the market to solve some of WPC’s issues, such as indentation susceptibility. “SPC is a stone polymer core ... stone is much denser and is not subject to indentation,” explained Ed Sanchez, vice president product management for Mohawk. Sanchez added Mohawk has launched SPC products such as its Pergo Extreme specifically for active households.

MGO COMPOSITION

Magnesium Oxide cores are newer to the market, and as such are not yet as prevalent throughout the category. These cores use minerals in place of the plasticizers that compose the cores of SPC and WPC. They are dense and resistant to indentation like SPC.

Coretec’s newer MGO products, Coretec Stone and Coretec Wood, each have four layers. Coretec Stone is comprised of a proprietary coating, design layer, mineral core and attached cork underlayment. Coretec Wood is a UV matte aluminum oxide finish, genuine wood veneers, mineral core and attached cork underlayment, shared Cady.

Ehrlich added MGO floors feature “many of the same benefits as other rigid core products but adds no benefits for flooring over SPC and WPC and has some inherent manufacturing obstacles that the others don’t.”

The introduction of MGO is likely thanks to a constant search for innovation within the segment. Said Sanchez, “The marketplace is always looking to innovate and one of the latest things that has come forward is MGO.” As the construction evolves, he added, “Less and less [those who offer MGO] are referring to it as ‘MGO’ and more and more they are referring to it as ‘mineral core,’ which would imply that they are looking at different formulations of minerals and mineral additives to solve some of the initial issues with MGO.”

However, Sanchez noted there are benefits to MGO. Magnesium oxide is mined from the earth with large deposits in China, he said. It also tends to be lighter. “We’re watching it closely but unless the innovation delivers a clear consumer benefit, it doesn’t make sense to bring it to the marketplace,” he added.

Jamann Stepp, vice president hard surface for The Dixie Group (TDG), said MGO is a fireproof core. He added, “A drawback to MGO is it must be cut with a circular saw and cannot be scored with a utility knife and snapped as can WPC and SPC.”

HEAD TO HEAD

All types of rigid core flooring share many attributes. All are waterproof and able to be installed over imperfect subfloors. However, there are few differences which will help the consumer pick the right construction for their needs.

The main differences between WPC and SPC constructions are in weight and density, explained Rogg. “WPC is lighter and less dense, while SPC is denser, harder but heavier. With its full solid LVT top layer versus a design wearlayer directly on the SPC rigid core, WPC offers more comfort underfoot with the resilient layer helping to absorb ambient sound in the room, while SPC is more likely to reflect it.”

Stepp added that SPC is denser and more indentation resistant. It is also less likely to expand or contract when exposed to extreme temperatures due to its lower percentage of PVC, he noted. However, other than the core differences, the other attributes are similar, he shared.

Jenne Ross, director of marketing for Karndean Designflooring, noted, “WPC tends to have the best acoustic ratings, is softest underfoot and is easiest to cut. SPC has the least amount of acoustic resistance and is also easy to cut. MGO makes a heavier product that is difficult to cut and is louder underfoot compared to WPC and SPC. (There is) less expansion and contraction.”

Hinkle added, “Overall, rigid core flooring [is] waterproof, scratch-, stain- and dent-resistant, and quiet and comfortable. It’s a great choice for … customers who want the look and feel of natural wood or stone in a floor that will hold up beautifully in high-traffic or high-moisture areas.”

BENEFIT RUNDOWN

All rigid core floors have inherent benefits such as performance against water and ability to be installed over imperfect subfloors. WPC floors might be better for residential applications and those where softness underfoot is of concern. SPC floors might be better suited for commercial applications or others with high levels of traffic.

However, it is important to remember that the longer the category continues to thrive, the better the constructions become, so performance can vary from manufacturer to manufacturer or even floor to floor.

For Novalis, noted Steve Ehrlich, vice president of sales and marketing, there are slight differences between WPC and SPC. “Both NovaFloor High Performance Core (HPC/WPC) and High Density Core (HDC/SPC) flooring are excellent in terms of kid-proof, pet-proof, spill-proof, dent resistant and dance on your floors kind of performance. NovaFloor HPC (WPC) offers a lighter construction with great acoustical qualities. HDC (SPC) is dense in construction, offering elevated dent resistance and temperature stability,” he shared.

The constructions can also differ in their design capability. “On the design front, WPC products have a deeper embossing capacity (i.e., in-register embossing) for enhanced authenticity while SPC products do not,” said Russ Rogg, president of Metroflor Corp.

Rogg added MGO (magnesium oxide) floors have unique benefits as well, saying, “Density, stability and a fire resistant, waterproof core are the key features of MGO. Composed of a hard mineral core, MGO floors have little movement and minimal expansion/contraction.”

The Dixie Group’s vice president of hard surface, Jamann Stepp, said the cores in the market today have more in common than not. “All of these products are designed to be waterproof, kid, pet and even husband proof,” he said. He cautioned the RSA should work not to oversell the waterproof story (more on the waterproof story starting on pages 14 and 15).

Two of the first questions to ask the consumer, advised Ed Sanchez, vice president product management for Mohawk, are what the room and the consumer’s lifestyle are like. “The more active the lifestyle — kids, pets, my son forgets to take off his football cleats and he doesn’t pick up his chair at the dinner table, etc. — the more you can steer the customer toward SPC,” he offered.
Going to EXTREMES

From fashion to function, Mohawk’s Pergo Extreme delivers on being bold

By Amy Rush-Imber

[Calhoun] From the visual design to the product’s performance, Pergo Extreme is made to standup to the toughest design critics and their active lifestyles.

“We think about how every piece is constructed, the entire construction, and make sure we are connecting with ‘extreme,’” offered Angela Duke, director of brand marketing.

From top to bottom, Mohawk focused on creating the ultimate product from unique visuals to the promise of extreme performance. Explained Duke, “It is high-definition design with bolder looks for the consumer looking for something unique. And, there is the protective wearlayer — 22 mil — so it is 100 percent kid- and pet-proof and then the rigid composite core provides 100 percent dent protection,” she described. “It is for that consumer attracted to the ‘Go Life’ campaign — for people really living on their floors.”

WORRY-FREE FLOORING

Indeed, the Pergo brand name itself is one of the top searched brands for flooring in the industry, now available in rigid core for specialty retail. This, said Duke, is a powerful thing.

It’s construction promises 100 percent dent proof, water proof, kid proof and pet proof all backed by a Lifetime Warranty.

“Think about some of the demos and images in the campaign,” Duke pointed out. “Last year, we showed pogo sticks to portray the dent proof story. This year, we will be launching new digital campaign assets that have “slow-mo” videos highlighting all the performance attributes.”

DESIGN DISRUPTOR

Sure hardwood and stone visuals are all the rage, but when the designers for Pergo Extreme take these popular looks on, they are anything but average.

“Because it is for extreme performance and thus long-lasting floors, we wanted to make sure that we have looks that create trendy interiors but also refer to long lasting materials. For example, we have some very high end marbles, terrazzo and Portuguese tile looks,” described Caroline Wille, vice president of design and development for resilient.

Some patterns have metallic in the bevels or a marble look with gold metallic pulled through, offered Duke, adding, “These are unique visuals.”

There are 60 designs in total that indeed have the Pergo take on natural visuals. Explained Wille, “We have a large offering of tile looks, a lot of marbles that are really trendy in a variety of different sizes — 12 $\times$ 36, 18 $\times$ 36 or even mixed. For the woods, the visual range is very light and fresh. We have incorporated some pine looks, hickories and some more modern tropical [looks] — adding a little spice to very natural looking oaks. Additionally, burned wood looks in three different colors add dimension through the refined cracking.

Pergo Extreme isn’t just powered by performance, it offers cutting edge design as well.

Both kid- and pet-friendly, Pergo Extreme luxury vinyl tile is made to live on.

GO LIFE

Pergo Extreme Rigid LVT is backed by the Go Life ad campaign that demonstrates the product’s premium performance.

Pergo Extreme — 100 percent dent-proof, waterproof, kid-proof and pet-proof all backed by a Lifetime Warranty — wears the tagline “High Performance Runs Deep” with new visual marketing tools aimed for greater connection with active households.

“The Go Life campaign was designed for a long shelf life because it allows us to build it out over an extended period of time,” explained Seth Arnold, vice president of residential marketing. “Even though the campaign has longevity, we can appropriately refresh it with new, engaging video and photo assets. That’s the benefit of having a timeless message that’s relatable to consumers.”

New campaign assets demonstrate that Pergo Extreme luxury rigid vinyl can transform any room. “It’s absolutely imperative for us to showcase how Pergo Extreme really does epitomize ‘High Performance Runs Deep’ for homeowners who want true worry-free living when making family memories,” said Ed Sanchez, vice president of product management. “We have an award-winning team that’s created incredible, realistic scenes like birthday parties, indoor dance recitals and kids trying out new toys. There’s excitement, color and life, and it’s all happening on Pergo Extreme.”
Activate local demand for Pergo with Neighborhood Ad Manager. For more information, contact your Mohawk sales representative or visit MohawkToday.com.

Pergo is the #1 highest searched flooring brand. With over 80 million families in the U.S., there is a growing demand for brands consumers know and trust. For Pergo Extreme, we’ve created digital resources that help drive customers to you, simplify the flooring decision and make the connection from what shoppers love online to what they see in your store.

Activate local demand for Pergo with Neighborhood Ad Manager. For more information, contact your Mohawk sales representative or visit MohawkToday.com.
Onboard with Innovation
The latest technology brings new visual and performance attributes to understand

By Kacey Perinelli

In the rapidly changing rigid core segment, keeping up with the latest technology is a high priority. After all, innovation is what sparked the category in the first place and technology is not slowing down.

“Technology forces suppliers to rapidly innovate or become obsolete. The pace at which rigid core is advancing is unprecedented in our industry with no sign of slowing down. Suppliers who are not able to keep up cannot compete in this category,” asserted Jeff Francis, director of category management – resilient for Shaw.

The Dixie Group’s vice president of hard surface, Jamann Stepp, agreed. “Innovate or die is what we must do … new technology will need to be crafted to keep it all exciting.”

This belief that in order to stay in the rigid core game a company must continue to innovate may work in consumers’ favor. Explained Alex Brodkin, senior manager of product management for Cali, “We see technology as a tool to help make a better product for the customer — better visuals, better durability and better performance.”

Realistic Visuals
One field in which rigid core has particularly excelled recently is its visual appeal. Both increasingly realistic digital print technology and advancements that allow for printing directly onto an SPC core rather than a digital film have made the visuals in this category more true-to-life than ever.

“Over the last few years, the visuals have been improved by technology,” Coretec’s director of category Natalie Cady noted. She explained high definition print décor films, embossed in register and enhanced bevel technology have all helped the company achieve greater realism. Coretec also creates products with a four-sided painted bevel. “Enhanced painted bevels create ultra-realistic looks and allow the products to add even more character to the room,” she added.

Karndean Designflooring previously shied away from creating certain designs because at the time the technology was not quite advanced enough. Jenne Ross, director of marketing shared, “We had experimented with developing marble designs in the past, but the technology didn’t allow us to create a visual that was up to the realistic design standards that we strive to achieve.” She added the company recently introduced stone visuals to one of its rigid core lines, thanks to technological advancements.

Scanning technology has been a big factor in improved visuals, noted Metroflor Corp.’s president, Russ Rogg. “We can scan at very high dpi (dots per inch), which gives more robust visual data with which to work. Through improved separation software over the past eight years, we are getting better at manipulating images, which helps when translating them to and engraving them on the cylinder,” Rogg said.

And, some are now printing directly onto the SPC core and bypassing the digital film altogether. The advantage is a more realistic look thanks to fewer pattern repeats. For example, Engineered Floors’ (EF) hard surface category manager, Ana Torrence shared, “In normal film products there are only four to five unique visuals and thus the product shows the pattern repeat when installed.” According to Torrence, EF’s latest technology allows for 30 to 35 unique visuals per style.

Construction Upgrade
In addition to enhanced visuals, several other advancements have taken place in the segment, particularly in construction and installation ability. “Several hybrid products with a rigid core but traditional face visuals like hardwood veneers have been introduced in the last couple of years,” noted Jason Surratt, senior vice president of product

Rigid core flooring, such as this from Engineered Floors, now boasts more realistic visuals than ever before.

PRINTING TECHNOLOGIES ARE MAKING IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DISTINGUISH VINYL FROM NATURAL PRODUCTS.”
— STEVE EHRLICH, NOVALIS

Cali’s rigid core — above is Vinyl Longboards in Seaboard Oak — brings an effortless look to this open floor plan.
Assure Certified
Everything you need to know about rigid core quality
By Dean Thompson, president and CEO, Resilient Floor Covering Institute

One of the most important things any RSA should know about is the new standard for rigid core quality: Assure Certified. We developed this certification at the Resilient Floor Covering Institute (RFCI), along with our membership representing the top rigid core manufacturers in the world. We also enlisted the services of SCS Global, an internationally recognized third-party evaluation, testing and certification organization, to develop the protocol and implement the program. Together, we created a comprehensive certification program that protects the integrity of rigid core flooring by giving all manufacturers the same high standards.

With Assure Certified, everyone including suppliers, distributors, retailers, consumers, designers, specifiers, purchasers and contractors have an easily recognizable certification when purchasing rigid core LVT (luxury vinyl tile) flooring. Qualifying for the Assure Certified designation means that the rigid core WPC or SPC LVT is “smart, durable and responsible” because it has met standards established by RFCI and SCS Global Services.

It’s also important to note that we created Assure Certified not only as a way of ensuring the highest product quality for any rigid core flooring sold in North America, but also as a way of addressing the concerns we discovered in our research of your flooring consumers. For instance, 72 percent of homeowners believe that their homes have a moderate to strong impact on their health and safety; which is only logical since we spend so much time indoors. Sixty percent are at least moderately concerned about indoor air quality. And did you know that 25 percent will actually avoid purchasing a product from a brand with a questionable environmental record? So as an industry, we’ll only continue to grow if we’re aligned with our customer’s needs and concerns. The Assure Certified program helps us do that for rigid core flooring.

As a sales associate, you can sell rigid core flooring with the Assure Certified seal with complete confidence. That’s because to earn that seal, the product in your showroom has to pass these critical steps:

1. Manufacturers must be certified to have quality control procedures to control material suppliers, product traceability, chain of custody and internal quality control testing.
2. Rigid core products being manufactured must be in compliance with the very rigorous 16-point performance testing as outlined in the ASTM 3261 standard.
3. The product must be tested to be compliant with protocols for indoor air quality (FloorScore).
4. There must be an absence of ortho-phthalates.
5. The product must be free of toxic heavy metals including lead, hexavalent chromium, cadmium and mercury.

Without a doubt, rigid core luxury vinyl tile is the most exciting and fastest growing category of flooring in North America. With the help of dedicated manufacturers, SCS Global Services and the Assure Certified program, we aim to keep it that way!

To learn more about the mission of RFCI and Assure Certified, visit rfci.com/assure-certified-rigid-core-flooring. To learn more about SCS Global Services and for more details on the certification process, visit scsglobalservices.com/services/assure-certified.

and design for Phenix.

And improvements in installation capability have ensured quicker installs and more exciting design possibilities. Yon Hinkle, vice president of product management for Armstrong Flooring said this innovation has enabled “fast and easy installation with thick, sturdy planks that lock together in a snap.” With no acclimation time needed and the ability to be installed over subfloor irregularities, rigid core is popular with the DIY crowd, he added, helping address the industry’s shortage of installers.

Mohawk’s vice president of product management Ed Sanchez said one of Mohawk’s recent advancements is in click technology that allows for herringbone installations without separate A and B boxes, enabling easy install with only one product.

Looking to the future of the segment, Sanchez added, “I think what we are going to see is continued advancement in each layer of product and the challenge to us as product developers is to take the innovation in each layer to deliver new and differentiated product to dealers and consumers.” He predicted continued advancements in décor, wearlayer technology, embossing and locking systems are on the horizon for the industry.

"WE EXPECT TO SEE INNOVATION IN RIGID CORE TECHNOLOGY CONTINUING TO EVOLVE RAPIDLY. WITH HIGH DEMAND AND SEEMINGLY LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES, THE RIGID CORE CATEGORY WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES IN THE FLOORING INDUSTRY.”

— Jeff Francis, Shaw
Engineered Floors (EF) is bringing the same commitment to excellence in product development through innovative technologies to the hard surface flooring arena that established the company as a leading soft flooring manufacturer.

Entering the rigid core category in 2018, it aimed to answer a growing need in the industry, said Ana Torrence, hard surface category manager. “We believe this focus gives us a competitive advantage to innovate and service our customers better than competitors can.”

The initial launch was with 42 products; today, EF offers 73 distinct items. “We are determined to offer the right SKUs to hit good/better/best price points, paired with aesthetics that appeal to consumers nation-wide,” Torrence explained. “We are thoughtful in developing our line to ensure we have the right styling and deep inventory to service our customers’ needs.”

Torrence added, “We are determined to solve important customer problems better and faster than competitors. “In 2018, we launched SPC products in a wide assortment of sizes — 6”×48”, 7”×48”, 9”×72” and multi width/multi length — faster than our competitors. In our tile products, we introduced proprietary technologies for its 3-D print aesthetics.

And while traditional SPC uses films with a pattern repeat of typically every five planks, EF is able to minimize repeats by digitally scanning real wood planks and printing them directly onto the core.

"Each ENSIGNIUM plank’s color, distinctive grain and knot is engrained directly onto the rigid core," Torrence explained. “Because of the unrivaled low pattern repeat, ENSIGNIUM provides a natural aesthetic that can only be compared to real hardwood.”

The technique also makes it easier to avoid repeating planks being installed adjacent to each other. “We scan real wood at twice the resolution of regular film and reproduce the visual and the 3D texture directly on the waterproof core. Our technology produces 30 to 35 unique visuals, so there is no pattern repeat in any box,” she reported.

Innovative technology is paramount to ENSIGNIUM’s performance. ENSIGNIUM does not have a traditional PVC wear layer that gives a plank a “plastic-like” aesthetic that looks fake. ENSIGNIUM uses Evertuff Clear coat, a proprietary coating technology that gives the product a more authentic visual and is so strong that it makes the product suitable for residential and commercial traffic applications with a durability of AC4 (considered highly abrasion resistant).

ENSIGNIUM features an SPC (stone plastic composite) core because the company believes it is superior to WPC (wood plastic composite) core in dimensional stability and indentation resistance.

“ENSIGNIUM looks like real wood but has superior scratch resistance and, with its waterproof core, it is more durable and unwavering to life’s messes than hardwood,” Torrence said.

Two new ENSIGNIUM collections were launched for 2020: Transcend, the opening price point, is available in six colors in 7”×48” planks; Avant Garde comes in 8”×60” planks and is available in eight colors. Both Transcend and Avant Garde are traffic rated for residential and commercial use.

“WE ARE DETERMINED TO OFFER THE RIGHT SKU’S TO HIT GOOD/BETTER/BEST PRICE POINTS, PAIRED WITH AESTHETICS THAT APPEAL TO CONSUMERS NATION-WIDE.”

— ANA TORRENCE, ENGINEERED FLOORS HARD SURFACES
Rigid Core Reinvented.

ENSIGNIUM, the new rigid core collection from Engineered Floors Hard Surfaces, comes with nature’s power engrained. Unlike the industry’s standard rigid core collections, ENSIGNIUM styles offer a low pattern repeat with each planks’ color, distinguished grain, and knot engrained directly onto the rigid core.
The wonder of waterproof

What is & isn’t covered with various constructions

By Kacey Perinelli

With the growing popularity of rigid core flooring such as WPC and SPC, there is increased emphasis on one compelling benefit — waterproof capability. Because rigid core flooring features cores that will not swell even when submerged in water, more manufacturers and retailers are touting the waterproof story, bringing even more awareness to this growing category.

**By Definition**

Waterproof by definition means that even when a floor is submerged completely in water, it will not absorb that water, bloom or change shape, said Ed Sanchez, vice president product management for Mohawk. However, he noted, “There are subtle differences between water-resistant and waterproof, so understanding how the manufacturer defines waterproof versus how the consumer defines waterproof” will help the RSA direct the consumer to the right floor for their needs.

Jenne Ross, director of marketing for Karndean agreed, adding, “Each manufacturer’s warranty is different, but it’s standard to cover ‘every day’ water such as rain tracked indoors from outside, water from dog bowls and liquids from small spills.” What is not covered she said, is typically “something like flood damage, substantial amounts of water left on the floor for prolonged periods of time, or damage from a natural disaster.”

The distinctions between waterproof and water-resistant are important to note, added Natalie Cady, director of category for Coretec. “While waterproof and water-resistant may sound similar, it’s important to understand they are not the same and each provides different features. With a waterproof product, spills will not be absorbed into the floor, regardless of the time the spill stays on the floor,” she said.

Most importantly, waterproof refers to standing water on top of the floor rather than necessarily addressing water that permeates from the subfloor. “The waterproof capabilities are topical and standing water should be wiped up immediately upon notice. If treated in this manner no water damage will occur to the product and the flooring will be gorgeous for years,” Novalis’ director of strategic accounts Nate Hohenstein said of the capabilities of rigid core flooring.

“**WATERPROOF RIGID CORE FLOORING PRODUCTS ARE IMPERMEABLE TO WATER WHICH MEANS THAT WATER WILL NOT SHRINK, WARP OR TRAVEL THROUGH THE PRODUCT.**”

— JEFF COLE, BEAUFLO

**Performance Pledge**

The word “waterproof” offers the consumer a promise that the floor will perform against water, but it is important to convey to the consumer exactly what that performance entails. For example, the planks themselves may be impermeable to water but if water enters from the subfloor and mold begins to grow, it is likely the floor will need to be replaced. It is therefore important for the RSA to be clear on the selling floor about what is and is not covered.

“Just because the floor is waterproof does not mean everything around it is waterproof. If water gets under the flooring, it can damage the subfloor or perimeter walls. RSAs must caution consumers that they should treat their floor with care because it’s a big investment and follow the manufacturer’s recommendations for regular maintenance,” shared president of Metroflor Corp. Russ Rogg. He added consumers today are looking for high performance floors that can go in rooms of the home where there is potential for water.

Highlighting the waterproof performance of these floors is important but it is also advisable to recommend floors based on their full range of performance benefits, said Jeff Francis, director of category management – resilient for Shaw. “Having a conversation with the consumer about their lifestyle, preference and application allows RSAs to make sound recommendations based on the performance attributes and styling the consumer wants while managing expectations. As waterproof is just one feature of this versatile flooring, communicating the multitude of benefits of rigid core products will serve both the RSA and consumer well.”

Armstrong Flooring’s vice president product management Yon Hinkle agreed, saying understanding the consumer is key. “It’s important to get a full understanding of the customer’s needs, expectations and the area where the flooring will be installed. One of the challenges is that there’s not always consensus among manufacturers, retailers and consumers about what ‘waterproof’ means.” He added that while a floor itself may be waterproof it does not mean it is able to prevent water from damaging the subfloor.

“Water will not damage the flooring. However, if water is trapped underneath the floor mold and mildew can grow. Thus, rigid core should be installed on...
a cured slab and in areas where water issues are addressed prior to installation. If there is a flood, the planks should be un-installed, the subfloor should be dried and the planks re-installed,” advised hard surface category manager for Engineered Floors, Ana Torrence.

Sales Floor Strategy

It is the responsibility of the retail sales associate to make sure the consumer knows what to expect from a floor’s performance. While the word “waterproof” has certainly created a buzz within the industry, a waterproof floor is not indestructible. Educating the consumer is the best way to set expectations and ensure that she will love her floor for years to come.

“Waterproof has become the go-to buzzword in the industry. We feel that the term ‘waterproof’ resonates and represents a much bigger picture to our customers,” shared Novalis’ Hohenstein. He added the idea of a waterproof floor also evokes the idea of a floor that is durable, something that busy families are seeking.

Hinkle agreed, “Waterproof is really just one part of an overall package that appeals to a customer … If a customer is looking for a waterproof floor, she’s likely also interested in a floor that will stand up to the everyday traffic you see in any busy house-

proof and the RSA should capitalize on this expectation.

Because the consumer thinks of easily maintained, worry-free flooring when she hears the word “waterproof,” it is definitely a word that can be used to leverage sales. “Ensuring our go to market strategy includes waterproof products is a must. This feature has become a staple in floor covering selections due to its enhanced performance and low-maintenance capabilities,” said EarthWerks’ director of marketing, Lindsey Nisbet.

Hohenstein added, “The impact water damage can do to a home is severe. The peace of mind delivered to a consumer from the ‘waterproof’ tagline cannot be underestimated. If a product contains technical features that provide a tangible waterproof story, the market suggests capitalizing on those attributes and selling based on a waterproof story.”

The waterproof story is compelling, but not bulletproof. Vice president of hard surface for The Dixie Group Jamann Stepp cautioned, “I believe it is important that the customer is informed of the rigid core products’ inherent waterproof properties as well as the other features and benefits that WPC, SPC and MGO offer. However, that is where it should stop.” Because the other areas around the floor are likely not waterproof, touting the benefits without overselling the capabilities is key.

“COMPLETELY WATERPROOF FLOORING CAN BE INSTALLED WITHOUT CONCERN IN KITCHENS, BATHROOMS AND BELOW GRADE. THEY ARE ALSO EASY TO CLEAN AND CAN BE LIGHTLY WET-MOPPED, ALTHOUGH SPILLS ON ANY FLOOR SHOULD BE CLEANED UP TO AVOID SEEPAGE INTO THE SUBFLOOR.”

— LAURA NIETO, CALI
Expanding Collections
MSI unveils 2020 visuals & performance benefits

By Kacey Perinelli

[Orange, Calif.] Focusing on trends is a specialty at MSI. Each year, the company focuses on bringing the latest colorways to market and this year will be no exception. With expanded visuals in its Everlife Collection, MSI is cementing its investment in LVT flooring.

NEW HORIZONS
MSI’s Everlife Collection will expand in 2020 to include farmhouse styles with on-trend, transitional designs across its Cyrus, XL Cyrus and Prescott Series. And the company’s XL Cyrus and Prescott will expand to include more performance-based products in the same great visuals as Cyrus.

“We learn a lot about what our customers want through our vast collections of flooring sales data, through various channels that we serve as the largest flooring distributor in America, and our new additions, we believe, represent the most sought-after designs that the consumers want: clean, transitional wood patterns with color hues that complement the white, cream and gray color schemes that dominate the wall and the countertop spaces,” shared Sam Kim, MSI’s senior vice president of product.

The company is expanding its XL Cyrus and Prescott Series’ product offerings to include hit visuals from the Cyrus Series. The Cyrus Series was a runaway hit for MSI, said Kim, and there were overwhelming requests from dealers wanting the graphics that were already present in Cyrus to be offered in upgraded XL Cyrus and in Prescott.

MSI’s XL Cyrus is a 9˝ x 60˝ XL plank format that offers an enhanced bevel. Prescott is a 7˝ x 48˝ format and 6.5mm thickness that includes a lifetime dent-proof warranty and commercial-grade 20mil CrystaLux™ wearlayer. "Inventory is now immediately available for the expansion, and we are seeing incredible reception of this expanded offering," Kim said. He added, “We could not be happier with the results that this expansion is producing.”

The performance of these products has always been top of mind for MSI. For example, “Our Prescott has always been a tank of a product in our line-up, featuring commercial grade CrystaLux™ wearlayer and an incredibly dense and strong core,” Kim shared. MSI wanted to bring the message of the strength of this product to consumers, which meant adding the lifetime residential dent-proof warranty.

INGENUITY ABOUNDS
In addition to performance, MSI’s floors are in tune with the latest trends in design. MSI is known for being a leader in this category and gets its inspirations directly from everyday consumers. Noted Emily Holle, trend & design director, “We attend all the industry shows and are keenly aware of the trends in the fashion industry, but we are grounded on reality and what the consumers want today.”

The company has data that aides in its efforts to track the latest trends. “We have a robust database of customer purchases through the vast dealer and fabricator networks we service, through our countertop, wall, and flooring, in which we are the largest importer and distributor, we are able to quickly spot new trends and demands,” Kim shared.

Keeping up to date also requires being able to pivot on a moment’s notice. Noted Kim, “We act fast to cater to the needs of what our consumers want. As to what we see as the emerging, mainstream styles we think will be great hits — be on the lookout for our second quarter of 2020 new color introduction!”

-- SAM KIM, MSI

Clean colors that complement neutral surroundings are on-trend. Seen here is the Prescott Series in color Finely.

Cyrus in color Bembridge is a dark, dramatic look perfect for smaller spaces like bathrooms.

“We BELIEVE THAT SPC IS THE CLEAR WINNER IN THE RIGID CORE CATEGORY AND PLAN TO CONTINUE TO UTILIZE THIS PLATFORM TO EXPAND OUR OFFERINGS.”

— SAM KIM, MSI
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Come see us at Coverings booth 3055 to view all of our newest collections.
The latest trends in rigid core looks

By Ryane DeFalco

The rigid core category has grown to impressive lengths since its inception. Not only have performance benefits strengthened, but visual capabilities keep getting better and better. Whether it be realistic natural looks or deepening shades of color, rigid core is sure to impress any consumer looking for a fabulous floor.

WOOD WOWS

The look of hardwood is one of the top visuals that consumers crave. The rigid core category offers end-users the chance to walk on the natural, biophilic design of wood without the higher price point. Ranging from light oak visuals to weathering darker tones, there’s no limit to how similar this category can replicate hardwood looks.
Engineered Floors Hard Surface, Ensignium

Shaw, Floorté Elite

COREtec Plus Enhanced

The Dixie Group TRUCOR Prime, XXL
The Solid Choice

SolidTech & SolidTech Plus answer market needs

By Amy Rush-Imber

[Calhoun, Ga.] Mohawk’s SolidTech and SolidTech Plus offer specialty retail a one-two punch — a WPC and an SPC product, each with its own unique story.

In fact, SolidTech came on the scene to tackle problems other products in the market were having. And today, these two collections offer a warranty for performance along with on-trend design.

The Difference is in the Details

SolidTech, a WPC, was launched to address performance issues experienced with some products in the market, explained Angela Duke, director of brand marketing for Mohawk. “The WPC formula in SolidTech answers the problems of dimensional stability in any room and climate. And, it is a waterproof product,” she offered.

SolidTech Plus, introduced last year, is an SPC that offers the customer a step-up option. While SolidTech has a 12 mil wearlayer, SolidTech Plus boasts a 20 mil wearlayer along with additional performance attributes such as enhanced stain and scratch resistance. And, with its EasyClean technology, the flooring — with three-times more protection — is easy to care for. It is also, according to Duke, the first rigid luxury vinyl product that is 100 percent made in the U.S.A. offering the company quality control and a quicker turnaround time.

“Our retailers have been asking for a 100 percent domestically produced rigid vinyl product that combines the on-trend designs consumers will love with high-performance durability that consumers need. SolidTech Plus was developed to meet this demand,” said Duke.

And because it can withstand moisture along with different climates, it is ideal for just about any room in the home. The wearability and durability is all backed by Mohawk’s All Pet Plus Protection, the only warranty to cover all pets, all accidents, all the time — plus scratch protection.

Design Direction

Mohawk made sure to hit key trends with the SolidTech portfolio. While SolidTech came on the scene two years ago with more rustic visuals, standard wood designs and just a few tile options, today’s SolidTech has been enhanced with wider, longer planks and more color variations. And, SolidTech Plus offers what Duke called, “more on-trend visuals and natural, cleaner looks.”

“We have the cleaner premier oak looks and some refined rustics that have sophisticated color play. All tones are very warm and natural, which is definitely the trend,” described Caroline Wille, vice president of design and development for resilient.

There are two SolidTech Plus collections encompassing 18 new styles that range in color from light grays to dark browns. Offered Wille, “We have a petrified wood look with some metallic veining, which is definitely an on-trend visual due to the very natural but still subtle movement which creates a very dynamic look. For instance, the silver accent works well with darker cabinets but also the more cleaner industrial style interiors.”

Campaign Trail

The company wants to make sure that consumers connect with SolidTech and SolidTech Plus so the rigid core products are part of brand campaigns within Mohawk’s Neighborhood Ad Manager that provides a local advertising solution to reach shoppers and drive traffic in-store.

“We are launching the More Moments campaign again with a specific rotation for SolidTech and SolidTech Plus,” said Duke. “We have two eight-week national promotions from Mohawk and within that, we’re promoting SolidTech and SolidTech Plus,” she explained, adding that one is the Mohawk More Floor sales promotion.

“You will see campaign images switching the conversation around waterproof. The consumers are looking for waterproof product and we want to make sure they understand waterproof,” said Duke.

More Moments are Made on Mohawk’s SolidTech Plus.

Install Integrity

A product’s performance is only as good as the sum of its components. And that’s why Mohawk uses the Uniclic click system for both SolidTech and SolidTech Plus. It is also used for RevWood and Pergo Extreme.

“Uniclic is our proprietary locking system that makes it super easy for installers and it provides added waterproof protection,” reported Angela Duke, director of brand marketing for Mohawk. “The system is engineered so that it keeps pinching on the joints so when it clicks together, nothing can seep through.”
MORE CONFIDENT MOMENTS ARE MADE ON MOHAWK

Mohawk’s new waterproof products, SolidTech Plus and RevWood Plus, make it easier for your RSAs to finalize the sale. With All Pet Plus Protection & Warranty, these floors are the perfect choice for any room. Whether your customer is looking for a wood look or high performance, you’ll be able to offer more confident moments with a solution they need in a style they want.
COLOR CONTRAST

Technology allows the rigid core category to be creative with its color choice. Here, suppliers use digital printing to include several hues all in a singular plank, highlighting the beauty of dark and light hardwoods.
In The Details ....

A huge draw to hardwood visuals is the ability to emphasize real wood’s unique graining. These hardwood textures look so real, consumers could easily mistake them for the real thing.
Keeping It Current
Novalis Innovative Flooring uncovers the latest trends

By Kacey Perinelli

[Dalton] When shopping for flooring, a consumer’s number one concern is how the floor will look in her home. Novalis Innovative Flooring, an expert in the rigid core field, is fulfilling the consumer’s desire for a beautiful floor with updated visuals in its Maybree® collection by NovaFloor®.

“In early 2020, we introduced the newly expanded Maybree® collection by NovaFloor® and are highlighting 10 new visuals in the line,” shared Steve Ehrlich, vice president of sales and marketing for Novalis. Included in the new visuals are four Barrel Oak planks that feature a clean look with subtle European inspired hues including pale blonde, heirloom brown and subdued gray, he added. These designs feature an extra-large, or “Estate-Sized,” 8˝ × 72˝ format.

TODAY’S TRENDS
The amount of information available online is leading to more unique home design as consumers are exposed to a wider array of visuals. “Our customers are more informed and inspired than ever before. With the internet, all the latest trends are at their fingertips and they feel empowered to put their own stamp on their spaces,” said director of marketing and creative design, Kim Hill.

That being the case, it is important to strike a balance between being on-trend and being “trendy,” Hill said. “Due to our exceptionally durable construction, the flooring is going to be beautiful for years to come. We want the styles to have staying power for our customers as well,” she explained.

To ensure its designs are trend-right but will stand the test of time, Novalis conducts extensive trend research and product development.

“We chose the XL or Estate-Sized, as we prefer to call it, formats in both the plank and tile visuals because large formats are trending in the market today. This supports both classic and modern looks and we feel will continue to trend-up in the years to come,” Hill noted, adding interior palettes have warmed recently. So, while NovaFloor® will continue offering a range of neutrals, it will place more emphasis on beige, blonde and taupe than in the past.

In addition, NovaFloor® is spotlighting tile visuals. “We are also highlighting six new tiles, four Lunar Marble and two Washed Concrete,” Ehrlich noted. These tiles are also available in an Estate-Sized format of 16˝ × 32˝. He added, “We chose marble and concrete visuals to offer two very different, yet easily styled visuals with mass appeal. The palette for the tiles consists of a range of neutrals inspired by nature. From soft white to warm taupe and stone grays, we have it all.”

SEEING STYLE
Novalis Innovative Flooring is constantly looking for the latest and greatest designs. What is special about the way the company operates is how thoroughly it researches in order to bring the very best product to market.

“Our visuals are chosen based on market trend research and customer collaboration that comes from many different sources and is gathered continuously throughout the year,” shared Hill. Sources include world travels, customer feedback and market research. Novalis makes it a priority to stay updated about what is trending. It looks to social media, shelter magazines, interior designers and professionally designed spaces as well as television and runway shows.

Hill explained, “Trends are interconnected. All interior design starts with the runway and spreads from there. While it may seem like watching the latest fashion would have nothing to do with the luxury vinyl business, it is actually a sneak peek into what styles and colors are around the corner.”

And, Novalis looks to its partners for guidance. “In addition to our own research, we truly listen to our retailers and value their opinions. They are our direct line of contact with the customer and know what it is that the market is looking for,” Ehrlich asserted.
Hayes and Knox have some big ideas! These two mad scientists are always making plans for their next invention which tend to wreck havoc on their Mom's gorgeous floors. Fortunately, the brainiacs at NovaFloor® found a solution: Maybree® planks with NovaShield®. This exclusive coating protects against the most destructive experiments two little boys can concoct. From home-made volcano eruptions to racing derby cars, NovaShield® can handle it all. Hayes' and Knox's inventive minds are free to roam and live life's happiest moments thanks to NovaShield®.

VISIT NOVAFLOOR.US TO LEARN MORE
**STYLISH STONE**

Several rigid core manufactures have taken a page from the stone category for visual inspiration. Stone looks bring a wistful feeling from outdoors into the home and onto the floors and walls.

**CONCRETE ANSWER**

A rigid core floor with a concrete visual allows consumers to have the style of concrete without the complicated installation process. The look of polished concrete is easily achievable and irresistible in the rigid core segment.
MARVELOUS MARBLES

BLACK BEAUTY

Dark marble visuals are daring and bold, making them a luxurious choice. They are also an excellent option for consumers who want to add some drama to their floors and home.

BRIGHT WHITES

The elegance of marble looks are sure to bring extra flare to any space. Consumers are sure to appreciate light Calcutta visuals with classic deep veining but available at a more affordable price than natural stone.
Wood Visuals Win
For 2020, Shaw introduced 10 cleaner, lighter visuals to follow current interior design trends that, so far, have been well-received by retailers from across the country. These colors provided an update for Endura, which Francis indicated is a top seller, making the tried-and-true favorite more on-trend. Here, FCW outlines a few of retailer’s Floorté favorites:

Prodigy HDR Plus, the inaugural style of Floorté Elite Series, boasts an innovative new embossing technique to better mimic real hardwood. New PAWdefense™ technology offers industry-leading scratch resistance, making it ideal for dining rooms.

Endura from the Floorté Pro Series comes in 30 different colors and can be installed above, on and below grade. The warm White Sand color, pictured here, is a great fit for modern interiors featuring a clean, minimalist look.

“Much of the success of our Floorté waterproof collection can be attributed to its simplicity and availability that make it an easy go-to for RSAs. With Shaw Floors innovative in-store merchandising, Floorté styles are organized in series, making it easy for RSAs to tell the unique performance story of our Classic, Pro, Hardwood and Elite Series platforms.”

— Jeff Francis, Shaw Floors

Stylish to the core
Built to endure, Shaw’s Floorté family is a go-to for the RSA

By Morgan Bulman

[Dalton] As a domestic manufacturer with the largest portfolio of rigid core flooring, Shaw Floors told FCW it has the ability to quickly service orders for a category as high in demand as resilient, making it a great partner for retailers. Among the company’s winning vinyl products is the Floorté collection — each of this label’s product options are 100 percent waterproof, meaning consumers can rest easy when it comes to anything from spills and messes to pet accidents, no matter which series is selected.

And, according to Jeff Francis, director of category management-resilient, the most important question the RSA can ask during the sale is “waterproof and what else?” This is particularly important today when waterproof is an expected attribute as opposed to the differentiator it once was. It’s why Francis suggested defining a customer’s lifestyle first before determining flooring solutions.

But Francis also noted a retailer can’t go wrong with stocking the entire Floorté family, which has a floor to meet every budget and style preference. “With enhanced warmth, softness and sound absorption, Floorté Classic Series offers classic style with amplified comfort,” he explained. “Floorté Pro Series withstands high traffic and extreme temperatures. Floorté Hardwood, a real waterproof hardwood product, gives consumers the timeless beauty of true hardwood. New in 2020, Floorté Elite Series offers the ultimate in scratch resistance and high-definition realism on a PVC-free mineral core.”

Purrfect for Pets
All Floorté products are built to endure kids, pets and active lifestyles. The company’s latest waterproof innovation is Floorté Elite Series, boasting elite pet protection with an unprecedented five-year residential scratch warranty. Francis shared this is possible thanks to the company’s “revolutionary PAWdefense™ technology that guards against scratches from pet nails, dining room chairs and other common household activity.”

Francis continued the product’s performance story comes coupled with realistic, high-definition visuals. “The mineral core allowed for the development of our new HDR embossing technique that mimics high and low gloss levels in the same plank — a design effect no other rigid platform can achieve,” he said. “Floorté Elite Series is the ultimate solution for style-conscious pet parents in need of a 100 percent waterproof floor that’s built to endure.”
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Sell Responsibly
Having the right consumer conversations about waterproof

By Kacey Perinelli

As the “waterproof” craze takes over the industry, retailers are seeing the effects firsthand. With more consumers beginning their shopping journey online, and learning about flooring from avenues such as Pinterest, Houzz and HGTV, more and more people are entering stores asking for waterproof flooring.

Manufacturers too are marketing the waterproof story and adding signage to displays touting these benefits. This means in stores the waterproof message is being advertised loud and clear. It is then up to the retailer to ensure the consumer knows the reality of what waterproof flooring offers in terms of performance.

**What’s really waterproof?**

What the consumer thinks when they hear the word “waterproof” might not be exactly what the product can guarantee in terms of performance, so setting expectations with your customers at retail is of utmost importance. After all, the floor itself may be waterproof but damage due to a flood of any kind is likely not covered by the product’s warranty.

“What we try and make the customer understand is that these floors are durable and are great for areas that receive topical moisture like in a kitchen, bath or where you would keep the dog’s food and water,” said Chris Cosentino, vice president of Hadinger Flooring in North Naples, Fla. However, he said, these floors are not going to stand up to a flood, though some customers may believe they will. “Customers need to be educated on the limitations of the product,” Cosentino added.

There is also the possibility to remove the floors and re-install them if there has been major water damage to the subfloor. Ryan Henry, vice president of Bert Henry Carpet and Tile in Tulsa, Okla. shared, “I tell customers in extreme cases the flooring could potentially be removed and re-installed if there was a major water leak.” He said it is important to convey that just because the floor itself is undamaged does not mean the same holds true of the subfloor or adjacent walls.

“The consumer needs to understand that the subfloor underneath is not waterproof and most floors that are being sold as waterproof are not watertight, [meaning] water can get underneath or through the locking systems,” explained Dustin Bowcutt, co-owner of Bowcutt’s Flooring America in Bluffdale, Utah. Waterproof floors, he said, are great for topical water.

For Chris Galvan, co-owner of The Floor Store in Chandler, Ariz., one of the greatest benefits of waterproof flooring is its ability to be installed in any area of the home. “The waterproof story is so important [for aesthetics] because you can carry a project throughout all areas,” he shared. He added that the buzz of “waterproof” is bringing more attention to the vinyl category. “Vinyl wasn’t a big selling word or category, but ‘waterproof’ is taking over,” he said.

**Customer Service**

“The customer is always right,” is an adage that can be heard in any consumer-facing industry. And these days, the flooring customer is coming in specifically asking for waterproof flooring thanks to marketing online, in big box stores and on television.

“Most people come in specifically asking for waterproof,” Dean Merrell, owner of Castle Floors in Mesa, Ariz. told *FCW*. He added that not only do they want this at-

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“THIS FLOOR IS INTENDED FOR A SITUATION WHERE YOU’RE STANDING IN THE KITCHEN AND FILLING THE DISHWASHER – DROPPING WATER ON THE FLOOR. THAT WATER IS EASILY MOPPED UP. THIS IS NOT MEANT FOR DISASTERS OR PLUMBING ISSUES.”

— Michael Haddad, Maryland Carpet

In areas of the home where water is a concern, rigid core, such as this from The Dixie Group, might be the right fit for the consumer.
tribute, he believes in most cases it would make a difference in the long run “if there was water of any kind” in their home.

In Merrell’s area of the country, there are a fair number of residents who only stay the winter. Previously, when they arrived in October, Castle Floors would do a lot of replacements due to rain getting into homes when the customers were not in residence. This, Merrell said, was more prevalent before the uptick in waterproof flooring customers.

In South Florida, waterproof flooring is particularly popular. “There has been a huge uptick in customers coming in asking about these floors. This has become the most popular product in our area by far. Waterproof flooring is perfect for homes in South Florida; it looks great, is durable and can withstand topical moisture as well as sand and debris being drug in from the outside which we get a lot of here,” shared Cosentino.

Part of giving the customer what she wants is making sure she is asking for the right thing. “One of the things I’ve learned being in sales is it’s [important to] profile your client. What are they there for, what’s the objective, what are they really looking for and what will look best for them,” noted Michael Haddad, owner of Maryland Carpet in Gaithersburg, Md. He said he advises his staff to ask questions of the client to assess if waterproof flooring is truly for them.

It is important for the RSA to educate the consumer about what they are actually buying, Galvan said. Nothing is 100 percent waterproof, he explained, “it’s a great pitch” but it depends on the consumer’s needs. For example, he said, “If they’re going through the family room and kids are coming in from the pool, if there’s moisture, clean it up.” The thing that makes it waterproof, Galvan added, is not needing to rush or worry about what that topical moisture will do to the floor.

Haddad agreed that nothing is truly 100 percent waterproof. “The word waterproof is over-used. An example I give is if you have a dishwasher and it goes bad, the water will find the easiest way to penetrate between baseboards and under the floor itself to your subfloor.” The floors, he said, aren’t meant to be in a pool or a bathtub. If you fill the floor with water, “it will seep somewhere.”

In fact, said Bowcutt, some customers think the capabilities of waterproof LVT or rigid core are the same as if they install a tile shower, where water is trapped, and this is simply not the case. “We keep people informed [of the limitations] as much as we can,” he offered.

Education is important, said Cosentino. “We educate our customers on the limitations of this product. There is no such thing as a completely waterproof product and we make them aware of that. That is the key to any sale, make sure your customers understand the product, its capabilities and its limitations.”

“We’re very proud of the education here with finding the right product for their home. I try not to get too technical. I focus on aesthetic and design.”
— Chris Galvan, The Floor Store

“We these waterproof floors are a huge improvement over laminates of the past. For active families, I believe it is a good choice.”
— Ryan Henry, Bert Henry Carpet and Tile

One of waterproof flooring’s greatest benefits is its ability to be installed in any room of the home, such as this from MSI, keeping a consistent design throughout a space.
The Total Solution Provider

CFL uses innovation to meet all performance, style & budget needs

By Mallory Cruise-McGrath

[Dalton] Consumers looking for flooring options with waterproof, sound abatement, scratch-resistance, sustainable and style and design properties can find it all within CFL’s broad portfolio of rigid core products.

“CFL offers the consumer rigid products in varying constructions across all price points, whether planks, tiles or innovative surface attributes,” CFL North America president Barron Frith shared with FCW. “With different features and our focus on performance benefits, no matter the consumer's budget or application — there is a quality option available for them to purchase.”

Rigid core products are undoubtedly an excellent flooring choice as they’re highly suitable for every room in the home. However, not every product is created equal and therein lies the opportunity for the sales professional to highlight the key differences and benefits of the many rigid core products available today.

“Recently, there have been many hybrid types of rigid products introduced into the market, and the industry needs to add clarity and do a better job of educating consumers on the features and benefits of each differing rigid product,” offered Frith.

For instance, CFL’s newest introductions in the waterproof category include Tenacity (100 percent PVC free engineered stone base); FirmFit MTL (SPC with the same scratch-resistance as laminate); and, NovoCore® Q (ultra-quiet SPC). The company’s portfolio focuses on versatility as each innovative collection provides solutions to challenges consumers have faced in the past with different rigid core lines, but without sacrificing style.

“We continue to push innovation,” explained Frith. For instance, “We are seeing an increased demand for larger scale products and we have responded to this need with larger scale product offerings such as our XXL tiles and XXL planks.”

Indeed, CFL’s leadership position is based largely on the company’s commitment to addressing product category flaws in order to develop superior products.

“CFL, in general, has really been the leader of bringing new technology to market,” said Austin Starnes, hardwood product manager at distributor BPI. “The fun part about doing business with them is they’re not about how to cheapen the product but rather they focus on fixing problems to make a better product.”

While innovative and style-forward, CFL products also emphasize sustainability.

“We are committed to providing products with excellent indoor air quality — that is why all of our products are Greenguard certified,” said Frith. “We have developed products that are PVC-free and feature a specially developed backing pad made from recycled PET that not only performs in terms of sound control and mold resistance but helps to recycle used plastic bottles.”

**PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO**

[Dalton] CFL’s arsenal of high-performing and design-forward rigid core products comes complete with the features, benefits and aesthetics to meet all consumer needs and price points. CFL’s rigid core offering includes:

- **Tenacity** - Falling within the ever-growing engineered stone category, Tenacity offers consumers the performance value of a rigid core product with the aesthetics of tile and stone. Tenacity, however, ups the ante, bringing to residential and commercial markets a design-right floor with enhanced durability, increased scratch-resistance and a strong sustainability story. For every 10 square feet of product, 11 recycled plastic bottles are used to create Tenacity’s NET+ performance underlayment. “An average American house can recycle up to 2,000 plastic bottles just by installing Tenacity flooring,” explained CFL North America president Barron Frith.

  Distributor BPI is currently launching Tenacity and, according to hardwood product manager Austin Starnes, is already seeing success. “The reception so far has been great. We’ve been seeing some Main St. and even some full commercial dealers finding applications for it,” he said. “It can be installed up to 10,000 square feet without the need for transitions and that’s an important story. We also share that it has a stone core, is PVC-free and recycled content is used to make the attached pad — there are so many features and benefits that customers are eating it up, and it gets us out of the price war.”

  - **FirmFit MTL** - FirmFit MTL features a FirmFit core but was developed to have the most scratch resistant surface in the Rigid category, with a scratch and stain resistance up to three-times more superior than vinyl products such as SPC, WPC or LVT (luxury vinyl tile).

  - **NovoCore® Q** - NovoCore® Q is the next generation of luxury vinyl flooring that champions the quest for a quieter, high performing hard surface solution. The construction allows NovoCore Q to be the quietest floor covering product in the industry without sacrificing any of the performance benefits of standard NovoCore SPC or WPC.

  BPI in fact is set to launch NovoCore® Q later this year. “We’re excited for NovoCore® Q. With its sound-absorption properties, it gives us a story to tell our customers that no one else has right now,” added Starnes.
FIRMFIT
The Strongest Waterproof Floor...

Ultra Scratch, Stain, and Dent Resistance

Fit for when life happens...

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Tackling the Tough Stuff
Retailers dish on the category
By Teresa O’Dea Hein

When starting any dialogue with a customer, it’s always important to make sure you’re on the same page. Since the extremely popular rigid core flooring products are referred to in so many different ways — rigid core, luxury vinyl, luxury vinyl plank (LVP), waterproof vinyl or even a brand name — take a moment to define the terms so that everyone is communicating accurately.

“Generally, in Naples, customers are coming asking for Coretec or waterproof flooring,” reported Chris Cosentino, vice president, Hadinger Flooring, Naples, Fla. “USFloors has done an incredible job of marketing Coretec and customers believe it is a style of flooring — not an actual brand from one manufacturer,” he said, adding that, no matter what name it goes by, “Waterproof flooring is how many of the stores are marketing LVP in South Florida.”

However it is referred to, rigid core flooring has grown very popular across the country. And, for some retailers, such as The Floor Meisters, also based in Naples, Fla., luxury vinyl now makes up about 80 percent of flooring sales.

Qualifying the Customer
Because there are many formats and constructions of flooring available today, it is important to qualify just what the customer’s wants and needs are. Harrison Lipschutz, sales consultant at Colorado Carpet & Rug Flooring Center in Denver, Colo., starts off with the standard questions — “Where do you want to install this flooring? Do you have children? Do you have pets? What is the budget?”

And then, he said, he listens. Really listens. “I pick up on what the customer says,” Lipschutz said. “I let the customer lead the conversation, after I ask those qualifying questions. And if it’s a couple, I listen to what they say to each other.”

He explained that his sales style is to put a lot of energy into his presentations. “I try to get the customer excited about having this type of flooring in their home.”

Lipschutz also draws on his own experience of dealing with salespeople “to know that I don’t want people to feel overwhelmed and out of control; I want the customer to feel like they’re in charge.”

Cosentino agreed. “It’s all about listening to the customer, as well as our follow-up and service level.”

Product Benefits
Spotlighting the significant benefits of rigid core flooring is essential, especially in certain climates and regions. T.J. Meister, owner/operator at The Floor Meisters, noted, “Here in Southwest Florida, we have a lot of humidity, and a lot of people have pools. Plus, many people have dogs — between water bowls and the occasional accidents, that creates moisture problems, which can stain hardwood flooring,” he said, adding, “People love the look of wood but not the cost. And with luxury vinyl, people don’t have to deal with..."
grout lines that attract dirt.”

Loren Van Middendorp, sales at Pierce Flooring in Bozeman, Mont. reported, “Customers like that it’s waterproof, durable, and the patterns and colors it comes in. What people really like about [rigid core] is that water cannot hurt it,” he continued. “It’s especially appealing to people after they’ve had a pipe burst, and we’ve seemed to see a bit of pipes freezing and bursting.”

Van Middendorp added that as open floor plans gain popularity, rigid core flooring can run from the kitchen into other areas for more continuity. “It makes the space feel bigger,” he noted. “Luxury vinyl is easy to maintain, time-less and practical.”

The fact that these floors can typically be installed over existing ceramic tile also appeals to many customers. While ideally, according to Cosentino, it’s best to remove old tile, the fact that homeowners could avoid dealing with the inconvenience, cost, dust and debris of tearing up old ceramic tile is very attractive.

“WATERPROOF VINYL IS A VERY VERSATILE FLOOR THAT OFFERS EASE OF MIND.”
— ROSS WILLIAMS, FLOORING 101, THOUSAND OAKS, CALIF.

COLOR WHEEL

Not surprisingly, color and style preferences tend to vary from region to region. Coastal colors — light, bright and clean — dominate in South Florida, according to Cosentino. “Also, the longer the boards, the better,” he added. “Our customers don’t like rustic looks or knots.”

However, in some places, such as Denver, a multiplicity of options are popular, according to Lipschutz. “Modern, clean...
Competitive EDGE

Engage Inception SPC successfully stands out

By Kacey Perinelli

[Norwalk, Conn.] Metroflor Corp.’s Engage Inception SPC was introduced to the market in 2019. Now, Metroflor is setting itself apart from the competition with this innovative SPC, offering more formats and visuals than ever before.

“Some of the new Engage Inception formats like multi-width, tile and longer/wider planks have just recently been adopted by distribution for this year’s spring selling season. But our distributors are excited to add these higher-styled formats in their portfolio,” shared Russ Rogg, president of Metroflor Corp.

With floors that not only look amazing but that also offer exceptional performance and a compelling sustainability story, Metroflor stands out.

SPECTACULAR SPECS

Engage Inception features standard 7” x 48” planks, multi-width planks, 9” x 60” longer/wider planks and 12” x 24” tiles, Rogg shared, with the latter three being newer introductions. These plank and tile formats feature a 4.2mm core, 1 mm HDPE underlayment and wearlayers of 6mil, 8mil, 12mil and 20mil. “The robust 5 mm overall gauge is thicker than many SPCs on the market,” he added.

Performance is also a key factor in Metroflor’s success. “The performance of Engage Inception floors is enhanced by Metroflor’s proprietary FX2 Surface Protetant and a pre-attached high-performance High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) underlayment,” Rogg said.

As well, the products feature excellent sound abatement. “The combination of our SPC panel and our 1.0mm High Density Polyethylene pad results in sound performance ratings of 61 STC and 67 IIC, making them well suited for residential and commercial multi-story buildings where transmitted sound insulation is imperative,” said Rogg.

Engage Inception also has the honor of being the first SPC product in the world for which Declare Labels have been published, along with Health Product Declarations (HPDs), noted Rogg. This fits in with Metroflor’s commitment to sustainability and transparency. In fact, he said, Engage Inception has reached the highest level of transparency in product ingredients.

Longer and wider planks are trending. Seen here is Sandalwood.

DEDICATED TO DESIGN

In addition to its exceptional performance, Engage Inception is also beautifully designed. Metroflor is keeping on top of the latest trends in design to ensure stunning, fashion-forward looks are available at retail.

Robert Langstaff, director of design for Metroflor Corp., said people gravitate toward familiarity. “We find that consumers are comfortable with what they know best: wood, stone and subtle abstracts.” Wood looks blend with many interior design styles, he noted.

He added, “Stones are becoming more subtle in design and color to create a neutral base to build upon, and abstracts in a softer, solid palette create a long-lasting, classic foundation for the interior space.” He also noted design preference tends to shift based on generational demographics.

When it comes to plank size, 48-inch planks still do well but the 60-inch planks are gaining in popularity, Langstaff shared, adding, “The effect is similar to what’s available in engineered wood plank but with the performance benefits of SPC.”

The combination of benefits offered by Engage Inception are sure to set it apart from other offerings in the market. “It’s price, design and performance that sell SPC flooring, and Engage Inception delivers on all fronts,” said Rogg.

“COMPETITION WITHIN THE CATEGORY HAS PUSHED THE QUALITY OF DESIGNS HIGHER. WE SET OURSELVES APART IN PRINT FIDELITY, CURRENT AND FORWARD COLOR TRENDS AND EMBOSSEEING.”

— ROBERT LANGSTAFF, METROFLOR CORP.
Engage Inception’s premium attached HDPE foam underlayment provides sound absorption to reduce floor-to-floor sound transmission.
MAINTAINING INTEGRITY

RETAIL TIPS FOR BattLING PRICE EROSION

Maintaining margins is an important factor for successful floor covering retailers. In fact, Business guru Warren Buffett sagely observed, “The single-most important decision in evaluating a business is pricing power ... If you’ve got the power to raise prices without losing business to a competitor, you’ve got a very good business.”

Still, with so many suppliers available, price erosion can be a threat. How do successful retailers maintain price integrity and turn a healthy profit in a category that is fiercely competitive?

**Margin Calls**

“We’re not in a race to the bottom,” said Chris Cosentino, vice president, Hadinger Flooring, Naples, Fla. “We charge a fair price and give excellent service.”

Combatting price erosion is a tough one, he acknowledged, “and that’s definitely eaten into the tile and hardwood categories. We support our NFA partners because we know we’ll get the best deals from them,” Cosentino added. “And we try to sell higher-end products; we’re selling a lot of premium Coretec.”

While Dan Mandel, owner of Sterling Carpet & Flooring, with stores in Anaheim and Mission Viejo, Calif., conceded that there is “major price erosion in the waterproof vinyl category,” he added, “We are big believers in you get what you pay for. Some small, fly-by-night suppliers won’t be around in a few years, and we don’t feel we are doing the customer a service by selling them an inferior product.

“Our main suppliers are Coretec/Shaw and Cali brands,” he continued. “We feel they are companies with a lot of innovation and integrity. They seem to always be on the forefront of styling, color and evolving the category, so we are very loyal to them. We know they will always stand behind us and, ultimately, the customer. To me as a consumer, this is worth more than saving a few dollars over the life of a floor.”

“Our big sellers are the products that we buy in bulk and carry in stock,” reported Loren Van Middendorp, sales at Pierce Flooring in Bozeman, Mont. “With these, we can offer a better price.” And the fact that it’s in stock is a big plus for customers, he added, “especially in summer and fall, when installer calendars are full.”

—Teresa O’Dea Hein

_RETAILERS REVEAL_
**Tough Stuff**

Continued from page 35

wood looks are popular in urban settings while rustic styles are more favored in mountain areas.

Warm, natural earthen tones are popular in Montana, said Van Middendorp. “People like the look of oak, hickory and pine. And color fluctuations and contrast. Very, very dark colors have been a trend,” he added, “but they show every speck of dust. They don’t camouflage dust as well as the medium woodgrain looks.”

In California, Williams said, “Gray is still popular but people are starting to lean toward warmer colors with a hint of gray. They want something that goes with the furniture they have. Some people like a cleaner look, while others like more knotholes.”

**UP CLOSE & PERSONAL**

Product samples are key to have on hand so that people can take them home and examine how they look in their own lighting conditions.

“There’s just no substitute for seeing the colors in person, holding the samples in your hand, and running your fingers over them,” Van Middendorp pointed out. “Colors on websites are not always very true to life,” he added.

Added Williams, “Getting customers to take samples home is key. I always suggest that people take home two or three so they have options.”

Some retailers cut their own samples so customers can take them home to get an accurate idea of how products will look in their own homes. And, retailers such as Floor Meisters, install sections of luxury vinyl on their showroom floors. This enables retailers to show customers how styles and colors will actually look and feel to walk on.

Hadinger stocks 30-40 SKUs of rigid core. So that customers can see the color and movement within a style, it also built a lot of custom wall displays spotlighting 4’ × 6’ panels of rigid core flooring, with containers of take-home samples below.

As far as merchandising goes, “That’s where we, the sales staff, come in,” Van Middendorp believes.

Sales technique cannot be discounted. “Don’t be afraid to sell yourself and sell your service,” Cosentino advised. “Our success here is due to the fact that we don’t try to be a low-price leader. We give excellent service and charge a fair price. We sell Hadinger — our brand.”

**THE NEW FRONTIER**

Rigid Core category poised for continued innovation

[Dalton] The Rigid Core category is one of the most innovative in the floor covering industry with new advancements being made daily — innovations that enhance the look of a product or resolve a performance or quality issue. Coretec president and WPC inventor Piet Dossche said that these tech-forward products will always be embraced by dealers and consumers alike and able to command a premium price.

“The Rigid Core category right now is at a point where the ‘rough, primary’ innovation has happened for the most part, and now the category is focusing more on the ‘intricate, more refined’ improvements to enhance the product,” said Dossche.

These improvements, he said, include scratch resistance through the use of different wearlayers and finishes; sharper clarity and more realistic looks in decors and design, using alternative films and print technologies; realism in bevel technology; sound abatement; and, enhanced performance in dimensional stability. And, these types of benefits are constantly being evaluated in order to bring a better product and solution to the market.

“New market introductions featuring these more refined but important features will appear this year and beyond and will keep the category vibrant and growing,” said Dossche.

Looking to the future, Dossche said Coretec will focus on other surfaces besides flooring as well as products for the home and commercial space. “Any new Coretec innovation will always be true to its core value of bringing solutions while enhancing and beautifying the look,” he said.

To maintain the category’s profitability, Dossche advised suppliers and dealers “ignore the noise” in the market concerning pricing and deals. “Focus on maximizing profitability by keeping retail prices stable and always look to enhance margins on unique products and brands,” he said. “The last 12 months have proven, when the tariffs forced prices up at retail, the consumer didn’t stop buying our products, just the opposite, she still acknowledged the beauty, performance and value we are bringing her and she continued to drive the category to new heights in sales and margin dollars.”

What’s more, Dossche added. “With potential supply issues looming as a result of the production interruption caused by the Coronavirus, it would be total insanity to start discounting products right now only to find out down the road you might have to pay a premium to replenish inventories,” he said. “Interest rates just came down by 50 basis points which will reduce the mortgage rate and the cost of borrowing, stimulating remodeling and new construction which all bodes well for our industry outlook.”

**STATS SAY IT ALL**

The rigid core category has seen impressive growth during the past few years, in both dollar sales and square footage sales – an estimated $2.7 billion and 2.2 billion square footage in 2019. And, according to Catalina Research, rigid core products could account for some 60 percent of total luxury vinyl tile (LVT) sales in 2020. Stuart Hirschhorn, director of research at Catalina, in fact, predicted that manufacturer sales of LVT could reach $3.7 billion and 2.8 billion square feet this year.

In addition, Catalina reported that WPC products could have represented 65-70 percent of total rigid core product sales in 2019, with SPC responsible for the remainder. “However, SPC is growing at a sharper rate,” Catalina’s Hirschhorn said. “SPC flooring is expected to increase its share during 2020 since a significant share of global luxury vinyl tile (LVT) production capacity investments are for SPC products.”

*FLOOR COVERING WEEKLY | March 2020*
TRUCOR® takes the stage

With both SPC & WPC and the longest plank on the market, the collection covers it all

By Amy Rush-Imber

[Dalton] TRUCOR® wasn’t the first SPC on the scene, but The Dixie Group leadership will tell you it provides best in class design and innovation backed by deep market experience.

“A lot of consumers today are coming into stores — whatever acronym they use — asking for a waterproof floor. If she states she wants click, waterproof floors, I hope [the RSA] will show TRUCOR®,” asserted Jamaan Stepp, vice president of hard surface, Dixie Group.

Why? Because by taking the time to look at the market needs and what will best attract the consumer while meeting her lifestyle, TRUCOR® has created a collection of products that offer both the best in design and performance in SPC and WPC.

“TRUCOR® SPC is a dual threat — more durability and style for any application and not segregated out (for any particular market.) Here’s an alternative to WPC with a more advantageous price point but with beautiful visuals, exceptional dimensional stability and design décors,” explained Stepp.

What’s more, parent company The Dixie Group crafted a go-to-market strategy for TRUCOR® that allows specialty retail to be competitive while maintaining profitability.

“The game plan for TRUCOR® is to effectively position the brand,” noted Stepp. “Masland, Dixie Home and Fabrica — they are all brands with selective saturation in the market. They aren’t in every nook and cranberry and the same holds true for TRUCOR®. We want to be important to a specific number of accounts across the country,” he said.

Performance meets innovation

Performance is indeed at the core of TRUCOR® throughout, what is now, a comprehensive line of both SPC and WPC products in both tile and plank formats.

The TRUCOR 5, 7 and 9 series (referring to plank widths) provides the ultimate durability of an SPC. “Part of the positioning is that it is different and unique and stands up to almost anything today’s active family can throw its way,” noted Stepp.

TRUCOR® Tile is an SPC in 16˝ ≈ 32˝, 12˝ ≈ 24˝ or 6˝ ≈ 36˝. TRUCOR® Tile SPC featuring Integrated Grout Technology (IGT) is available in 12˝ × 24˝, 18˝ × 24˝ or 24˝ × 24˝. TRUCOR® Prime XL, was launched this year and is a WPC measuring 7˝ × 73˝ or 9˝ × 72˝. And, the latest innovation for TRUCOR® is Prime XXL measuring 10˝ × 84˝ — the longest and widest WPC plank in the market today, asserted Stepp.

“WE CREATED PROPRIETARY FILMS — ACTUALLY SCANNED REAL HARDWOOD PRODUCT AND MANIPULATED THEM TO MAKE THEM UNIQUELY OURS. THE VISUAL IMPACT IS A PRODUCT THAT, INSTALLED, LOOKS LIKE IT’S $20 PER SQUARE FOOT AND IT’S NOWHERE NEAR THAT COST. WE SPENT A LOT OF TIME, MONEY AND EFFORT TO LAUNCH THIS PRODUCT.”

- JAMANN STEPP

SPC SPECS

According to Jamann Stepp, vice president of hard surface, Dixie Group, WPC has 45-plus percent PVC in the core while SPC has 30 to 35 percent plus the PVC film lamination. “There is a lot less percentage of plastic in the overall body of SPC, and in doing that, it makes it more dimensionally stable and a ton more indentation resistant. It’s different, it’s unique and will stand up to pretty much anything the busy family or commercial end user can put on it,” he said.

TRUCOR® offers a vast collection of tiles and planks in WPC and SPC formats. “The cool thing is it is beautiful, it is going to perform, it is easy to install and cleaning and maintenance is easy.”

Here’s what the collections have to offer:

- TRUCOR® SPC comes in 5-, 7- and 9-inch widths and 76 SKUs including tile visuals with Integrated Grout Technology (IGT). TRUCOR® Tile is available in 16˝ × 32˝, 12˝ × 24˝ or 6˝ × 36˝ and TRUCOR Tile with IGT is available in 12˝ × 24˝, 18˝ × 24˝ or 24˝ × 24˝ tiles.
- TRUCOR® Prime XL is a WPC construction available in two sizes — 7˝ × 73˝ and 9˝ × 72˝ — five SKUs in each.
- TRUCOR® Prime XXL is a WPC construction in the longest and widest dimensions on the market today at 10˝ × 84˝. Prime XXL is available in eight SKUs.

Design direction

TRUCOR® paid a lot of attention to designs that are driving consumer’s purchases today and are offering products to meet those needs. “We’ve created proprietary film — digital scans of real hardwood — making them uniquely ours. The consumer wants a large plank look for an open floor plan and a good sized room — the 10-inch Prime XXL plank fits nicely in there.”

And while world of rigid core products can be confusing. But there too TRUCOR® by the Dixie Group is on the mark.

Merchandising, Stepp said, is “attractive and easy to walk up and shop. It’s a customer magnet. We are not trying to create piece of furniture but rather a feature to show the product. You see some of every SKU.”
So EXTRA... 

PRIME XL | PRIME XXL

The largest WPC planks on the market... for making the BIGGEST impressions.

7 x 72 | 9 x 72 | 10 x 84
When it comes to providing insider information about merchandising and selling rigid core products, there is no better place to turn than to the retail experts. Here, FCW's editor-in-chief Amy Rush-Imber gathers sound advice and insight from Cathey Gundlach Links, vice president of merchandising, Flooring America/Flooring Canada, Floor Trader and IDG, about the real retail situation for these exciting products.

**FCW:** When is a rigid core product the right product for the customer?

**Gundlach Links:** Rigid core products come in many flavors: WPC, SPC and even waterproof hardwood. The RSA’s best tool for recommending the right product is based on the customer’s needs and the first qualifying conversation when they visit the store. Does she have kids or pets? Is this product for a kitchen or basement? What activities happen in this living space? Our entire rigid core offerings are waterproof, kid-proof and active family-friendly – the RSA just needs to define what those points are that determine the best product for her home.

**FCW:** How should the RSA talk about the difference between SPC and WPC?

**Gundlach Links:** First let’s talk the similarities: WPC and SPC both have beautiful, realistic visuals. In fact, sometimes even the most discerning eye can’t tell between the natural beauty of the real product and the digital décor of the luxury vinyl. WPC and SPC are both perfect for the kitchen, bathroom, basement and other wet areas – along with below, on or above grade. Installations are typically a click locking system that is installed as a floating floor and can be installed over most existing hard surface floors. Both WPC and SPC are easy to maintain and clean once in the home – it really is worry-free flooring from the standpoint of spills, muddy paws and daily messes.

WPC and SPC can really differ when it comes down to factors such as indentation (high traffic areas or high performance needs) or extreme temp differences (think four-season rooms and vacation homes). In these types of conditions or installation needs, SPC offers some additional benefits due to the construction of the core. SPC can offer additional benefits in commercial areas where the traffic and performance needs are high. WPC, on the other hand, can offer some additional comfort underfoot with its construction and is generally a thicker product than SPC.

**FCW:** What can the RSA confidently promise when it comes to performance of rigid core products?

**Gundlach Links:** An RSA can confidently sell and promise a beautiful high-performing floor with the purchase of a rigid core product. The innovation and technology that has advanced the core of today’s WPC, SPC and newest category of waterproof hardwood is enabling products to perform and withstand even the busiest households. Pet-proof and kid-proof flooring makes life easier (and a lot happier for the culprits of the messes).

**FCW:** How can retailers merchandise this category to uncomplicate the shopping journey?

**Gundlach Links:** We have been talking with our dealers for the last year about “decluttering” the showroom floor. We understand that retailers want to offer options to choose from but that can quickly lead to oversaturation in key categories as every manufacturer has a product offering. We also know that having too many options to choose from can lead to no choice at all. The first step to any solution is identifying the problem—retailers should look at their current WPC/SPC department and determine showroom allocation based on sales as well as productivity by each display. Just this small step to identifying the key products to show and sell will help radically simplify the selling system and
shopping journey for both the RSA and the consumers.

**FCW:** What are the trend-leading designs in rigid core today?

**Gundlach Links:** Trend changes we have seen in the world of rigid core are really in the quality of the printing technology that produces the visuals. The realistic beauty in the hardwood category will have even the most seasoned RSA expert doubting the product category. As WPC and SPC looks replicate nature, our trends in this category follow the hardwood category as a whole. You’re going to see more offerings in rigid core in lighter and natural looks. Whitewashed floors aren’t just for the beach and coastal cities anymore.

**FCW:** Is there anything else you think is vital for the RSA to be armed with when selling rigid core products?

**Gundlach Links:** At the end of the customer journey for flooring, she wants a beautiful floor that not only represents her style and tastes but that works with her active lifestyle which may include kids, pets or both. And, did I mention...she wants to have some fun while shopping! She wants to feel as happy about her purchase at completion as she did when she first started this journey. Listen to your customer, prequalify their needs and help direct them to the product that is going to best perform in their home – this creates a customer for life!

**FCW:** How has the co-op created a collection to meet the customer needs specifically?

**Gundlach Links:** We have created exclusive curated collections of best-selling colors and trends of rigid core in our Downs H2O, Galvanite and AquaDura H2O collections. With the evolution of technology and innovation in the core, we continue to offer the newest product assortment in our proprietary brands that today’s customer demands. AquaDura H2O is our newest waterproof hardwood collection that enables your customer to have real hardwood flooring throughout their whole home, regardless of the room.

**FCW:** How have you simplified the selling and purchasing process with your proprietary collections?

**Gundlach Links:** You will see many changes coming to the Flooring America/Flooring Canada showroom floor in regard to our proprietary collection. We have worked to change many of the graphic components of our brands to help educate not only the customer but also the RSA to the differences within rigid core constructions to ensure the proper placement of products. In addition, our own online university has been creating training modules to also help simplify the process and guarantee the customer journey is the best experience from design to installation.

EXCLUSIVELY YOURS
Flooding America/Flooring Canada designed a program just for its members to help set them apart. Here, Cathey Gundlach Links talks about its beauty & benefits.

*Seen here is Galvanite luxury vinyl in wide and long planks.*

*Downs H2O is waterproof, pet-proof and kid-proof.*

*Aquada H2O is the new waterproof hardwood line.*

*Aquada H2O increases hardwood’s applications.*

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*FCW:** What are the trend-leading designs in rigid core today?** **Gundlach Links:** Trend changes we have seen in the world of rigid core are really in the quality of the printing technology that produces the visuals. The realistic beauty in the hardwood category will have even the most seasoned RSA expert doubting the product category. As WPC and SPC looks replicate nature, our trends in this category follow the hardwood category as a whole. You’re going to see more offerings in rigid core in lighter and natural looks. Whitewashed floors aren’t just for the beach and coastal cities anymore.

*FCW:** Is there anything else you think is vital for the RSA to be armed with when selling rigid core products?** **Gundlach Links:** At the end of the customer journey for flooring, she wants a beautiful floor that not only represents her style and tastes but that works with her active lifestyle which may include kids, pets or both. And, did I mention...she wants to have some fun while shopping! She wants to feel as happy about her purchase at completion as she did when she first started this journey. Listen to your customer, prequalify their needs and help direct them to the product that is going to best perform in their home – this creates a customer for life!
Style & Service
Karndean Designflooring sets itself apart
By Kacey Perinelli

[Export, Pa.] Karndean Designflooring has been a leader in luxury vinyl tile (LVT) since the category’s inception. And because of its LVT expertise, it has seamlessly transitioned to a manufacturer of rigid core flooring. With everything from entry level to best-in-class offerings, there is a floor for everyone within the company’s expansive portfolio.

Karndean Designflooring has four rigid core ranges, Knight Tile, Van Gogh, Korlok Reserve and Korlok Select. The Knight Tile range features a 12mil wearlayer; Van Gogh, Korlok Reserve and Korlok Select all offer a 20mil wearlayer; and, Korlok Select also boasts a 5G® locking mechanism.

“All our rigid products have a 2G® locking mechanism, except for Korlok Select, which is one of the few rigid products equipped with a 5G® locking mechanism. This allows for an even faster installation — more than 1.5-times faster to install than competitive rigid core products,” explained director of marketing Jenne Ross.

All of Karndean’s rigid core offerings also feature the company’s waterproof, proprietary K-Core® layer. “K-Core® benefits all parties involved — consumers, retailers and installers. It provides a dimensionally stable rigid core that helps to hide subfloor imperfections and can be installed over most existing hard floors,” offered Ross.

She added that Karndean’s rigid core floors have superior indentation resistance. “Our rigid core can withstand an average of 2-times more weight per inch than competitors,” Ross noted. In addition, K-Core® can be scored and snapped with a utility knife, eliminating the need for a bulky saw, leading to less mess for consumers and install teams alike.

**INSPIRED DESIGN**

As a leader in design — after all, “design” is in the company’s name — Karndean Designflooring seeks out inspiration all over the world. Each year, Karndean produces new gorgeous floors with heartfelt inspirations in visuals unlike anything else in the market.

“Regardless of product construction or specification, every Karndean Designflooring visual is originally developed with the same level of care, no matter which range it falls into,” Ross asserted.

**PRIORITY SERVICE**

Karndean strives to be a step ahead of its competition. It continues to set itself apart, said Ross, through both customer service and stellar design.

“What really sets Karndean Designflooring apart, and what has kept us in business globally for more than 45 years, is the level of partnership and service we offer to our retailers and customers,” she shared. With three U.S.-based distribution centers, the company is able to house high levels of inventory, often leading to order turnaround times ranging from 48 to 72 hours only.

Added Ross, “Our customer service representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET (Eastern Time), and it’s not uncommon for our representatives to get to know customers on a first-name basis. Our technical services team is available to answer questions from installers as they’re on the jobsite, even using FaceTime to see exactly what the floor looks like.”

Karndean Designflooring, Ross said, takes pride in the way it develops its designs and the level of detail within each. “This allows retailers to offer visuals that can’t be sold down the street or in big box stores; and for consumers, this gives them a unique look and a point of pride in their home.”

She added Karndean Designflooring offers reliable performance to both retailers and consumers, leading to fewer callbacks and more repeat business and word of mouth referrals.

**FULFILLING EVERY NEED: CHOOSING KARndEAN DESIGNFLOORING**

**Knight Tile:** Filled with effortlessly stylish visuals with universal appeal, offering a diverse mix of wood species and natural stones from neutral limestones to urban cool gray woods.

**Van Gogh:** The company’s pioneering work horse range, embodies enduring American style and performance with its textured emboss and distinctive traditional and rustic visuals.

**Korlok:** Comprising timeless designs that emit casual luxury, each product has a soul and a story.

- **Korlok Reserve:** 48˝ × 7˝ planks with a 2G® locking mechanism.
- **Korlok Select:** Extra-long 56˝ × 9˝ planks with 5G® locking mechanism.
- **Korlok Select’s American Barnwoods** are also available in a 24˝ × 6˝ herringbone plank, which are specifically designed to be laid in a herringbone pattern. And, in the late spring or early summer of this year, Korlok Select will expand to include stone visuals from marble, slate, limestone and antique cotta as well as stenciled patterns.

The Knight Tile and Van Gogh ranges are also offered as gluedown LVT, while Korlok designs are only available in rigid core.

Clean, natural wood visuals are regaining popularity, such as Van Gogh in French Oak.

Natural Koa, a Korlok Select design, showcases a native Hawaiian acacia visual.
As an expert in your field, you have a reputation to uphold. We know the feeling. With 45 years of experience specializing in luxury vinyl flooring, trust us when we say your reputation is safe with Karndean Designflooring underfoot.

On solid ground
Ensuring the install’s integrity

By Morgan Bulman

In the eyes of the consumer, rigid core flooring has it all: it’s pet-proof, dent- and scratch-resistant and, most importantly, waterproof. But this category’s performance promises are largely dependent upon a proper install — the subfloor, product and its associated accessories must be properly prepped and acclimated to ensure the floor’s integrity.

As soon as a customer expresses interest in purchasing a rigid core floor, it’s imperative for the RSA to inform them of all the required sundries right from the start. This can potentially include anything from moisture mitigation systems to underlayments, depending on specific wants and needs like comfort and sound abatement, but always includes trims and moldings.

This can seem contradictory, considering part of the beauty of going the rigid core route eliminates the need for extra install equipment. But today, companies such as Mohawk are focusing on easing installation pains, such as reducing the amount of time an end user’s life and home may be disrupted, according to its senior director of accessories David Moore.

“One of the really nice things about rigid is that it took care of additional challenges when it came to installing flexible vinyl by creating click products that could be floated, making subfloor prep not as important,” Moore shared. Instead of dealing with any imperfections that could telegraph, rigid core can bridge those gaps. “There has been a lot of changes in LVT (luxury vinyl tile) in the last few years, one of them turning underlayments from a margin enhancer to a differentiator. They tried to carve out a space in the market by adding a pad to the product. Plus, you’re not gluing rigid core down, it’s expected to float, so adhesives aren’t a huge piece of the market right now either.”

So, what actually is required to install a rigid core floor? According to Britton Watson, senior marketing and communications manager for Schönox HPS North America, that can vary by manufacturer and environment. For best results, she suggested to never cut corners on proper prep. “A smooth, sound, clean and stable substrate is important to both the short- and long-term success of the floor,” said Watson. “Consumer education is important — even though rigid core is a worry-free product, it’s no different than any floor installation.”

David Jackson, vice president of field technical services for DriTac, agreed. Any type of floor covering is dependent on the right materials used during installation, and rigid core flooring is no different, he said, adding preparation is universally pivotal.

“Within the category of rigid core flooring, there is breadth of variations that demand different complimentary materials,” Jackson explained. “Many rigid core products are meant to be floated, rather than glued down, and should never be glued down unless explicitly specified as an option by the manufacturer. Likewise, rigid core products often have foam padding attached to their underside, limiting the need for an accompanying underlayment.”

Incorporating an adhesive, underlayment or epoxy, continued Jackson, is contingent upon the core construction and manufacturer guidelines. The most effective way to determine what materials will be needed is to refer to the supplier’s instructions. For example, Watson added that, in some cases, specifications may require an additional underlayment to minimize floor failure claims.

These experts also noted that, even though this category often touts not needing acclimation time, it’s still important for a floor to be brought to the natural room temperature of the designated space it’ll remain in for its existence. Installing a product in a warm home after being in a cold truck, they said, can pose problems.

So here, FCW spoke with industry leaders to get their take on the best way to combat some of the biggest threats to rigid core during the installation process.

Addressing Imperfections

Of course, the benefit of floatable rigid core is its ability to mask imperfections by being loosely laid over the subfloor. This is typically done through a click-lock system, enabling installation to be inexpensive, quick and easy. This doesn’t mean, however, that the product can be installed without checking on the subfloor first.

Taylor Adhesives’ director of technical services, Gary Scheidker, offered it’s always important to address high and low areas in the substrate. A subfloor with peaks and valleys can interfere with the locking system’s integrity. He added that rough surfaces need to be smoothed or skimmed out — if the subfloor isn’t flat, it may cause the install to come undone, especially if the floor is consistently subjected to heavy traffic.

“The success of any flooring installation requires proper substrate preparation. This
includes correcting any substrate irregularities greater than 1/4 inch in a 10 foot radius,” he stated.

**Addressing Sound**

When a subfloor isn’t properly flattened, rigid core planks can feel thin and bouncy underfoot, creating sound transmission challenges. And, foot traffic in general can be loud, producing a hallow echo. The right underlayment, though, can address these complaints.

“Impact traffic noise and sound transmission from daily living circumstances have been a nuisance of having hard surface flooring for many years, regardless of the construction of the plank’s materials. Rigid core is no exception to the unwanted noise factor,” noted MP Global’s director of marketing Jack Boesch. “Reducing how sound travels to other rooms can be reliant upon the type of underlayment material chosen.”

And, because Millennials are delaying home purchases, they are more apt to live in urban areas with multifamily housing. These environments, such as apartment buildings and condominiums, necessitate sound abatement, especially when an SPC-based product is involved, since its transfers sound louder than WPC, explained Boesch. He also pointed out that sound abatement is a legal requirement regulated by the Homeowners Association (HOA). Boesch also warned planks with an attached pad aren’t always the best option when it comes to sound.

“Rigid core planks with pad already attached are a convenient idea but offer little to no sound reducing benefit, adding an additional underlayment beneath may improve and control walking and talking classes of sound,” he revealed. “Underlayments with a DNA made up of thin dense materials, seemingly perform well for controlling sound under rigid core planks.”

But underlayments don’t just provide sound benefits, they also deliver moisture protection.

**Addressing Moisture**

Moisture is another big concern — in addition to being flat and smooth, the subfloor also needs to be dry.

“Moisture is another animal to wrap our heads around, protecting the bottom side of any flooring regardless if the flooring materials claim ‘water-proofness’ need a level of protection from nagging moisture vapor emitting from concrete subfloors,” Boesch noted. “The unseen culprit from water vapor over time can spell ruin to any flooring. Planks can start to delaminate over time from long-term exposure to water vapor as well as in wetter areas [where] alkalinity migration

Continued on page 50
Dream it. Click it. Love it.

Beauflor USA’s Pure makes a comeback

By Morgan Bulman

[White, Ga.] Beauflor USA is upping the ante with a relaunch of its popular Pure collection. With a focus on expanding patterns and visuals — 16 new designs in wood and tile looks, to be exact — Pure also continues to boast performance benefits that differentiate it in a saturated market.

DreamClick® Delivers

A big part of what makes design and performance possible for Pure is the company’s patented locking system DreamClick®, which allows the collection to be installed in complex patterns, such as herringbone and checkboard, fast.

“Sixteen new designs are paired alongside eight existing designs to create a selection of trendy and versatile looks that can blend seamlessly with any interior design style,” offered senior marketing manager Tami Stahl. “Sixteen wood looks come in an array of colors ranging from stone gray to blonde to chestnut brown in both smooth and wirebrush textures. This is the first time we are including tile designs in the Pure collection. Eight tile looks emulate concrete and stone visuals in a mix of natural earth tones that fit perfectly with contemporary and industrial design trends.”

Another trend that Pure addresses is the consumer’s heightened desire for a worry-proof floor. Pure can be installed nearly anywhere and everywhere — both for residential and light commercial — due to its ability to resist dents, scratches and spills.

But aside from the end user, installers will be happy to know that multiple people can work on the same floor at the same time. And, installation time is also reduced because not much has to be done to prepare the subfloor. Pure even eliminates the need for underlayments.

RSA Friendly

Stahl also noted that Beauflor offers several selling tools that its customers can utilize to better understand Pure’s myriad of benefits and attributes. “We have created an extensive product presentation that provides a comprehensive overview of the collection including the marketing campaign, features and benefits, product specifications, product designs, moldings and merchandising,” she shared. “We also have room scenes available for every design and color to help customers visualize what the product [would look] like installed in a room.”

The company also plans to soon launch a three-stack display, a carry board set and sell sheets. Stahl added its sales teams are located throughout the U.S. to answer and assist the RSA with any questions they may have about Pure.

A score for sustainability, senior marketing manager Tami Stahl also stressed that Pure is continuously improved and adapted to reduce the impact of its life-cycle on the natural environment. Added Stahl, “Pure is 100 percent recyclable, making it a perfect floor for the world of tomorrow.”

COMMERCIAL CASE STUDY

Project: Carpet Planet Showroom Floor
Location: Colorado Springs, Colo.
Manufacturer: Beauflor USA
Flooring Used: Pure

Pure was recently installed on the showroom floor of Carpet Planet in Colorado Springs. The retailer was searching for a product that would capture the attention of customers, but also needed a product that was fast to install and durable enough to withstand daily, light foot traffic from customers. With Pure, the retailer was able to use two different designs and three different colors to create an eye-catching visual in a large space.

The Carpet Planet in Colorado Springs used Toulon Oak 1095, Toulon Oak 976M and Lime Oak 954D together in a herringbone pattern.

Not only is Pure made from 80 percent recycled and mineral content, but it’s one of the lightest rigid core products on the market, meaning less CO2 is produced during its transportation.

FEATURES TO SELL BY

1. With more of the population moving into metropolitan areas, sound transmission is more important than ever before. Pure has superior sound absorption qualities that make it up to 50 percent quieter when compared to the competition.

2. Pure is also fast and easy to install, thanks to the DreamClick® locking system. Compared to other options on the market, DreamClick® makes the install process up to two times faster. Pure is easy to click together and minimal tools are required.

3. DreamClick® also allows for unique designs — Pure can be locked together on all four sides and installed in any direction. It can also be rotated 360 degrees to create a limitless number of unique patterns, allowing installers to mix different colors and visuals to create one-of-a-kind floors.

4. A score for sustainability, senior marketing manager Tami Stahl also stressed that Pure is continuously improved and adapted to reduce the impact of its life-cycle on the natural environment. Added Stahl, “Pure is 100 percent recyclable, making it a perfect floor for the world of tomorrow.”
PURE
RIGID COMPOSITE VINYL PLANK + TILE

Endless unique design combinations are possible with PURE Dreamclick® 360° locking system. PURE can be installed in any direction and can mix various colors of planks and tiles. So you can let your imagination run wild!

Dream it, Click it, Love it!

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beauflor.us
INNOVATIVE INSTALLATIONS

Rigid core creates unique interiors

By Ryane DeFalco

Rigid core is often selected for installation based on its performance capabilities. And since the category has only gotten bigger, manufacturers are taking rigid core a step further by making unique installations possible. Whether it be patterns, installation ease or simply where the product can be installed, several rigid core products on the market today show just how far the flooring industry can go when it comes to putting innovation at the forefront.

LONG & LOVELY

Much like in the hardwood and ceramic tile categories, consumers of rigid core are increasingly moving towards longer plank sizes. “We are seeing an increased demand for larger scale products, and we have responded to this need with larger scale product offerings such as XXL tiles and XXL planks,” shared CFL president Barron Frith.

The Dixie Group is also seeing longer planks grow in popularity. “Styling and fashion seems to be trending towards longer and wider planks,” explained Jamann Stepp, vice president of hard surface. “Larger tiles in $16 \times 32$” and $18 \times 24”$ are taking hold as well. We are even introducing a $6 \times 36”$ plank with a marble visual ... something unique in terms of plank size for a tile.”

The Dixie Group is taking rigid core to new heights — and lengths — with its TRUCOR Prime XXL collection, measuring $10” \times 84” \times 10mm$. Solid Ground

Continued from page 50

from the concrete to the flooring surface in the form of a white powdery substance.”

DriTac’s Jackson added, “The primary purpose of moisture-mitigating adhesives and underlayments is not to serve as a protective layer for the subfloor, but to limit the moisture reaching the installed flooring material. Moisture vapor emissions, if left unhindered, can rise from the subfloor and cause costly damage to the flooring. Before installing adhesives and underlayment, it is essential to conduct proper moisture testing.”

Leggett & Platt’s product and marketing manager Randy Dye also stressed the importance of moisture testing, especially if the subfloor is composed of concrete or plywood.

The RSA will be happy to know, though, that selling a moisture mitigation system is a win-win situation. Taylor’s Scheidker noted not only will it provide the customer with peace of mind — ensuring there won’t be mold and bacteria growth — but it’ll also add considerable profit to the sale.

Suggested Dye, “The main thing the RSA must remember is this: with hard surface flooring, you are taking the consumer out of the flooring market for many years, so you need to be sure and offer the best underlayment and explain the benefits.”

ADDRESSING TRANSITIONS

According to Mohawk’s Moore, “Any hard surface flooring cannot be finished without trims and moldings, you need transitions — these aren’t optional products.”

Echoed Thilo Hessler, president of Versa-trim, rigid core floors need moldings when transitioning to other floors, around the perimeter of the wall or around steps. This includes a small gap around the perimeter, he added.

To avoid surprising the end user with additional costs at the point of sale, Moore recommended trims and moldings shouldn’t be treated as an afterthought. He equated the situation to getting an oil change — when you go to pick your car back up and find out you need a new air filter or that your tires are bald, you’re not going to be happy, he said, and same goes for transitions. It’s important the end user understand these aren’t superfluous products being added on. “Transition pieces are not everyone’s favorite topic of conversation,” Moore admitted. “The order process, the cost, how do I get it, will they show up at the same time as the floor to get the job done — there aren’t a lot of great feelings.”

With a wide range of flooring thicknesses available on the rigid core market, Mohawk found it imperative to provide a product that was multifunctional and adaptable. All of its transitions work from 2 mil to 8 mil thicknesses and are designed with height adjustment abilities to give the installer greater flexibility.
Jeremy Kleinberg, senior product manager of Armstrong Flooring, told FCW about the importance of rigid core's versatility. “One of the advantages of rigid core flooring is that it offers a variety of installation methods.”

Rigid core can be installed even beyond the floor all the way up onto the walls. In fact, Metroflor offers an entire line of wall coverings — all of which have a rigid core foundation.

“Wall installations for rigid core are growing as retailers discover an incremental sales opportunity to sell in wall fashion in addition to flooring,” said Russ Rogg, president of Metroflor. He said the company's wall fashion line is a great opportunity for retailers to make an additional sale, as it is designed specifically for wall applications, rather than being a flooring product retrofitted to a vertical application.
Realistic & Revolutionary

Mannington spotlights visuals & domestic production

By Kacey Perinelli

[Salem, N.J.] Mannington Mills’ ADURA® Selling Solution simplifies the sale of what can be a complicated category allowing the consumer to pick the visual that most calls to them first and then choose the construction that best suits their needs.

The ADURA® Selling Solution places three of Mannington’s best resilient constructions — ADURA®Flex, ADURA®Rigid SPC and ADURA®Max WPC into one comprehensive selling solution, allowing the consumer the ultimate flexibility when choosing her floor. And with five new patterns with 15 color options in all three constructions being introduced this spring, this collection is more comprehensive than ever before.

In addition to placing emphasis on this revolutionary selling system, Mannington is bringing rigid core production to the U.S.

SIMPLE & STYLISH

In an effort to satisfy every consumer, Mannington Mills has built a portfolio of looks in the ADURA® Selling Solution meant to wow consumers and satisfy their needs. The collection’s newest visuals feature clean and modern designs, which reflect the latest home trends.

It is important that the consumer be able to get the design they love in the product they need. Jimmy Tuley, vice president of residential resilient for Mannington, explained this evolution helps Mannington satisfy any demand. “It’s literally a one-stop-shop for all things LVT,” he shared.

The new patterns and colors offer an array of on-trend visuals which are hyper-focused on realism. To this end, Mannington has introduced its first ADURA®Rigid and ADURA®Max products that feature a four-side painted bevel.

“The line consists of on trend species such as European White Oak, Walnut, Exotic Acacia, and marble creating a diversified collection that focuses on realism. We created the right colors to fit the market and combined it with a low gloss finish, realistic textures and painted bevels resulting in a well-rounded collection that is sure to provide something for every consumer,” noted senior director of styling, Terry Marchetta.

Marchetta added the newest looks focus on minimalization, which creates a non-descript backdrop, easily allowing the consumer to feature her personal style in the space. “When you look across our line, you will see that the visuals are very simple and clean,” she said, adding, “We have consciously taken out knot holes, rustic elements and imperfections creating the perfect floor to coordinate with every home fashion style whether it’s Nordic, Bohemian or Classic.”

The newest looks are Parisian Oak, a minimalist look; Manor, inspired by mid-century modern design; Kona, an exotic Acacia look; Margate Oak, the relaunch of a best-selling pattern; and Baltic Stone, a dark, dramatic look that plays well with natural wood accents.

GROWTH MINDSET

Mannington Mills is also focused on its growth opportunity for 2020. With ample opportunity in the rigid core category, the company knew the time was right to put a focus U.S., production. The new plant, based in Calhoun, Ga., will produce rigid core products from start to finish.

Mannington has a decades long legacy with expertise in production of traditional LVT (luxury vinyl tile), shared Tuley. “We make our traditional LVT from start to finish, including making our own films.” Going forward, Mannington will leverage its hard-won LVT expertise to ensure its U.S. rigid core manufacturing is world class, Tuley added.

The new rigid core plant is located on Mannington’s existing manufacturing campus in Calhoun, Ga. Tuley told FCW, “We’ve been making significant investments in the last few years, in both the manufacturing and warehousing facilities. We chose to build the new plant on our campus in Calhoun, which is located in the most efficient place in the U.S. for us to distribute the product throughout the United States and Canada.”

Tuley noted that Mannington is invested in the rigid core category. “This is the most important flooring category and we intend to continue to lead and innovate in this category. Having control of every part of the supply chain allows us to serve our customers with the highest quality products in the market,” he said.

“This year our goal was to add fashion forward visuals that closely represented today’s trends.”
— TERRY MARCHETTA, MANNINGTON MILLS

Create timeless interior style with Manor, a 7” x 48” white walnut plank in a rich color, Cognac.

Kona features the exotic look of Acacia, bringing a balanced aesthetic to any room of the home.
ADURA® is the waterproof luxury vinyl line that has it all.

80 styles
3 constructions
1 solution

ADURA® Max || Rigid || Flex

ADURA® Max – WPC
Known and trusted. Quiet and luxurious.

ADURA® Rigid – SPC
Superior indentation resistance. No acclimation needed.

ADURA® Flex – LVT
Traditional glue down. Can be installed with grout.
Made in Madison, GA – Readily Available

MANNINGTON.

Try out any of our new floors in your customer’s room at Floors.com/MyRoom

Mannington.com
The visual appearance of rigid core has only improved with time. Modern day technology has allowed visuals to look even more realistic, and Shaw has used these advancements to enhance its rigid core portfolio. According to Shaw’s Jeff Francis, director of category management – resilient, the company has used “a new embossing technique that showcases high and low gloss visuals in the same plank, more closely mimicking the depth and character of true hardwood. It’s our most realistic looking luxury vinyl to date,” Francis said.

Beauflor has kept design top of mind in its rigid core offerings which feature eye-catching, multi-colored patterns that, in years past, seemed impossible to include on a rigid core surface. But with advanced technology, Beauflor has been able to produce a variety of fun patterns and varying sizes and colors onto one floor.

“Be on the lookout for some excitement with metallic looks and accents,” advised Tami Stahl, senior marketing manager for Beauflor USA. “Floors with unique patterns will continue to be popular as customers continue to want flooring that expresses their creativity and personal style.” Beauflor even uses its own DreamClick locking system that allows customers to mix tile and wood visuals together, “as well as install the product in any direction so designs ranging from single and double herringbones to basket weaves can be achieved,” Stahl added.

Engineered Floors has begun its use of new technology for creating its hard surface visuals. According to Marianne Murry, director of marketing for EF, “the technology uses 3D digital printing and thus the pattern repeat is minimal (one in 30 planks) and the luster replicates the gloss of wood because the product does not have a plastic PVC wear layer.”

Jason Surratt, senior vice president of product & design for Phenix Flooring, spoke about the exciting new visuals that are possible in rigid core. “Advanced cutting techniques and clicking systems are delivering new patterning capabilities more reminiscent of the tile industry. Mix and matching widths and nontraditional side installations are starting to enter the rigid core product segment,” he said.
Herringbone visuals are heavily sought after, as they take the classic look of hardwood and add a fun design element to the typical installation. Rigid core suppliers have taken this trend to heart by producing products that are specifically made to be installed in a herringbone style, for example.

Karastan just entered the rigid core category this year with several on-trend visuals in its portfolio including herringbone and chevron looks. According to Ed Sanchez, Mohawk’s vice president of product development for resilient, locking systems can allow rigid core planks to click together with one simple movement. This makes herringbone looks easier to achieve and in less time.

Karndean Designflooring also allows herringbone installation for its expansive collection of rigid core products. And according to Jenne Ross, director of marketing, technology is key to rigid core’s innovations in performance, design and installation.

“Rigid core technology continues to diversify, as shown by new mineral core and ABA products,” Ross said, adding that rigid core floors that are specifically designed to be laid in a herringbone pattern can offer “added design flexibility” to homeowners.

LuxeCraft, the new resilient collection from Karastan, is perfect for high-end and luxury settings.

With design in its name, Karndean Designflooring offers on-trend looks, like the herringbone seen here.
The PERFECT Combo
Armstrong Flooring’s Rigid Core Essentials & Vantage offer one-two punch

By Mallory Cruise-McGrath

[Lancaster, Pa.] Armstrong Flooring’s Rigid Core Essentials™ and Rigid Core Vantage™ lines of SPC flooring were each developed to offer homeowners a powerful combination of beautiful style, long-lasting durability and ease of installation and maintenance. Although each line is suitable for residential interiors, Rigid Core Vantage is positioned as a trade-up option due to its enhanced stability, making it a solid choice as well for large scale commercial installations.

What’s more, both collections are waterproof. “Planks will not swell, buckle or lose integrity when exposed to water,” explained Jeremy Kleinberg, senior product manager, Armstrong Flooring. “As a result, homeowners can choose the look they want — including authentic wood visuals — in any room in their home, including kitchens, bathrooms, mudrooms and basements.”

**Peak Performance**

Rigid Core Essentials and Rigid Core Vantage each offer a number of key style and performance attributes.

For example, Rigid Core Essentials™ offers distinct visuals that mimic natural hickory, walnut and oak while also being built to withstand the demands of everyday life. “With a 5mm dense polymer core and a 12 mil urethane wear layer, Rigid Core Essentials will hold up to scratches, spills and stains. Plus, installation is easy as planks lock into place and can be installed over most existing subfloors — no need for messy glue or a separate underlayment,” explained Kleinberg, adding as well that Rigid Core Essentials comes with a 30-year limited residential warranty.

Rigid Core Essentials also provides acoustic benefits valuable not only for individual homeowners but in multifamily applications. “The flooring helps prevent airborne sound (such as voices or music) as well as impact noise (footsteps) from being transmitted between floors of a building,” he said.

**Step-Up to Vantage**

“With its combination of realistic design and durability, Rigid Core Vantage is suitable for either residential or commercial applications,” offered Kleinberg. It is produced using a unique manufacturing method that results in the added stability needed for large commercial installations. Rigid Core Vantage’s large plank format works especially well in open floor plans and features natural wood looks built to maintain their beauty — even within high traffic, high moisture and high impact environments.

To help consumers recognize the value in trading up to Rigid Core Vantage, Kleinberg advised that RSAs start with the attention to detail in its designs. “Rigid Core Vantage features extra-large format planks — 7” x 60” or 9” x 60” — high plank-to-plank variation and painted bevel edges that accentuate the individual planks within the floor,” he said. “Design features like embossed-in-register texture enhance the authentic visuals.”

Rigid Core Vantage also boasts outstanding dent performance due to its solid polymer core; it also features a 20 mil urethane wear layer. “Rigid Core Vantage planks with attached cork backing help span minor subfloor imperfections that may telegraph through thinner flexible LVT (luxury vinyl tile) or need more extensive subfloor preparation for it to be installed successfully,” Kleinberg said. “Thanks to their dimensional stability, installers do not have to acclimate these rigid core products in most installations. Rather, they can get to work sooner and install faster, with one-piece drop-lock planks.”

**HIGH STYLE**

Rigid core flooring offers today’s most popular looks on platforms designed to meet the demands of everyday life.”Rigid Core Essentials offers a fresh, modern look, with a range of warm browns, creamy neutrals and cool grays — all in 6-inch width planks,” said Jeremy Kleinberg, senior product manager, Armstrong Flooring.

With its bevel edges and embossing in register, Rigid Core Vantage features realistic wood styles in an extra-long plank format to create a dramatic look that’s perfect for any room.

“Wood visuals have long been popular in this segment; however, the style and color preference changes,” said Di Anna Borders, vice president, design, at Armstrong Flooring. “We are seeing clean, lightly colored, Scandinavian-inspired looks making their way into this segment as well.”
BEAUTIFUL, DURABLE WATERPROOF PLANKS

Easy to install, easy to maintain.
Sounds like Rigid Core Essentials™ is the right fit.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING BIGGER AND BOLDER?

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Rigid Core Vantage™

Extra-long 60˝ Planks
Painted Bevels, Embossed-in-Register Texture
Commercial-Grade Wear Layer

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**Business Savvy**

Rigid core delivers in commercial applications

By Ryane DeFalco

Versatility of installation is a valuable benefit of the rigid core category. And, because rigid core can be installed in a number of areas and provide great visuals, the category is a great choice for commercial spaces.

**Installation Ease**

“The ease of install, ease of maintenance including plank replacement and proven performance make SPC a favorite of customers and end-users alike,” shared Jeff Francis, Shaw’s director of category management – resilient.

Marianne Murry, director of marketing for Engineered Floors, added that rigid core can handle heavy foot traffic. “Rigid core has a high indentation resistance, high dimensional stability and is easy to install,” she said.

In fact, rigid core is an ideal choice for areas that are used excessively, making it well-suited for commercial spaces, said CFL president Barron Frith. In addition to being more indentation resistant than other product categories, he said, “The waterproof characteristics help to address maintenance issues that have been problematic for wood flooring in commercial applications.”

Dana Wright, senior director of product management, commercial hard surface, Mohawk Group, reported that, among the reasons rigid core is a smart choice for commercial, is that it offers easier and more subfloor forgiveness in its installation and “the ability to have immediate occupancy with a floating application, improved ease of flooring replacement, as well as longer installations without the need for transitions,” she said. Wright added that rigid core floors deliver a “looks better longer” appearance with resistance against scratches and stains.

The product’s installation needs to be addressed from the start to avoid any problems that may occur due to subfloor imperfections. “Often commercial applications do not have suitable subfloors to work with, which makes rigid core the perfect flooring choice to hide those imperfections,” explained Dana Wright, senior director of product management, commercial hard surface, Mohawk Group, reported that, among the reasons rigid core is a smart choice for commercial, is that it offers easier and more subfloor forgiveness in its installation and “the ability to have immediate occupancy with a floating application, improved ease of flooring replacement, as well as longer installations without the need for transitions,” she said. Wright added that rigid core floors deliver a “looks better longer” appearance with resistance against scratches and stains.

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**Commercial Creations**

Mohawk Group’s Dana Wright, senior director of product management, commercial hard surface, called dimensional stability one of the best benefits of rigid core floors. “It helps diminish minor subfloor undulations and encourages even wear versus non-rigid products which telegraph subfloor undulations and wears unevenly in high spots,” she explained.

Verçade Wall Fashions by Metroflor add design flare to the walls of commercial installations. These wall fashions have a rigid core foundation, perfect for taking on commercial spaces such offices, restaurants and more.
Coretec offers a variety of rigid core collections that are suitable for commercial applications. Seen here is a hardwood look from Coretec Pro as well as a stone visual from the Coretec Stone collection.

Karndean recently installed its rigid core floors at Boise State University, seen above. Now, students and faculty can come and go as they please, sure that these rigid core floors are more than just stylish, but commercially-sound as well.
Southwind builds on success

Quality, service & availability at the foundation

By Janet Herlihy

Southwind Carpet and Hard Surface continues to grow its presence in the multilayer hard surface marketplace.

About five years ago, company leadership recognized an opportunity to provide their already loyal customer base an alternative solution to the multilayer products being offered by the larger players in this category. In fact, Southwind has the perfect infrastructure in place around its core business of manufacturing carpet to execute a business plan that has resonated with its customers focused on “Quality, Service, and Availability.”

Starting with one style of WPC in six colors, Southwind has since expanded to offering 12 styles today with close to 100 different color options. The newer styles are a healthy blend of WPC, SPC, LVT and looselay.

“We continue to separate ourselves by focusing our efforts on style and design while adhering strictly to our business philosophy,” stated Richard Abramowicz, executive vice president, sales/CMO, at Southwind. “We are very selective and calculated when it comes to considering new product introductions. We are totally focused on what makes our customers successful.”

NEW DECADE, NEW PRODUCTS

For 2020, Southwind has introduced three new exciting collections.

Authentic Mix offers random size planks — widths of 5 inches, 7 inches and 9 inches and lengths of 20 inches, 40 inches and 60 inches — all packaged in the same carton. This 8mm thick WPC sports a hearty 20 mil wearlayer with an attached 1.5mm IXPE pad, a closed cell cushion for advanced sound absorption that is impervious to water. In addition, Authentic Mix is enhanced with EIR (embossed-in-register) texture and graining, which precisely matches the visual for a much more realistic look. Featuring a high-density core, sound deadening pad and a commercial grade wear layer, Authentic Mix combines a high-end hardwood look, waterproof peace of mind and a lifetime residential warranty.

The other two introductions expand on the company’s already successful SPC product lines. Rigid Plus, a tough, dimensionally stable plank is poised to replace traditional vinyl click. A 2000 kg/m density rating offers superior indentation resistance and virtually eliminates telegraphing. Rigid Plus is offered in 7” × 48” planks, is 5mm thick with a 12 mil wear layer and is easy to install over most existing hard surface floors.

Equity Plank is the third and perhaps most exciting new introduction, striking a perfect balance between beauty and toughness. Available in six shades in planks that are 9 inches wide by 60 inches in length, this 6mm thick product with an attached IXPE pad, combines unmatched styling and realistic EIR visuals. With a 20mil wear layer, Equity Plank is the perfect floor for the main street and specialty retail flooring dealer, according to Southwind.

TECH SUPPORTS SERVICE

Believing that the independent retailer offers a personalized service that can’t be replicated through other channels, Southwind is focused on the specialty retailer and main street dealers.

Customer service is a priority at Southwind which has online resources available at Southwindcarpet.com. An online customer portal provides access 24/7 to registered dealers, where account information, including invoices, bills of lading number (on invoice), sales history and price lists are available. The portal also allows access to warranties, installation instructions, marketing needs, product specs, claim forms, credit forms, tech bulletins and installation photos.

Design Your Room is a room visualizer that allows the consumer to take a photo of a room they are interested in putting flooring in and then insert a Southwind flooring option in that room. The consumer can choose to rotate the floor to run in various directions to find the way that best suits the room. The shopper can upload a photo or use one of the stock photos provided by the program.
RIGID PLUS, where QUALITY & VALUE add up.

Challenging the status quo while manufacturing carpet and developing the finest hard surface products with quality, style, and color in mind.

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Kimberly Hill, Novalis’ director of marketing and creative design. She added that the latest advancements in wearlayers not only hide imperfections but will protect flooring from future abrasions.

Jamann Stepp, vice president of hard surface for The Dixie Group, pointed to wearlayers as another detail to understand. "Wearlayers are important; 20, 22 and even 30 mil wearlayers are commonly specified in the commercial arena." As for the category as a whole, Stepp insisted, "The features that make rigid core, SPC in particular, a good choice are abundant."

Rigid core products also make for a faster installation. According to Metroflor president Russ Rogg, "The ease and speed of installation are a factor in choosing rigid core products for commercial applications, which have been proven to be up to 20 percent faster to install than traditional glue-down floors or even soft surface products like carpeting. This translates into a lower installed cost, without product quality compromise."

In addition to resistance against dents, water and damage, rigid core can also keep commercial spaces free from excessive noise. "Rigid core is ideal for multi-story commercial applications where noise transfer is a primary concern," shared Jenne Ross, director of marketing for Karndean. She added that select rigid core products can even help to reduce noise transfer to building levels below the installation.

SITTING PRETTY
Rigid core offers superior performance in commercial areas — but Jeremy Kleinberg, Armstrong Flooring’s senior product manager, noted that design doesn’t need to take a backseat to other benefits.

"In spaces ranging from healthcare to offices, there’s an ongoing trend to design commercial spaces with a more residential look. In addition, biophilic design principles emphasize the importance of bringing elements of nature into indoor spaces," he shared. "Rigid core products are well-suited to create authentic wood looks with the durability and water resistance for use in spaces where hardwood wouldn’t be feasible."

Kleinberg added that rigid core floors get the job done, whether commercial settings are in need of fashion or function. "Businesses are looking for beautiful floors that create a welcoming space but also have the durability to withstand traffic and stay looking newer, longer. Rigid core flooring meets those needs."

Pretty and practical, these rigid core floors from Mannington Commercial add on-trend hardwood visuals to the already impressive performance benefits.
The next generation of LVP is here.

The Black Label Collection features two product lines that seamlessly flow from one collection to the other with no transition. These floating vinyl planks boast an impressive 28 mil wear layer and feature a new Rigid Core construction known as ESPC (Enhanced Stone Polymer Composite). This provides a quieter, warmer, and more comfortable feel underfoot and both are finished with enhanced embossing technology to provide a natural, more refined look and feel.

Equipped with a vinyl Balancing Layer on the bottom of the SPC core and an attached acoustical IXPE cushion, ESPC flooring combines the advantages of both SPC and vinyl with excellent dimensional stability.

Enjoy 24-hour turnaround and FREE FREIGHT in 2020 for the Black Label Collection. Contact your Happy Feet sales representative to schedule your order and learn more.

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I4F provides cutting-edge digital printing technologies that enable direct printing on a huge range of different core boards as well as on PVC films. Digital printing opens up endless possibilities by enabling the creation of truly unique, one-off designs with superior optical quality while avoiding unnecessary inventory for pre-printed materials.