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Plastic forms offer advantages

Chemical polish not up to par
with mechanical method

Vol. 17 No. 8 November/December 2017

A worker wearing a hard hat and safety vest is operating a green power trowel on a highly reflective, polished concrete floor. The machine has several bright lights on its front. The background shows a large, open industrial space with white pillars and a ceiling with hanging white bags.

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American Institute
of Building Design



American Concrete Institute®

From the Publisher's Desk

Dear Readers,

Houzz.com, a trendy home ideas website, recently predicted “concrete” would be among the top 2018 trends. At ConcreteDecor.net, monthly website traffic along with key areas of engagement tells us what’s popular in decorative concrete.

Many recommendations and decisions are based on information we derive from websites, Google and social media. It’s how businesses operate today. It’s one of the ways *Concrete Decor* operates as information published in the magazine is ultimately archived on ConcreteDecor.net for your ongoing benefit.

At church recently, the sanctuary came alive when music leaders asked everyone to clap along with a song. I’ve always found clapping interesting because it can be so enriching to events and such a great way to keep everyone in synch. However, if church leaders asked everyone to go home because a worship team was now leading us in music online the sounds, atmosphere and value afforded to that congregation would be lost forever.

This is similar to an industry trend *Concrete Decor* has been witnessing over the past five years. It frightens me because the scenario of a church taking its ministry online is what I believe is happening today with companies choosing to divorce themselves from printed publications.

Construction trades, especially technical ones, demand we make ongoing efforts with on-the-job training in the form of mentorships or apprenticeships. But what if all we’re exposed to is product-oriented? Where do trade skills come into play? What develops and perpetuates an understanding and respect for trade education?

The bigger question then becomes: how do we build and maintain a trade identity if someone can’t pick up a magazine and read articles, ads and expert advice if print has been dissolved? You may ask, what about digital magazines? Well, if they were that popular we’d see 98 percent of our readers switching to online and they’re not.

When I started this magazine, decorative concrete was a new trade. I was caught up in learning all about products and processes because I had already developed valuable trade skills as an apprentice and later a contractor. I see a focus on skills as our industry’s missing link. While the American Concrete Institute holds a growing arsenal of solutions, trades can only be taught on the job site. And it can only be administered if our industry is all on the same page. That’s where the power of print comes into play. It’s where each of us must invest ourselves daily if decorative concrete is going to continue to compete.

It’s where we have an opportunity to turn a 2018 construction trend prediction into the norm for generations to come.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Bent Mikkelsen
Publisher

On the cover: Ryan Lakebrink, co-owner of The Art of Concrete in Denver, is all in with the power trowel polishing phenomenon, already using the process for most of his company’s polishing work. Most of the projects have involved big-box retail, with some smaller convenience store jobs in the mix.

Photo courtesy of The Art of Concrete



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4



18



22

business & industry

- 4** WOC 2018: Mall of Concrete is Shaping Up
- 8** Where Have All the (Skilled) Workers Gone?
by Greg Iannone
- THE BROADCAST
- 10** Hashtags: What They Are and How to Use Them Effectively
by Lindsey Congeni
- 12** Four Men Chosen in 2017 for Decorative Hall of Fame Honor



features

- 18** **Power Trowel Grinding**
 Stirring things up in the polished concrete trade
by Joe Maty
- 22** **In Good Form**
 Plastic forms are a durable alternative to lumber
by K. Schipper
- 28** **Plywood Surface Patterns and Textures Yield Variety of Finishes**
by Heather Rasmussen
- CONCRETE QUESTIONS
- 30** **How Important is Education to Our Industry?**
by Chris Sullivan
- THE POLISHING CONSULTANT
- 32** **Mechanical Versus Chemical Polish:**
 One clearly outshines the other
by David Stephenson
- DESIGN THEORY
- 36** **The Value of Color is Important to Design**
by Rick Lobdell



artisan in concrete

- 14** **Dan Lynch Concrete Floors**
 Marrero, Louisiana
by Vanessa Salvia



- 5** PRODUCT NEWS
- 38** MARKETPLACE
- 17** AD INDEX
- 40** FINAL POUR

concrete DECOR EXPERTS



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Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. and a member of the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Reach him at questions@concretedecor.net. See Chris' column, "Concrete Questions," on page 30.

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WOC 2018: Mall of Concrete is Shaping Up

by K. Schipper

VISITORS to World of Concrete 2018 in Las Vegas Jan. 23-26 will have a chance to get better acquainted with a unique form of, well ... concrete forms.

The Omaha, Nebraska-based Fox Blocks, a division of Airlite Plastics Co., will provide the wall system for the Mall of Concrete at Decorative Concrete LIVE! The nearly 4,300 square feet of retail space will feature four buildings made from Fox Blocks' insulated concrete forms (ICFs).

Located directly across from entry to the Las Vegas Convention Center's South Hall in the Concrete Surfaces & Decorative Outdoor area, the mall will feature walls and floors left undone so attendees can watch decorative concrete professionals install and finish various applications.

However, they won't be installing on concrete; they'll be installing on Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) foam panels. Unlike other types of concrete forms that are stripped away once the concrete sets, with ICFs the insulated form is an important part of what is ultimately a building sandwich, with concrete in the middle. Or, as Mike Kennaw, Fox Blocks vice president of marketing and sales, calls it, "a five-in-one system."

"The rebar doesn't have to be tied like it does conventionally in a wood or aluminum form," Kennaw explains. "The form itself stays in place and becomes the insulation on not only the inside, but on the outside. The plastic ties that hold the form together then become the furring strips for attaching drywall and other finishes."

Not only do the ICFs allow contractors to handle five different steps at one time, but Kennaw says they're easy to use.

"Our blocks are preassembled, so you don't have a bunch of pieces to put together," he says. "It locks together like a kid's Lego kit, so assembly is pretty straightforward."

A big part of that, Kennaw adds, is that Airlite began as a contract manufacturer for other insulated concrete forms, allowing it to engineer a better product when it brought Fox Blocks to the market 10 years ago.

Core widths range from 4 -12 inches, with a 2 5/8 inch layer of EPS (the form)



Photo courtesy of Fox Blocks

Last year's exhibit centered around a residential theme while this year's focuses on retail space.

on each side. The company offers blocks in straight, angle, corner, T, tapered, ledge and radius configurations.

Along with speed of construction, Kennaw says one of ICFs' biggest advantages is they perform highly on ratings tests because there are no thermal breaks.

He also sees a growing market opportunity given the destruction wrought by hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria and fires in the Northwest and Canada this summer and the more recent ones in northern California.

"I think it's spotlighted the need for resilient, energy-efficient construction," Kennaw says. "Even if homes weren't destroyed, with flooding, some homes are going to have to be taken down. With our system, you'd still have to take the drywall off, but the walls would still be there."

For now, though, he says, it's often a matter of educating one contractor and one homeowner at a time on the advantages of ICFs.

"The key is getting people to

use it a few times and get comfortable with the process," he says.

As for what WOC attendees will see in terms of decor going up on the wall system at Mall of Concrete: "Everything from a hard-coat stucco to synthetic stucco to fiber cement siding, wood siding, bricks and cultured stone," Kennaw concludes. "We're the substrate with an attachment surface you can really attach anything to." 🛠️



Photo by Concrete Decor staff

Again this year, decorative concrete professionals will install and finish various applications during Decorative Concrete LIVE!

PRODUCT NEWS

Mixes are fast-setting and durable

Fast SL, a self-leveling and polishable overlay from Kingdom Products, can minimize downtime on your floor resurfacing projects, as well as anywhere high-performance, quick-setting, high-strength industrial grade materials are needed. It quickly levels and maintains workability for 20 minutes.

It's been optimized for polishing, staining, dyeing, epoxies and urethanes. It can also be used as an underlayment for leveling surfaces under floor coverings like tile, carpeting, vinyl and hardwood.

A cementitious product, Fast SL will accept an organic coating in four to six hours. It can be ready for polishing as soon as 48 to 72 hours after placement.

Suitable applications for Fast SL include hotel lobbies, schools, malls, hallways, retail stores, warehouses, parking structures, loading docks and all types of residential buildings.

Kingdom Products' Fast Setting formula line also offers Fast Fill, a concrete mix that can create a tenacious bond capable of filling voids between ¼ and 5 inches deep in one lift; and Fast Feather, a fast-setting, feather-edge repair mortar that can also be used on vertical applications.

www.kingdom-products.com
(570) 489-6025

StampApp now on Windows

The Brickform StampApp is now available on Windows. Just go to the StampApp website and download it for free.

StampApp for Windows gives you access to the nonaugmented reality app. You can view every color and texture, save your favorites, and share them with whomever you like. The Windows app is perfect for tabletop demonstrations as you can use it to explore different texture and color combinations without the image target.

www.stampapp.net

Make your mark wherever you go

A portable, affordable and revolutionary computer numerical control machine from RedArt Technologies will now let you leave your mark with precision, quality, support, training and the latest advancement in CNC technology. The CNC Pro allows you to engrave a business logo, etch a message or custom decorate a concrete surface wherever your work takes you.

The machine — created by a Bountiful, Utah, resident — is designed to fold up and travel in a waterproof carrying case. Made of high-quality metal components, it can be taken apart and reassembled from job site to job site.

Besides concrete, the machine can engrave practically any surface, including wood, plastic, acrylic, glass, rubber, stone, tile and soft metals, whether the angle is vertical or horizontal. Custom rails can be easily adjusted to fit the size of the job, and a locking/unlocking head design allows the Z axis to float and engrave uneven surfaces.

The CNC Pro is equipped with a motor-driven system that links to a laptop where you can access software provided with the machine. See videos of the CNC Pro in action on Red Art Technologies' Facebook page.

www.redarttechnologies.com
(855) 926-2776

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Vac attachment captures dust at the source

When dry-cutting bricks and blocks, dust flies. That's why Husqvarna developed a new dry-cutting vac attachment for its popular masonry saw, the MS 360.

The new MS 360 Vac Attachment collects dust when it's created and pulls it into a vacuum, creating a cleaner work environment. Once attached, it can stay on the saw at all times.

The vac attachment affixes to the conveyor cart by lining up two pins to two holes. A dust trough fits in the groove on the cart to catch and easily remove dust produced while cutting. It almost completely surrounds the blade and can be adjusted for different material sizes. Once attached to the conveyor cart, it is then connected to a 250 cfm or more vacuum equipped with a HEPA filter to meet OSHA silica regulations.

www.husqvarnacp.com
 (800) 288-5040

Urethane cement has enhanced workability

Laticrete, a leading manufacturer of construction solutions, recently introduced Spartacote Urethane Cement to provide commercial and industrial production facility managers with a durable, high-performance coating system that can withstand thermal shock, heavy traffic and harsh impact. With its simple, two-step installation process and enhanced workability, it allows for a faster, easier installation.

"Spartacote Urethane Cement can be applied on new or existing concrete after mechanical profile to a CSP 4/5. Then, after mixing, the material can be placed using a cam rake," says Laticrete channel manager Jeff Bonkiewicz.

As a high-performance flooring solution for demanding spaces, the urethane cement is suitable for a wide range of environments, including commercial kitchens and other food and beverage production areas. Additionally, this thick mil coating system can withstand extreme abrasion and impact in spaces like heavy-duty industrial facilities.

The cement is available in light gray, dark gray, red, green, black and tan and is designed to be used in conjunction with Spartacote



top coats for additional protection and UV-stable properties. Due to its very low VOC levels, the product ships globally with no restrictions.

www.laticrete.com

HEPA air filter made for air scrubbing

General Equipment Co. introduces its new portable HEPA air filter — the AF500 Air-Scrub-R. Ideal for establishing a healthier environment in residential, commercial and industrial applications involving activities such as floor cleaning, grinding and polishing, and drywall installation and repair, the AF500 is a highly compact, portable and efficient solution for providing air scrubbing/negative pressure air movement capabilities on nonhazardous job sites.

The new unit features a two-stage design, with a 30 percent prefilter and a 99.7 percent efficient HEPA secondary filter. Able to capture particles down to 0.3 microns, the unit can remove particulates such as airborne allergens, soot particles and mold spores stirred up by air movement.

Built with a ¼-horsepower, 115 VAC variable-speed electric motor and a large 16-inch diameter inlet for improved air flow and maximum filter surface area exposure, the AF500 offers adjustable air flow rates up to 500 cfm. Weighing only 33 pounds, the compact air scrubber is designed to be stackable.

The UL-certified air scrubber uses an integral GFCI outlet with 12-amp breaker, allowing up to four units to be daisy-chained together while connected to one outlet. The unit is made of high-density, UV-resistant polyethylene. It operates between 56 and 72 dBA sound levels, which is equivalent to a standard air conditioner.

www.generalequip.com
 (800) 533-0524



Tape goes on securely, comes off easily

Edge Tape, touted as the "easy-secure, easy-release" tape for Ram Board users, is strong and durable enough to secure protection to floors, walls and stairs, but its low-tack adhesive removes cleanly without damaging surfaces after the job is done.

The tape is durable enough to withstand work and foot traffic without requiring reapplication. It can be left on surfaces for up to 14 days and still be removed cleanly with no residue left behind. The tape, which is 2.5 inches wide, is safety orange in color so workers can easily identify the edges of the work area.

www.ramboard.com
 (818) 848-0400

Coatings Clarification

A story titled "Coatings and Concrete: The Evolution Continues" in the October issue of *Concrete Decor* magazine included incomplete information on Endurable Concrete Products' Endurable Concrete Sealer. The sealer is applied as a waterborne product. We regret the omission.

Compact multitool has surprising power

The Bosch GOP12V-28 12V Max Starlock Oscillating Multi-Tool is both lightweight and compact yet has the surprising power of a Bosch 12-volt Max tool. Featuring the next-generation Starlock 3-D interface; the tool is equipped with an accessory connection cupped and shaped like a bottle cap to provide more contact surface area.



The oscillating tool's EC brushless motor delivers more power and enhanced efficiency versus the previous-generation tool's 12-volt motor. This variable-speed tool produces speeds between 5,000 and 20,000 oscillations per minute and has ample power for fine cuts and fast task completion. Its Constant Response circuitry allows the tool to maintain the desired speed even as load increases.

The tool weighs 1.75 pounds and is 11.2 inches long. A hex wrench is included for changing blades. Magnets help hold the blade in position and simplify blade changes.

www.boschtools.com
(877) 267-2499

Water pump delivers where needed

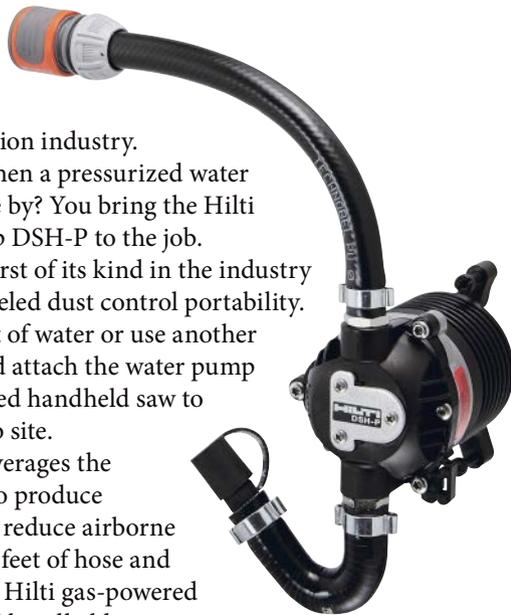
Water has long been used as a means for dust control in the professional construction industry. But what do you do when a pressurized water source is hard to come by? You bring the Hilti integrated water pump DSH-P to the job.

The DSH-P is the first of its kind in the industry and provides unparalleled dust control portability. Simply fill up a bucket of water or use another static water source and attach the water pump system to a gas-powered handheld saw to control dust on the job site.

The water pump leverages the power of the gas saw to produce pressurized water and reduce airborne dust. It comes with 10 feet of hose and is compatible with the Hilti gas-powered DSH 700-X and 900-X handheld saws.

The DSH-P is available as a fleet item which provides a one-year, no questions asked, repair coverage period; and a guaranteed one-day turnaround on repairs.

www.hilti.com
(800) 879-8000



Peelable cleaner works on concrete

A new, nontraditional cleaner from Prosoco removes stains from a variety of masonry substrates in a formula that peels off residues and doesn't involve rinsing off the surface.

Enviro Klean DriKlean is a gentle but powerful cleaning solution designed for interior spaces where traditional liquid cleaners can't go. In an easy-to-apply formula that can be sprayed, rolled or brushed on, DriKlean safely removes dust, soot, oils and other surface soiling from concrete, limestone, sandstone, marble, travertine, plaster, terra cotta, mortar or brick. The cleaner and soiling easily peels off after drying.

The new product is a perfect solution for interior restoration applications where rinsing isn't practical, especially in buildings with damage from fire or smoke.

DriKlean is free of natural rubber latex, eliminating allergy concerns for users. It is also low in toxicity and odor.

www.prosoco.com
(800) 255-4255



Laser digitizes measuring process

Digitize the entire measuring process with the new Hilti laser range meter PD-CS. Using an integrated laser module to capture and save measurement data directly onto photographs taken by its internal digital camera, the laser range meter will eliminate the need for multiple devices — including paper and pencils.

The meter allows users to measure distances up to 656 feet with an accuracy of +/- .04 inch and add context to store data with pictures and/or text. Collected information can then be shared in a single PDF report or spreadsheet (CSV) using Bluetooth, Wi-Fi or a micro USB connection.

Two 5 MP cameras with zooming capabilities make locating a target outdoors or at long distances very easy. The user can take direct and indirect measurements and calculate area and volume among many other applications. Notes can easily be added to measurements and photos, and users can create project folders for different job sites.

The meter uses an Android-based technology and has a color touch screen that is usable even with work gloves on. It has 8 GB of memory and will store more than 6,000 measurements with photos. The unit has an integrated li-ion battery with a 10-hour battery life.

PD-CS is covered by the Hilti Tool Warranty 20/2/1 — 20 years of repair or replacement of defective parts; two years no-cost repair including wear and tear; and a guaranteed one-day turnaround on repairs. 

www.hilti.com
(800) 879-8000



Where Have All the (Skilled) Workers Gone?

by Greg Iannone

HAVING had the opportunity to travel this great nation from coast to coast and visiting many places in between, I've heard a common statement about the current state of the construction marketplace in general and the decorative marketplace in particular. Sometimes it is uttered as a rhetorical question, while other times it's a simple statement of fact: Where has all the skilled labor gone? Or, there isn't enough skilled labor to fill the backlog.

Whichever way the question or statement is delivered, the fact remains the same: We have a severe shortage of skilled labor in the concrete construction industry.

Shortage is severe

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, as reported by Commercial Construction index Grace Donnelly/Fortune, 95 percent of contractors had a moderate to difficult time finding skilled workers for their job openings in the second quarter of 2017. Going forward, they don't see it getting any easier either. The biggest shortage is concrete workers.

For our industry to thrive, we need a huge influx of new talent.

Contractors also state that there is concern about the skill level of employees already on the payroll. More than half of the contractors are highly concerned about their workers having adequate skills. While the report goes on to state that the demand for construction jobs is up eight-fold from the same period in 2009, lack of skilled labor makes it highly questionable as to whether the industry can adequately fill the openings.

In a previous article I noted that in Italy it always seemed to be the "old men" who were repairing the cobblestone streets while the young men stood by looking disinterested. Who will be our next generation's true craftsmen and what are we doing as an industry to see that they are properly identified and trained? Will we be able to fill



Industry events, such as the Concrete Decor Show, are addressing the need of training newcomers to the decorative concrete trade through hands-on workshops.

Photo by Concrete Decor staff

the demand for skilled labor or, out of lack of such talent, will our future hardscapes be relegated to simple utilitarian gray concrete that is functional but otherwise unimaginative?

Ongoing training is a must

It appears we as an industry have correctly identified the problem: Skilled labor shortage. However, to date, we have been unable to come up with the proper antidote or solution.

The problem and solution are twofold.

I believe most manufacturers within the decorative industry have awoken to the idea that once workers are in the concrete workforce, proper training needs to be offered on an ongoing basis. This is evident by the increase of training opportunities that has been offered by many manufacturers and advertised in this magazine.

So, we have identified the problem of providing additional or specialized training once we have increased our labor force and are taking steps to provide training once new talent has entered the workforce. Still, the larger question remains, how do we attract new talent to the concrete industry in the first place?

Attracting new talent

"Back in the day," high schools were replete with a variety of "shop" classes — from woodshop and metal shop to auto and construction-related classes — that allowed students to gauge their interest and provide the initial exposure and education necessary to pursue such a career. Some public schools even built a single home over the course of a school year.

For various reasons, too many to enumerate here, most of these opportunities no longer exist. The mantra I hear constantly repeated to the rising generation is: Go to college and become a professional like a doctor, lawyer or IT specialist. Don't get me wrong. We need these professionals and all are noteworthy. However, we also need tradesmen and craftsmen, concrete finishers and electricians.

It is estimated that in the coming years the country will spend approximately \$1 trillion in infrastructure improvements. At our current construction industry levels, we can't handle the demand for the increase in skilled labor it will require to satisfy such demand.

Our industry needs a marketing outreach program of epic proportions. One that can reach an entire generation of upcoming

millennials. One that will let them know the “trades” can be professionally satisfying and financially lucrative.

Attracting new talent and addressing the need for more skilled labor is talked about at nearly every construction summit, tradeshow or get-together. I know it was a topic of conversation at a recent American Society of Concrete Contractors’ meeting in Phoenix. The ASCC, along with other organizations and manufacturers, do a wonderful job of promoting and facilitating training opportunities once we have workers on board and in place.

The elephant in the room, the question that continues to go unanswered, however, is: What are we doing as a construction industry to attract talented new workers who can be trained and educated properly?

Industry must unite as a whole

I am a huge proponent for providing continuing educational training and will continue to be a vocal cheerleader and supporter of such efforts.

For the health of our industry, it’s crucial we find a means and a mechanism to come together as a whole — contractors, material

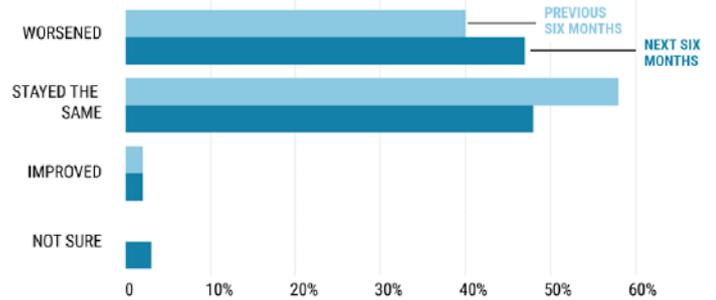
manufacturers, ready-mix producers and so on. In other words, every concrete construction-related industry must do its part so we can effectively and with a united voice reach out to a rising generation of untapped potential superstars with the message that our industry is worth considering as a career.

I know this sounds like a public-relations push and in some ways it is. Just as the U.S. Army’s slogan of “Be all you can be” was, back in the day, a cool slogan backed up by opportunity, substance and training. It proved to be highly successful in increasing the number of recruits to the military in general, and the Army in particular.

For our industry to thrive, we need a huge influx of new talent. The decorative industry provides opportunity for growth and advancement by means of ongoing training and can become a very satisfying career.

PROBLEMS FINDING SKILLED WORKERS

► Contractors report that they expect a larger challenge in the next six months than they had in the previous six months when it comes to hiring workers with adequate skills. Contractors in the Northeast expect the problem to worsen more drastically than in the South, Midwest, or West.



Source: COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION INDEX
GRACE DONNELLY/FORTUNE

Just as new products are the lifeblood of any company, new skilled labor is the lifeblood of our industry. 🚧

Greg Iannone is area sales manager for Solomon Colors/Brickform. He has worked in the concrete construction industry for more than 30 years and has provided training seminars throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico, as well as Mexico and Japan. He can be reached at (801) 376-6750, (909) 434-3274 or giannone@solomoncolors.com.

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Circle Reader Service Number 27

Hashtags:

What They Are and How to Use Them Effectively

by Lindsey Congeni

Do you remember the last time you saw a hashtag? Chances are it was in the last hour but at least sometime today, and it may not have even been on a social network. Hashtags are everywhere these days, from your favorite TV show to highway billboards. As such, they can and should be a part of your social media strategy. The key is using them effectively.

A history of hashtags

Place the # symbol before a keyword or phrase and it becomes a clickable hashtag and a way to group like content on social media. With millions of social media updates posted each day, hashtags provide a way for us to find relevant information, as well as follow and contribute to conversations online.

Hashtags have been around for quite some time and are here to stay. Believe it or not, hashtags were used as early as the late '80s/early '90s on Internet Relay Chat. They really gained in popularity when used on Twitter about 10 years ago.

Today hashtags are mainstream on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and pretty much every online channel. They are also routinely used on TV shows, news outlets, billboards and other avenues to get and keep the conversation going online.

Why your business should use hashtags

You might use hashtags in your personal life — whether it's to keep up with NFL trade rumors, join a political conversation or maybe just make a joke — but are you using them for your business? If not, you should be. Hashtags help grow your audience, promote your latest marketing campaign, prove you're a thought leader and showcase your completed projects.

With so much content online, it's key to be able to group and search for like content. If you aren't using hashtags, chances are your online content isn't being shown to the amount of people it could be. Additionally, if someone is searching for a certain hashtag, then you know that they are clearly interested in the information you are writing about. It's a win-win.

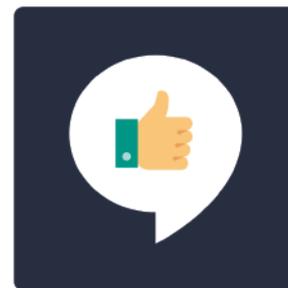
Hashtags are already being used in our industry at conferences and tradeshows (#ConcreteDecorShow), to research industry trends (#GreenBuilding) and even just for inspiration (#DesignIdeas). You can use hashtags already out there and in use (search [hashtags.org](https://www.hashtags.org)) or you can make up your own.

Top hashtag best practices

We've all seen people either misuse hashtags (meaning isn't what they intended), use too many hashtags or use meaningless hashtags. Don't fall into that trap. Here are our top tips for using hashtags on social media:

#HashtagHowTos

In social media, hashtags serve a number of purposes. They are a great way to group content and demonstrate you're up-to-date on industry trends, but they are often misused and abused. To get the most out of your hashtags, keep the four following tips in mind.



#ShortAndSweet

Make your hashtags easy to parse by keeping them short and capitalizing each word.

#thishashtagissuperlongandhardtoread

#MuchBetter



#KnowYourLimits

Limit hashtags to 1-4 per post on every social network other than Instagram. Too many can make your posts look like spam.

#10IsTooMany



#DoYourResearch

Do a quick search on Twitter or [hashtags.org](https://www.hashtags.org) before using a hashtag to avoid using one that is also being used for something inappropriate or unrelated.

#HashtagFails

✗ Find us at Booth 143 at the 2018 Concrete Convention for a product demo! #convention

✓ Find us at Booth 143 at the 2018 Concrete Convention for a product demo! #ConcreteMixers #2018ConcreteCon

#DontBeVague

Avoid overly broad hashtags. They won't add anything to your post and will take up character limits.

#BeSpecific

- **The shorter the hashtag the better.**
#thishashtagissuperlongandhardtoread
- **Use capitalization when including multiple words in the hashtag.**
#ConstructionJobs
- **Limit hashtags to one to four per post** (this applies to all social networks with the exception of Instagram).
#10IsTooMany
- **Research your hashtag before you post it.** Do a quick search on Twitter or hashtags.org to ensure it has the meaning you think it does.
- **Avoid overly broad hashtags.** They won't add anything to your post and will take up character limits. #BeSpecific
- **Use the official hashtag.** Most tradeshow, conferences and chats have an official hashtag. Make sure you use it.
- **Monitor your hashtag.** You will likely find new conversations to participate in, questions to answer and people to follow.

A word of caution about that last tip: In rare cases, hashtags can be hijacked and take on a negative meaning, so you want to ensure you are protecting your brand and not continuing to use a negative hashtag. An example of hashtag hijacking would be when McDonald's started the #McDStories hashtag for people to share positive stories about the restaurant, but instead people started using it to share their McDonald's horror stories.

Keep in mind that not every post should have a hashtag. If it seems forced, meaningless or too broad, then leave the # sign alone. Maybe you don't have anything to say about #NationalCupcakeDay and that's OK.

Also remember that hashtags' effectiveness doesn't end after the post. Continue to monitor hashtags. It is great way to participate in industry conversations and stay up-to-date with the trends that matter most to your business and its customers. 📱

Lindsey Congeni is the social media director at Constructive Communication Inc. With more than 10 years of marketing experience, she excels in taking brands' online presence to the next level. As the former social media director for one of the Midwest's largest digital marketing agencies, Lindsey developed social media strategies for dozens of large companies, specializing in those with complex audiences and messages. She can be reached at lcogeni@constructivecommunication.com.



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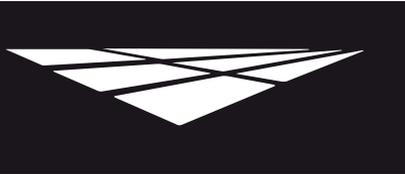
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Four Men Chosen in 2017 for Decorative Hall of Fame Honor

THE Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame welcomed its newest members Nov. 6 at the 2017 Concrete Decor Show in Palm Harbor, Florida. Ben Ashby, David De Angelis and Glen Roman received plaques during the gala, while Francis “Sully” Sullivan was inducted posthumously.

Established in 2010 by Professional Trade Publications, parent company of *Concrete Decor*, the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame recognizes individuals and companies that have impacted the future of decorative concrete, both as a business and an art form. Since its inception, 29 people and two companies have been bestowed this honor for unselfishly giving their time, energies, loyalty and resources to help the industry grow.

Honorees were chosen by Hall of Fame members.

Ben Ashby

From Roy, Utah, Ben Ashby was the offspring of Don Ashby, an “old school” man of concrete, and Sandra Ashby, a professional artist. He’s been directly involved with the concrete industry since he was 12.

In high school, Ashby was in a work study program, spending half days on the job site learning from his father. Afterwards, he attended Weber State University on a music scholarship, where he learned to balance his love of music and concrete.

During college, Ashby traveled around the world as a bass player for his school band. He left that band to go professional, and performed at American military bases worldwide as part of the USO. On any given weekend, you can still catch him playing with his current band, Dirty Harry, somewhere in Utah.

When he was 22, Ashby moved to Phoenix, Arizona. There, he worked with Sher-Good Concrete Inc. for 20 years as a foreman and superintendent, building multimillion-dollar custom homes. In his spare time, he experimented to create



new looks in concrete, which ultimately led to the creation of The Ashby System, a technique that uses mostly standard ingredients to create the look of aged stone.

In 2003, he moved back to Utah and spent four more years developing his countertop method. Upon unveiling it to the public, Ashby was inundated with orders and bombarded with requests to teach the method that creates this look.

He aligned himself with Gerry Sadlier, then vice president of Concrete Solutions and a well-seasoned trainer, and began teaching The Ashby System to his peers. The two men formed Countertop Solutions which ultimately became StoneCrete Systems, which brings fine products, training and support to hundreds of people yearly.

A very hands-on and personable instructor, Ashby gives direct support to all his trainees, displaying a seldom-seen loyalty to those who have completed one of his concrete countertop courses. Today he works in his Utah shop creating an impressive array of concrete items unique to the industry including countertops, fireplaces, showers, flooring and architectural details in many homes.

David De Angelis

A member of a third-generation family-run business in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Dave De Angelis has considered concrete a part of his life since early childhood. For decades, the company’s main thrust was flatwork but it began investigating “imprinted” concrete in the mid-1970s.

From 1973-78, De Angelis attended John Carroll University where he earned a bachelor’s in marketing. During college, he spent summers doing concrete work, and in 1976 was introduced to decorative concrete through the Bomanite program in California. “This was a life-changing experience,” he says.

Back then, “imprinted” concrete was still in its infancy and information, training



and techniques were limited. In a few years, De Angelis learned lessons which helped form a strong foundation. For seven more years, he worked in the family business transitioning a portion of the operations into decorative concrete flatwork. He also traveled for Bomanite to train and consult.

The market for “imprinted” concrete was growing and, in 1983, De Angelis moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and developed the state’s first Bomanite franchise.

In 1986, Bomanite offered him a job as director of technical services and, in 1987, he sold his company in Tulsa and moved to its headquarters in Palo Alto, California. Bomanite’s manufacturing expanded exponentially during De Angelis’s tenure.

For 10 years, De Angelis developed products, tooling and techniques for architectural concrete. His fondest memories are the times spent with colleagues, sharing ideas and interacting with the workforce. “It was those times that spawned true innovation,” he says. In 1997, when he was vice president, he left Bomanite and returned to Tulsa to start Architectural Paving Systems.

De Angelis’s experience spans 41 years in the decorative concrete industry — working in the field, and creating and marketing new tooling, products and techniques, as well as formulating and manufacturing products. “I owe many of my successes to the special people I’ve been surrounded by throughout the years,” he says. “It’s been a lifetime of blessings and successes because of these people.”

Currently, De Angelis continues to operate his business in Tulsa.

Glen Roman

Glen Roman has worked in the decorative concrete industry for almost two decades. He began his career in 1998 with Brickform, which hired him to head the division for a





(From left) Dave De Angelis, Glen Roman and Ben Ashby display their plaques commemorating their induction into the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame during the 2017 Concrete Decor Show in Florida. Bent Mikkelsen, show producer and publisher of *Concrete Decor*, accepted the award on behalf of Francis "Sully" Sullivan, who was inducted posthumously.

Photo by Steven Ochs

new sandblast stenciling product.

"Before I knew it, I was doing a lot of traveling and working on high-profile projects with some very knowledgeable and talented people in the industry," he says.

Soon, Roman began delivering presentations and conducting Brickform's contractor training seminars nationwide. His skills and teaching methods earned him such honors as the Concrete Network's 2005 Industry Leader award.

"I've always liked helping contractors understand how all these products work together along with some of the realistic limitations they can encounter," he says.

His unique job description has allowed him to travel throughout the U.S. and Canada and internationally, working with customers and architects for project support and on-site crew training on a variety of decorative concrete methods. "I've had some truly great life experiences I would have surely missed out on if it hadn't been for decorative concrete," he says.

Roman is best known for his in-depth knowledge of large-scale sandblast stenciling techniques and his history of working on projects that feature this application. He has co-written and appeared in numerous articles on the topic along with a wide range of other applications for many industry publications, as well as online.

In past years, Roman has been a keynote speaker in the World of Concrete seminar program in Las Vegas and a speaker and support volunteer at Concrete Decor Shows across the country.

Roman is currently the owner and operator of Staintec, a company he founded in 2007 that specializes in exterior decorative concrete restoration and troubleshooting, along with manufacturer consulting and on-site project support.

His main goal is to help educate everyone from architects to homeowners to understand the different aspects of correctly installing and maintaining decorative concrete products.

Francis "Sully" Sullivan

Francis "Sully" Sullivan, founder of Sullivan Concrete Textures in California, proved to be a true industry pioneer and innovator, contributing much throughout his lifetime.



Under his list of credits is the ashlar slate concrete stamp, which he helped develop along with Disney Imagineering for Disneyland decades ago. In his 80s, he patented Aggretex, a 3/8-inch cementitious coating where aggregates can be added without hand broadcasting them. And there were lots of things he accomplished in between.

Sullivan's decorative concrete career began in 1964 when he met up with Brad Bowman, one of the founding fathers of Bomanite and the man credited with the invention of "ornamental concrete."

Sullivan was the first to install it in Southern California.

By 1970, he became the fledgling Bomanite Corp.'s first franchise partner in Southern Cal and was licensed to install the new decorative element. Sullivan also later trained new franchisees.

In the early years, there were only three designs: cobblestone, brick and 12-by-12 tile. Sullivan continually helped this line grow and evolve because he was always striving to improve the industry. From the onset, he incorporated dust-on color hardeners and even had a color named after him, Sully Gray-Green.

In the ensuing decades, Sullivan's projects included Disneyland, Sea World and the visitor's center on top of the Hoover Dam. He also installed Los Angeles' Pershing Square.

Sullivan also came a long way from that first stamped project that looked like brick as the Golden Age of Concrete dawned with designs that revolutionized the industry. His fancy driveways for famous people included Sylvester Stallone, Rod Stewart, Kenny Rogers, and Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh.

"I always had the vision," Sullivan said in a 2007 article in LandscapeOnline.com. He likely placed more than 1 million square feet of concrete per year during his many years in business.

Concrete was Sullivan's lifelong passion and he remained active well into his senior years. He passed away Jan. 1, 2013, in Newport Beach, California, at the age of 92. 🚗

ARTISAN IN CONCRETE

Dan Lynch Concrete Floors Marrero, Louisiana

by Vanessa Salvia

DAN Lynch, a concrete artisan known for his concrete floors that look like wood, grew up in Southern Louisiana, near New Orleans, with five sisters, three brothers and a father who did concrete work. In his N’awlins drawl, Lynch says he’s “53 years young,” and he’s the only one of his siblings who still does concrete work.

“I grew up in the business,” Lynch says. “I’ve been in business on my own for about 20 years. I left my dad in ’98. If you’re talking concrete work in New Orleans or in the surrounding areas, the name Lynch is going to pop up without a doubt.”

His father’s business was installing traditional wooden floors, but at one point a 14-year-old Lynch went with his father, Jim, to Destin, Florida, to do a job for an architect who wanted concrete floors in his condo.

Two months later they did another concrete job. That was in 1979 and it took off from there, with one concrete job a month and then two. His father sold all his wood floor tools and equipment and went into decorative concrete.

Of course, back then, it was different. “We used a chemical acid stain,” Lynch recalls, and sealing those concrete floors was labor-intensive. Dipping into a 5-gallon bucket, “We’d scrub the stain on our hands and knees with an acid brush and then we’d buff wax everything with a paste wax. We really didn’t know.”



Branching out on his own

Lynch describes leaving his father’s concrete business as a situation of being in an old school and wanting to do things his own way. “When I left I got to be more creative and change things up a little bit,” he says.

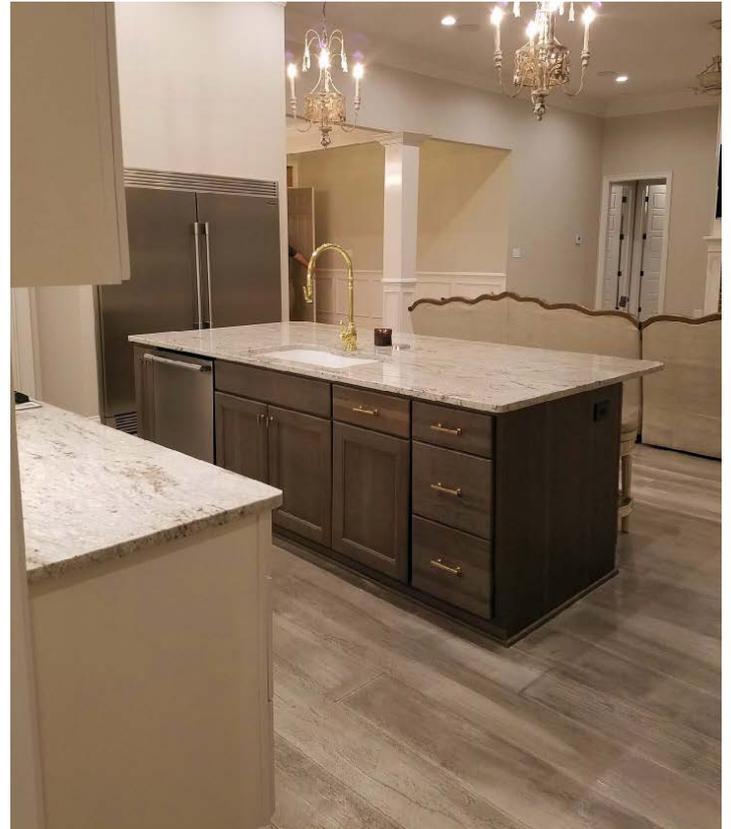
Lynch started doing overlays six years ago, using self-levelers and microtoppings. He used to be against overlays, because he had seen so many of them fail. Then he figured out the issue was the installer going over the expansion joints and not properly prepping the concrete.

Now, he does more overlays than stains. “It’s a trend that’s going to be around for a long time,” Lynch says. “And the overlays on the market now have come a long way.”

High-end residential focus

His primary market is high-end residential, and he enjoys meeting with the homeowners and walking them through the design process. Last year, Lynch installed 65 stained floors in new homes for one builder. All had a similar color palette and only seven of them were scored.

“When you walk into a house you should have a good flow,” he says. “Borders, I like them, but I don’t include them in a lot of my houses because I think they close rooms in. The biggest trend now is people want open spaces. To me putting



Photos courtesy of Dan Lynch Concrete Floors

patterns around dining rooms, kitchens and living rooms is like building walls.”

In one recent case, though, the pattern decorating part of an 1,800-square-foot floor was reflected in other decorative elements, and that made sense. “I put 12-inch white diamonds and 2-inch weathered-wood basket weave just in the foyer,” Lynch says.

“Their granite countertops are white so when you first walk in the house those diamonds are going to catch your eye, then the countertops draw your eye, then the white fireplace. The rest of it looks like 12-inch-wide wood that looks like it’s been there forever.”

One of the jobs Lynch loves most is in his own office. He installed a Jack Daniels floor using an overlay made to look like old oak strips. He put the Jack Daniels logo in the middle of the floor, with barrel heads around it. One of his employees, Elkey Burlette, is a graphic designer who did all the stenciling.

Wood is good

The customers who hire Lynch for his wood-look floors pay a premium for that look. They can sometimes save some money by using stains or other designs in other rooms or in part of the rooms. He charges

\$3.50 per square foot for designs such as in the foyer described earlier and \$4 per square foot for stain. He uses water-based stain, which he feels comfortable with after a lot of trial and error.

“I get nicer colors with the water than the acid,” he says.

Homes in Louisiana are good candidates for concrete floors that look like wood. “They’re less expensive than real wood floors,” he says. “Also if you have a hot water heater bust, you just wet vac it up and you’re good. If you have laminate and your house floods, you’re looking at trouble.”

After Hurricane Katrina devastated



the area in 2005, Lynch revisited some of his older jobs. “All we had to do was clean them up and they were as good as they were before the flooding, so that’s a selling point for me,” he says.

“People got tired of the acid stains somewhat and the wood floors are the latest and the greatest. I think they’re beautiful. They have longevity and they’re only going to get more popular.”

Offering products and training

Last year, Lynch quit installing for several months to open Ashley’s Concrete Products in Harvey, Louisiana. Named after his

daughter, the supply business is now able to operate without his daily oversight, so now he’s installing a few more floors.

He’s also busy training and doesn’t worry about competition from others knowing how to install the wood-look floors. “I know everybody here and in surrounding areas,” he says.

“I can call any one of the installers and if I have a problem I know who to call to fix that problem. They lean on me and I lean on them. We work pretty well together down here.”

Along with Christie Tamayo of Select Surface Solutions, Lynch trains people in Orlando, Florida, four times a year as well

as in other areas. He credits Tamayo with encouraging him to offer training in the first place.

“She thought my work was extraordinary and encouraged me to do trainings,” Lynch says. “After talking with her a few times, I went to one of her trainings. She brought me out of my shell.”

Ashley’s Concrete is a SureCrete distributor and, in a recent training, Lynch’s class created the world’s largest Scofield color chart. He donated more than \$5,000 from two of his most successful training classes to St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. All the money was donated from installers,



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“With my training we put the jambalaya in the pot, we fry seafood. We gonna eat pretty good,” says Lynch with a laugh, followed by a remark about the disappointing quality of the seafood in the Pacific Northwest that he experienced on a recent visit. “It’s worth my trainings just to come and eat.” 🍴

Dan Lynch Concrete Floors

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Power Trowel Grinding

Stirring things up in the polished concrete trade

by Joe Maty

It's going to take the industry by storm. It's a game changer. Revolutionary.

In the case of polishing concrete with power trowel machinery, all those phrases might well prove true. Or, maybe not.

Revolutionary? You could make that claim. Game changer? Yes, but....

Perhaps it's best to conclude the jury's still out. But no question about it — the power trowel machine is on course to churn up things in the polished concrete trade.

"It's not a replacement for all the other equipment used in polished concrete," says Jeff Snyder of Wagman Metal Products, one of the companies that pioneered the development of adapting power trowel machines for grinding and polishing concrete. "It brings more opportunity and expands the use of polished concrete, and opens doors to larger projects" — big projects where the per-square-foot cost of polished concrete was a barrier.

This use of power trowels for grinding and polishing is gaining more traction, so to speak, due partly to the challenge of a tight labor market. But quicker turnaround and the resulting cost savings are the major drivers, say representatives of companies involved in the business.

"It opens doors to processing faster. A job that may have taken 10 days now takes three days," Snyder says. "The owner's happy. He's

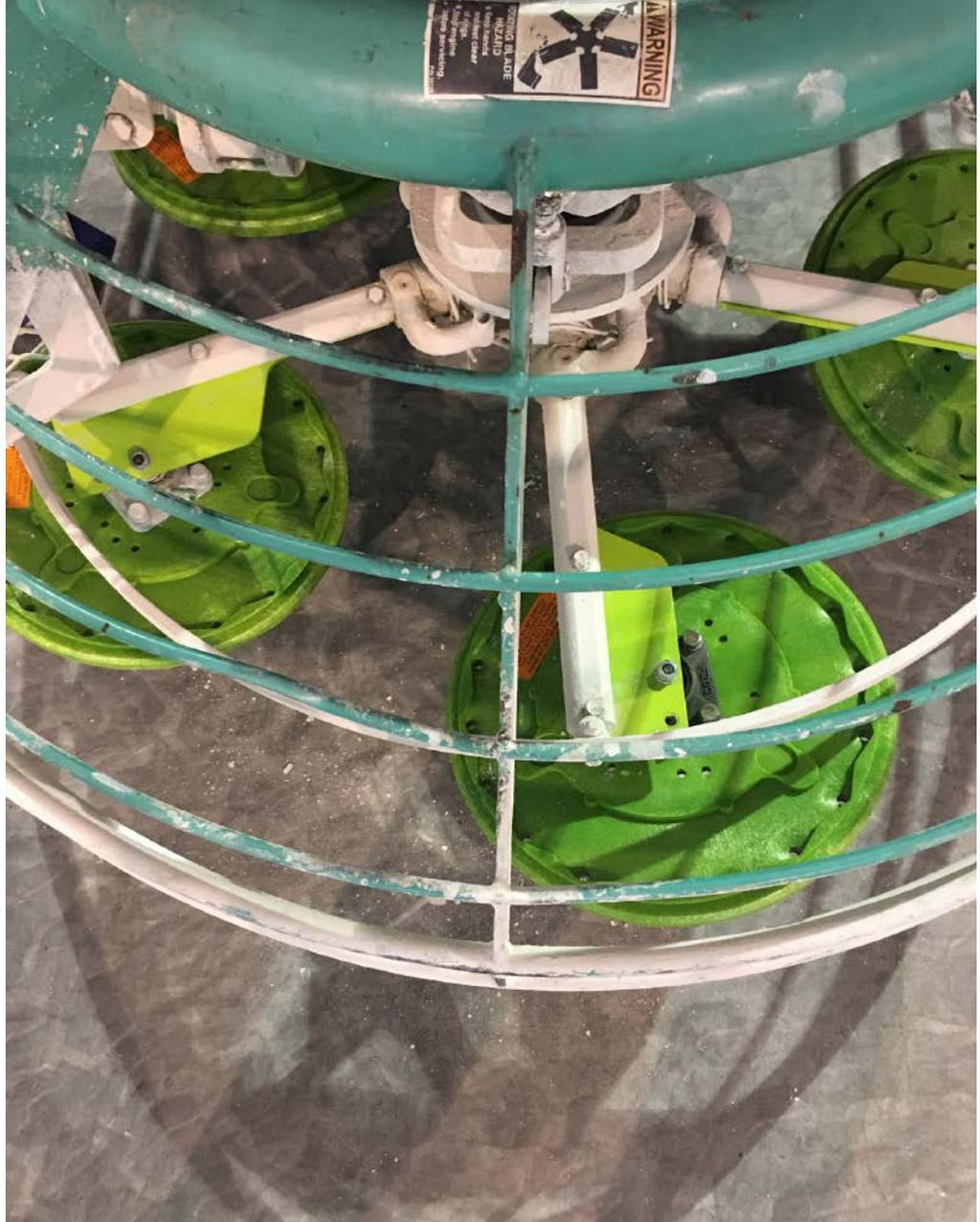


Photo courtesy of Wagman Metal Products

Quicker turnaround and the resulting cost savings are major drivers fueling the modification of power trowels for grinding and polishing concrete, say representatives of companies involved in the business.

getting his building faster and you need less scarce labor. It's a win-win."

Also adding octane to this growing facet of the trade is the idea that power trowel grinding is another part of the toolbox, not a total replacement of the arsenal that threatens the economic doom of a trade that established itself as a major player in high-quality flooring.

"Once polishers get past the idea that it's competition, they see it as another piece of equipment for polishing concrete," Snyder says. It offers the potential to make polished concrete cost-competitive for large facilities — warehouses, sprawling commercial space such as big-box stores, airplane hangars — "anything 5,000 square feet and up."

Snyder says the precursor of power trowel

outfitting for grinding/polishing dates back to the early 1990s, when George Wagman responded to requests from contractors to attach brushes to power trowels as a means to remove dissipating resin-curing compound from concrete. Early in the new millennium, this was followed with systems for brushes for scrubbing and stripping and, eventually, rotary devices for pads, bristles, polishing, stripping and scrubbing.

These power trowel systems for grinding and polishing aren't capable of duplicating everything conventional diamond grinders can do, such as leveling the floor. "If you want to grind the floor level, there are other ways to do that," Snyder says, such as using a heavy-duty diamond grinding machine.

Also, these systems are designed to process wet, as they're not equipped to

collect airborne dust.

Conventional diamond grinding and polishing also is designed to produce “museum-quality” polished concrete, and for specifications that call for exposed aggregate, Snyder adds.

Adding power trowel concrete grinding to a contractor’s portfolio is not capital intensive, Synder says. As he puts it, it’s a “low barrier to entry.” Still, attention to good polishing practices remains crucial to success.

“The idea that you can go faster doesn’t mean you can be sloppy. You have to clean up the slurry after every grit level,” being sure to remove diamond fragments that could compromise processing at the next finer diamond grit. Low-emitting propane machinery is a must for power trowels used for interior jobs.

The fast track

Ryan Lakebrink, co-owner of The Art of Concrete in Denver, is all in with the power trowel polishing phenomenon, already using the process for most of his polishing work.

“It doesn’t fit every job in every place, but when it works it’s way more efficient than walk-behind grinders,” Lakebrink says. His



Photo courtesy of The Art of Concrete

Besides efficiency and profitability gains for contractors using power trowel polishing systems, users of these systems point to the benefit of accelerated turnaround for the general contractor and owner.

company uses Wagman Metal Products’ grinding equipment with his power trowels, a Multiquip Whiteman and a Wagman LP230. Most of his projects have been of

the 20,000-square-foot and up variety, mainly big-box retail, with some smaller convenience store jobs in the mix.

Lakebrink says grinding with power

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Photo courtesy of Superabrasive

Contractors say grinding with power trowel systems produces heavy amounts of slurry, due to the volume of square footage processed so rapidly. The process also tends to splash more than conventional grinding, making protection of adjacent surfaces a priority.

trowel systems produces heavy amounts of slurry, due to the volume of square footage processed so rapidly, so disposal needs must be taken into account. The process also tends to “splash” more than conventional grinding, meaning protection of adjacent surfaces is high priority.

Access to spaces to be processed such as doorways or other openings can present a challenge with power trowels, particularly the larger-sized machines, he says.

Efficiency and the potential for fatter profit margins are benefits for the general contractor and owner because of the brisk turnaround made possible with power trowel grinding systems. “It’s great for the bottom line but more important is that it gains time for the GC,” Lakebrink says. “It can cut the time in half.”

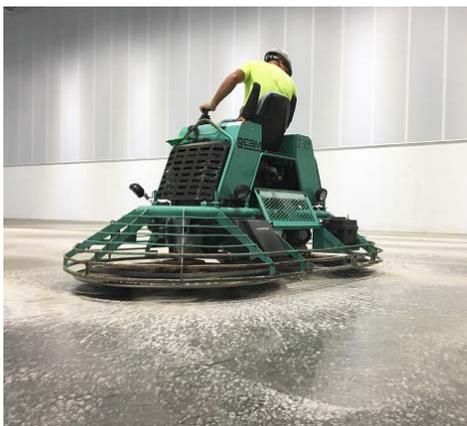


Photo courtesy of GranQuartz

Power trowel systems put polished concrete in a stronger competitive position with VCT on big projects, users say.

Picking up speed

Erich Wichter of GranQuartz, a supplier of power trowel machine accessories, says the use of power trowels for grinding/polishing currently remains a specialty used by a small portion of the polished concrete trade, but the numbers are climbing.

“It’s a small percentage now, but as the larger companies start to add it, the smaller companies will follow suit,” says Wichter, Southeast regional sales representative for GranQuartz’s concrete division. The company is a distributor of grinding equipment offered by Superabrasive, the developer of the Trowel Shine system for power trowel concrete grinding/polishing.

“I think it’s really going to change the industry,” he says. “It will allow people to produce more work, and it’s less labor intensive. You won’t need 25 men to do 65,000 square feet, and it will open up doors for customers who won’t pay \$5 a foot but might go for \$2.”

This positions polished concrete to challenge VCT (vinyl composition tile) on big projects, particularly when polished concrete’s sustainability assets such as durability/service life and ease of maintenance are figured into the equation.

“It’s a huge market,” says Tim Lickel of Wacker Neuson, a maker of power trowel machines, talking about the potential for polished concrete in larger spaces such as warehouses, big-box stores and the like. Wacker Neuson has teamed with Wagman Metal Products to offer grinding/polishing

capability with power trowel machines.

“Twenty years ago, you’d just see VCT, but now they’re polishing concrete,” Lickel says of these large-scale projects. The trend will accelerate with the high-volume polishing capabilities offered with power trowel adaptations, he says.

The cutting edge

Silex, supplier of equipment and materials for concrete polishing, is adding momentum to the power trowel polishing movement. The company recently unveiled the Silex Power Trowel Polishing System described as the market’s first “active” planetary grinding process for power trowels.

The key word here is “active,” says Stephen Klugherz, president of Diamatic. Silex was recently acquired by Diamatic, a deal that includes the new polishing system.

Without going into an engineering dissertation, Klugherz says the active planetary mechanism results in a more aggressive grinding process, providing a more evenly refined, consistent scratch pattern and boosting productivity while still providing the capability to polish to the highest levels. When an alternative “passive” polishing mechanism is used, he says, it is “dragged along” and hampered by barriers in high spots.

The Silex Power Trowel Polishing System represents a major adaptation of the power trowel machine that includes a specially designed gearbox mounted to the undercarriage, a water-distribution



Photos courtesy of Wacker Neuson

Continued innovations and improvements are under way with grinding/polishing systems for power trowels, with more advances anticipated.

apparatus and cruise control. Klugherz says this adaptation, both engineered and manufactured by Diamatic, essentially transforms the power trowel into a grinding machine.

Polished Concrete Solutions is the developer of the PowerGrind system. This system, which can use metal-bond diamond tooling, offers a magnetic quick-tooling change feature that prevents “fly-offs,” damaged pads and crew downtime, says company vice president Meghan Littlefield.

Michael Littlefield, president of the company, developed the system “when faced with a 350,000-square-foot job and no feasible way to get it done efficiently at



Still regarded as a specialty in the trade, power trowel polishing is expected to be offered by more and more polished concrete contractors, industry insiders say.

a reasonable price point,” Meghan says. “The R&D for the system was tested and perfected on this project. We’ve used the system on over 1 million square feet.

“It’s a super-efficient, cost-effective way to get high-volume projects done,” she says, summarizing the essence of the case made for grinding and polishing with a power trowel. She and Michael assert that their system is “rugged and reliable,” and boasts solutions to “some major issues contractors face when trying to polish with a trowel.

We’ve made it a straightforward, easy-to-follow process with proven results.”

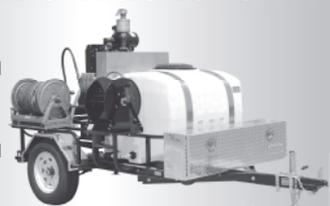
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In Good FORM

Plastic forms are a durable alternative to lumber

by K. Schipper

As a child, who wasn't thrilled to see the wood forms come out indicating a new sidewalk, driveway or even basement was about to be poured? Today, we know concrete can do so much more, and certainly the forms that helped shape it have changed, too. While steel forms are pretty much reserved for larger industrial and commercial projects, plastic is providing a very durable alternative to lumber these days.



Photos courtesy of Plastiform Concrete Forming Systems LLC

Plastic's flexibility makes it much easier to bend than lumber, giving users the option of tighter radiuses or long, sweeping curves.

A real advantage to plastic is its ability to be curved and otherwise manipulated. Need a tight radius or maybe a set of cantilevered steps? There are ways of easily achieving them with the right form.

And, while plastic can create a much smoother surface than wood forms, the addition of urethane liners can also add the sorts of textures that in the past could only be stamped, giving decorative concrete experts yet another option to offer clients.

Say it with plastic

Even if your forte is patios and driveways, it may be time to think beyond simple wood forms.

People may automatically think wood when they think about building forms for pouring concrete, but Dan Block, vice president of sales for Milwaukee-based Metal Forms Corp., says his company



Photo courtesy of Metal Forms Corp.

The use of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) for forms ensures uniform straightness and height, easy setup, and that each form can be used over and over again.

For immediate release

If you're using a 21st century form product, such as plastic, then it probably makes sense to use a 21st century form-release system, as well.

Jake Stubbs, an executive assistant with Franmar, says any time you're concerned about sticking issues that might damage or destroy the surface of your concrete, you should use a form release. "It's going to give you a better, smoother and denser finish," he says. "It's going to come out a lot better."

Blue Bear offers a full line of concrete form releases for an assortment of different forms. While the Blue Bear 800GP is geared toward general construction usage on wood and steel forms, there are releases for latex, urethane, precast steel and even stamp-pad forms.

"We work with a lot of manufacturers, and it makes a difference if you're working outdoors on a job site versus in a factory running a production line," Stubbs says. "It also depends on what kind of finish you're looking for." For example, he says, something calling for a high-end architectural finish requires a different release than a utility box which will be buried.

One big difference between Franmar's Blue Bear line and its petroleum-based competitors is its water-based and environmentally friendly products. Franmar is in the process of developing more biodegradable products for the marketplace. Among its latest efforts is a water-based system available in concentrate form.

Still, Stubbs says, it's a slow process weaning people away from products they've used for years, and much depends on how stringent state and local regulations are.

For instance, he notes that petroleum-based chemicals can be sprayed on and contractors know they work. But Franmar offers an alternative because the company strives to manufacture products that are effective and safe for both user and environment.

"People are concerned with change," he concludes. "But, this stuff really works."

— K. Schipper

began manufacturing steel forms in 1909 and launched its Poly Meta Forms — made of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) — at the start of the 21st century.

"Their main market is for a contractor who wouldn't use a steel form because of its weight, and he's probably used to using wood," says Block. "These are very lightweight, and they come in similar lengths and sizes to lumber, so the concrete contractor is familiar with using this type of product."

Mary Ann Dorman of Santa Ysabel, California-based Plastiform Concrete Forming Systems LLC says there are other advantages to

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using plastic forming systems. One is their ability to make tight radiuses quickly and easily. For instance, using a 1-by-4 bender board from her company, it's possible to create an 18-inch radius.

Perhaps one of the biggest advantages to plastic, however, is its durability.

"I have people who have had them for 30 years and more, and we've been in business for 33," says Dorman. "With wood, you have to shop for something without knotholes, and then you can use it maybe three times if you're really careful and really lucky."

Block agrees that durability is a key feature of his product, as well. He also highlights the ease of cleaning, which can be done easily with a broom, a brush or a spray of water. And both Poly Meta Forms and Plastiform are designed to not only snap together easily, but their staking systems allow users to quickly and accurately set elevations.

Their other advantage: fasten a urethane mold inside the form before you pour, and you've got a wood- or rock-face without stamping.

"You can screw a urethane liner into the plastic form if you want to give it some accent," says Block. "It's an easy upsell."

The upsell

"Upsell" is a word Keith Boudart, sales manager for Aurora, Illinois-based Butterfield Color, uses a lot when talking about that company's one-piece form for steps.

"The advantage is it allows a contractor to have a decorative feature on steps — mainly a cantilever step, a textured step — without having to strip the form the same day to finish it," he says.

The cantilevered steps are certainly one piece of the upsell equation.



Butterfield Color has developed a product that allows users to form cantilever steps and then texture the entire step as part of the pour, rather than having to strip the form from the front of the step and run the risk of having it slump.

Photos courtesy of Butterfield Color

Butterfield is the only company to offer the one-piece form, Boudart says. Previously, the company offered the cantilevered step and the riser separately.

Butterfield has also developed its own form liners specifically for steps that allow a contractor to put a texture or decorative feature on the front or riser. The same form liner works on the outside of a patio or other vertical surface.

"We have a vertical wall system that can be used for creating knee walls called the country ledge form liner,"

Boudart says. "We have 2- and 3-foot-high sections, and we also have column forms that match the type of stone."

Basically, the one-piece

steps and the form liners give contractors an opportunity to offer more than just a stamped patio, for instance.

"They might also sell them a knee wall, along with the stamped patio, or they can add decorative steps," Boudart says. "They're not only upselling, but they're raising the level of their expertise and offering a higher-end job."

Ed Baldoni, owner of the Scott Township, Pennsylvania-based Concrete Countertop Solutions, isn't so much about upselling as he is offering a better look and an easier pouring experience with his company's PVC (polyvinyl chloride) forms for countertops and pool forms.

Baldoni's competitors offer Styrofoam forms, which he notes aren't nearly as stable or as easy to work with. One secret to the PVC forms' success is they mount much more securely. They also don't have to be removed while the concrete is still workable.

He explains that in both environments, the preferred method for mounting

Creating texture for the front of steps is easy with a multiuse urethane liner that fits in the form.

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Photo courtesy of Concrete Countertop Solutions

For countertops — and pool edges — PVC (polyvinyl chloride) forms offer a firmer surface against which to pour, meaning better overall results.

Styrofoam is two-way tape.

“The way our countertop forms mount, we put a half-inch cement board on top of the cabinet and the forms mount from the top into the cement board, so there’s nothing stuck to the cabinet,” he says. “Once the concrete is dry, you pull the form

forward and it snaps off.”

Because part of the form is left under the concrete, it isn’t reusable. However, the company’s system does offer seven different edge profiles. And, since the concrete has been poured against smooth plastic, “You’re going to have what looks like a perfectly

polished piece of concrete,” he says.

Concrete Countertop Solutions’ pool forms are another story. They snap into the track holding the vinyl pool liner and can be reused. And both they and the countertop forms have reusable liners available to match a stamped pool deck or if a client wants a rock-face or travertine edge on a countertop.

The company’s newest offerings are bringing a touch of Europe to the concrete countertop market as well.

“Our Euro Edge lets users pour a countertop that’s only 7/8 inch thick,” says Baldoni. “They also want white countertops, and you need a special concrete to pour countertops that thin, so we’re replacing our regular mix with the white mix.”

Perhaps surprisingly, Baldoni says that the new mix, which is 50 percent white marble, is less expensive than the regular mix. And, he adds, it’s also ideal for other specialized uses, such as table tops and concrete furniture.

Art and science

If it sounds these days as if the sky’s the limit in terms of concrete forms, that may be a bit optimistic. However, as the heart of any concrete project, it’s important to make the right choices, says Jeff Girard of the Concrete Countertop Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina.

“The fit, the finish, the aesthetic of the finished piece are dictated largely by the form,” he says. “The choice of materials and the techniques to assemble them, as well as its design, are critical.”

Based on years of teaching techniques for working with concrete, he says while beginners focus on getting a good concrete mix, those with some experience know the greatest challenge is building forms efficiently and profitably.

Or, as he puts it, “You can lose a lot of money by spending a lot of time making a complex form that isn’t necessarily required for the project.”

An important thing to consider when choosing the right form for a job is whether the job is one of a kind — say, a custom bathtub — or more of a production item, such as a tabletop. And, for Girard, materials for making forms extend well beyond wood or plastic.

“Because the material that makes up the form is in intimate contact with the concrete, understanding how it interacts with the concrete as it is cast and cures is an

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important consideration,” he says.

His list includes steel, such as angle iron, various plastics from polystyrene to PVC, melamine, urethanes and silicone rubbers.

“What we do is special,” Girard says. “It’s high value, and it appeals to the person who wants something that’s unique, which means custom. Our skill set should include making forms and molds, and it should involve creativity. We have to get to what the customer is asking for.”

And, what might that be? In the kitchen and bath, Girard says it’s often something that’s tactile — and not granite. He also sees a growing demand for concrete furniture, a demand he compares to “a fast-growing tree.”

“The biggest detriment to concrete furniture is the weight,” he says. “It used to be the only way to make something strong enough was to make it thick enough. Now, the material itself and the technology of the material has opened up the design possibilities to where we can make analogs of conventional furniture.”

It’s those changes in the material itself that Girard believes will dictate what can be done in concrete in the next five years. While the form will continue to accommodate



Photo courtesy of The Concrete Countertop Institute

For production casting, plastic is just one of several materials that offer consistency, quick cleaning and assembly.

the characteristics of the concrete, he feels many new projects will incorporate systems where a veneer or face coat will be applied to the form first, followed by a backer with fiberglass reinforcement. The concrete will be poured later.

“It’s kind of like making a cake by first putting the frosting inside the pan and then putting the cake inside the frosting,”

he says. “There’s an art and a science to knowing how to build forms and then also knowing how to cast with concrete and work with it.”

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The main inside (bottom) of this arch of the San Diego Central Library was formed complete, rebar installed and then the arch's formwork was completed and placed in three pours or lifts. A conscious effort was made to not make completely "tight" joints between form panels. Morley Builders wanted to also allow a small portion of concrete to "ooze" out between the form panels to maintain a "craftsman touch" appearance, rather than making the concrete appear "too perfect." Photo courtesy of Morley Builders

Plywood Surface Patterns and Textures Yield Variety of Finishes

by Heather Rasmussen

CONCRETE finishes are typically intended to be smooth — polished even. There are polishing machines and sealants aplenty to achieve that flawless look. Careful selection and use of plywood concrete forms can also influence the finished appearance and texture. Various specialty and textured panels are available.

Overlaid plywood

Plywood panels with an overlay surface are often specified for concrete forms because the overlay yields a smooth surface. Resin-impregnated fiber overlays using phenolic resin and plywood make up the two top choices for concrete form panels: Medium Density Overlay (MDO) and High Density Overlay (HDO). Each of these options results in different finishes and expected reuse durability.

Medium Density Overlay (MDO)

MDO plywood is produced with a resin-impregnated fiber overlay and a minimum of 34 percent phenolic resin content. Manufactured in two grades — concrete form and general — MDO-concrete form panels are less durable (fewer reuses) than HDO-concrete form panels, but significantly outperform plywood concrete form panels manufactured without overlays. The MDO-concrete form panels leave behind a matte finish on the cured concrete surface.

High Density Overlay (HDO)

HDO plywood is produced with a thermosetting resin-impregnated fiber surface (no less than 52 percent phenolic resin) bonded to one or both sides under heat and pressure. The tough resin overlay allows the HDO plywood to resist abrasion,

moisture penetration and deterioration from many common chemicals and solvents.

HDO-concrete form panels are the more rugged of the overlaid panels and ideal for such punishing applications as concrete forming. HDO-concrete form panels leave the finished concrete with a smooth "steel-form" finish.

APA-rated siding

APA-rated siding, including 303 plywood siding, is available in a wide variety of surface textures and patterns. When used in concrete formwork, these textures and patterns add beauty and balance to any concrete project, big or small. When a designer considers using texture in a concrete project, it's often to add visual relief or purposeful pattern to an otherwise monochromatic palette.

Here are six tips from APA — The Engineered Wood Association on how to get your desired finish using engineered wood concrete-forming panels.

Tip 1: Select the right panels for the job

The required plywood class and thickness designation, as well as size and spacing of framing, depends on the maximum load. Concrete form design procedures are based on ACI standard 347, which recognizes the use of many variables in modern concrete designs. These variables include the use of various cement types, admixtures, design slumps and concrete placement systems.

APA provides a Grade-Use Guide for Concrete Forms matrix to make the panel selection easier and more accurate for the job (APA's Concrete Forming Design/Construction Guide, Form V345, pg. 5, www.performancepanels.com).

Tip 2: Form design considerations

The first step in form design is to determine maximum concrete pressure. It will depend on such things as pour rate, concrete temperature, concrete slump, cement type, concrete density, vibration method and form height.

Textured plywood having an exterior bond classification usually is applied in two ways in formwork design:

- 1) As a liner requiring plywood backing so that the liner delivers texture, but contributes little to the structure of the formwork, or
- 2) As the basic forming panel. In this case, the best reports come from projects where the number of pours required is limited because the textured surface can increase necessary stripping forces and the possibility of damaging the panel while stripping.

Tip 3: Prepare panels for easy stripping

Film coatings — such as lacquer, polyurethane or epoxy — can be used with a release agent to make stripping easier and increase the panels' life span. A form release agent — applied a few days before the plywood is used, then wiped so a thin film remains — will prolong the life of the plywood form, increase its release characteristics and minimize staining.

Tip 4: Avoid forceful stripping

Metal bars or pry bars shouldn't be used on plywood because they'll damage the panel surface and edge. Use wood

wedges, tapping gradually when necessary. Plywood's strength, light weight and large panel size help reduce stripping time. Cross-laminated plywood construction resists edge splitting.

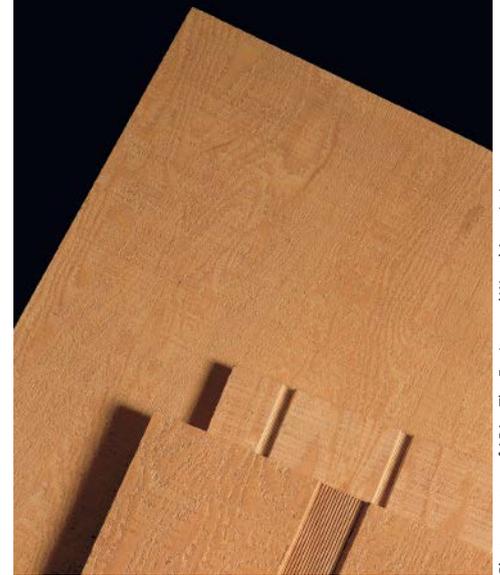
Tip 5: Avoid surface dusting and staining

Surface dusting of concrete has occasionally been seen in concrete poured against a variety of forming materials, including plywood. This could be due to myriad reasons, including excess oil, dirt, dew, smog, unusually hot, dry climactic conditions, and chemical reactions between the form surface and the concrete.

Staining is occasionally observed on concrete poured against HDO plywood forms — a reddish or pinkish stain is a fugitive dye and usually disappears when exposed to sunlight and air. Both these issues can be avoided by properly maintaining form panels.

Tip 6: Caring for APA engineered wood concrete-forming panels

Soon after removal, plywood forms should be inspected for wear, cleaned, repaired, spot primed, refinished and lightly treated with a form-release agent before reusing. Care should be exercised to prevent panel chipping, denting and corner damage during handling. During storage, the stacks of plywood panels should be kept out of the



Siding and plywood that are APA-rated signify manufacturers that are committed to a rigorous program of quality verification and testing.

sun and rain, or covered loosely to allow air circulation without heat buildup.

For more information and to create your own impression with APA's engineered wood concrete-forming panels, visit www.performancepanels.com/concrete-form-panels.

Heather Rasmussen is the market communications manager at APA – The Engineered Wood Association. With more than 10 years of marketing and communications experience, she unravels technical jargon to make it easily digestible by laymen. Heather was previously with the Western Electricity Coordinating Council. She can be reached at Heather.Rasmussen@apawood.org.

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How Important is Education to Our Industry?

by Chris Sullivan

Is training still relevant in the decorative concrete industry? Has the industry reached the maturity stage in its life cycle which directly impacts the desire or need to be trained? Or are we on a plateau, about to witness yet another surge of growth with new technologies and methods?

Training and education have been part of decorative concrete as long as decorative concrete has been around. For the most part, training and education practices have remained the same in our industry over the last 15 years. Is that part of the problem?

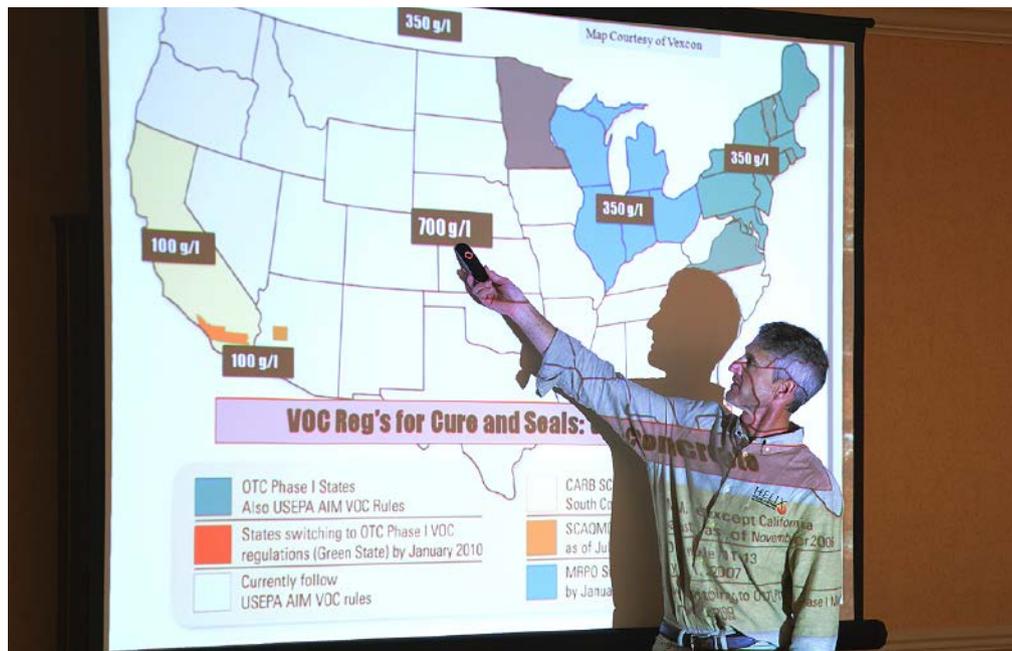
It may make me sound old to say this, but I remember when 100+ people would happily give up a day to watch someone stamp and stain a 10-by-10-foot concrete pad. Today, the class sizes are smaller, hundreds have become a dozen (if you're lucky), and the "same old" does not generate much excitement. So why the decline?

Jim Peterson, a strong proponent of education and founder of ConcreteNetwork.com, a leading online decorative concrete services and information resource, feels there is a direct connection between the decline in attendance at training events and the consumer. "If there was more buyer demand, people [installers] would add more services and more would get in the business, which would lead to more training."

So why is there a decline in consumer demand? I believe in some areas the industry has become lazy and stagnant. Faster and easier does not always mean better. Decorative concrete is not the "new" product it was 15 years ago.

Innovation is imperative

If you're an installer, when was the last time you offered a new finish or service? I totally understand the need for consistency and quality, but not at the expense of losing the creative edge. Over the years, the shine has worn off the penny and our market matured from a hot trend to being one of many hardscape options competing for the consumer's dollar. Add in increased external and internal competition, and the market shrank, as did the number of



Chris Sullivan leads a seminar on "Sealers for Decorative Concrete – Selection and Application" during the 2017 Concrete Decor Show in Palm Harbor, Florida. He values education as one of the most critical factors in the health of the decorative concrete industry.

qualified installers.

So how does this circle back to education? The decorative industry must continue to develop new and innovative products that generate excitement aimed at the consumer and designer. Installers must continue to expand their horizons and push the envelope, while manufacturers must develop products that meet and exceed the consumer and design communities' needs.

These new ideas and concepts are then shared through proven and new methods of training and education. This will create excitement, which will keep our industry relevant, driving growth at the consumer level.

Training means hands on

Along with excitement and energy created by new products and systems, how the training is presented plays a big part if anyone shows up. Bob Harris, senior decorative concrete consultant for Structural Services Inc., is an industry leader and early vanguard of industry training. He coined a phrase that I think says it all: "It takes years

to become an overnight success."

Bob, and his wife, Lee Ann (who shies away from the spotlight but is also a wealth of knowledge), are two of the most passionate and outspoken advocates for education and training in the decorative industry. Bob is a true craftsman with an eye for detail, as his work clearly demonstrates. His philosophy regarding quality and detail carries over into his training sessions.

"We have always preached that students need to focus on one or two topics and become very proficient at these applications before moving on to other market segments," he says. He walked me through what a typical stamped concrete class at his facility looks like.

"Operating a Bobcat, shooting elevations, setting forms and placing upwards of 20 cubic yards of both patterned and seamless stamp," he rattles off. "We also cover making repairs and sealing the next day."

It is the philosophy of "quality over quantity," which is at the heart of decorative concrete when you think about it. This also sheds light on the difference between a

Photo by Steven Ochs

“demo,” where products are demonstrated, and a “training” where the intent is to have those attending be hands-on and involved. Over the years, attending a training has become a day off. If you are taking the time to attend, take advantage of what’s being presented and get involved!

Behind the Trowels

Interestingly, the new trend with training appears to be less about content and more about how the content is shared. “www.BehindtheTrowels.com” is a new online training program created by Keefe Duhon and Wess Robison. Robison says the decorative industry needs to catch up to the digital age when it comes to training. “Behind the Trowels is intended to put affordable, professional and relevant training at the fingertips of installers from across the world,” he says.

The duo offers one-hour live online sessions on specific installations, systems or industry trends. Paying subscribers can interact with the presenter, ask questions and share ideas, versus watching a prerecorded video, which, Robison says, “separates us from the digital world.”

Both he and Duhon are strong advocates for education, no matter the form it takes. They say online training already exists in the medical, legal, oil and educational industries, and they feel it’s a great fit for the decorative concrete industry. They are also upfront admitting that there is no substitution for quality hands-on instructor-led training. Their concept fills a void for those unable to attend a class or feel

more comfortable using the online format. “We are excited to offer another medium of training — one that is affordable, does not require travel expenses and time away from work,” Robison says. They went live in late September with their first online class that showed a metallic epoxy application in a bathroom shower. They are busy scheduling new topics for future classes.

Engage in education

I realize how precious time is, and when a contractor isn’t working he’s not getting paid. I also know the value of education as one of the most critical factors in the health of our industry. There is little excitement when the headline is the same day after day, or the content never changes.

Decorative concrete, as an industry, is fighting an uphill battle when you consider our largest producers and installers are small compared to the corporations that produce pavers and other competitive hardscape materials. When was the last time you saw a full-page ad in a high-end national home and garden magazine promoting stamped concrete? Concrete pavers and composite decking are front and center every month.

But we have something those other products don’t — flexibility and installer creativity. At the end of the day you can do things with decorative concrete that pavers, wood, tile and composites can’t touch.

Artistic creativity and a continuous flow of new ideas have been an integral part of why decorative concrete is where it is today. Without training and the exchange of ideas,



Photo by Concrete Decor Staff

Those interested in learning new skills need to partake in hands-on workshops, such as those offered at the recent Concrete Decor Show in Florida. Part of this one featured the use of stencils.

a big part of that growth never occurs. This is bigger than just one person or one company.

It’s important all of us who make a living in decorative concrete support and engage in education. As Robison with Behind The Trowel put it, “Whether participating in instructor-led training, online training or networking, learning should never stop!”

Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. and a member of the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Reach him at questions@concretedecor.net.



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Circle Reader Service Number 21

The Polishing Consultant

Mechanical Versus Chemical Polish:

One clearly outshines the other

by David Stephenson

How do you tell if a floor has been profiled correctly without the use of a testing device? As a contractor, manufacturer or customer, this is an important topic.

First, some history: When polished concrete initially came to the market it was mainly used for industrial and manufacturing facilities. Back in the late '90s and early 2000s, there was no good way to color polished concrete floors. Back then, the coloring process of choice was acid stain and that doesn't work well with polished concrete as the two processes fight one another.

Once concrete dye was invented, polished colored concrete became a valid architectural finish. However, there were no stain protection options available. The only chemical treatment we had was densifier. Densifier did a good job of hardening the finish and creating a much longer-lasting floor. We quickly figured out that installing densifier after color would assist in holding more color in the concrete.

Concealing the chips

But there was one big issue with these newly colored floors. Chips were very visible (see photo above right). Recently, I met up with a guy who worked for me about 15 years ago, and he reminded me of a big school we did early on using dye. We didn't know enough back then about protecting the concrete during construction. After we finished polishing the floors, there were numerous chips in the concrete and the customer was most concerned about the main entrance and the cafeteria areas.

The district was very picky, so the solution was to man mechanics' dollies with 10 guys and give each a small paint brush and jar of acrylic sealer. The crew then rolled over this 10,000-square-foot area on their stomachs dabbing sealer into the chips to let the color show through. This process would darken up the chips and show the color, which was then a close match to the polished concrete. As you can imagine, I



Photos courtesy of David Stephenson

Without a stain-protecting layer, colored/dyed areas of polished concrete flooring typically have chips that appear on the surface.

wasn't a very popular boss when I explained what we were going to do.

As we showed this issue to more and more manufacturers, one manufacturer eventually presented us with a possible solution. By using an extremely low-solids sealer, we could put a thin coat over the entire floor that would serve two purposes. We could sell it to customers as a stain-preventative layer and, if we could get customers to buy it, this small amount of sealer would correct the specific issue we were trying to fix with the sealer and small paint brushes.

The "stain protection" would darken the chips and show the color better throughout the entire floor. This seemed like a win-win solution. The prior method wasn't realistic to install over large square footage, and this new process was much quicker. I don't think anyone in the industry at that time could foresee how these products would be abused over the next few years.

Shortcuts don't pay off

Prior to the invention of stain protections, polishers were true concrete artists. Every area that had scratches was clearly visible. They had to mechanically polish the concrete to get the high-gloss shine because there was no chemical way to achieve that shine. Soon after topical stain protection was introduced, contractors figured out stain protection would hide some scratches so they could mechanically polish less and complete jobs quicker.

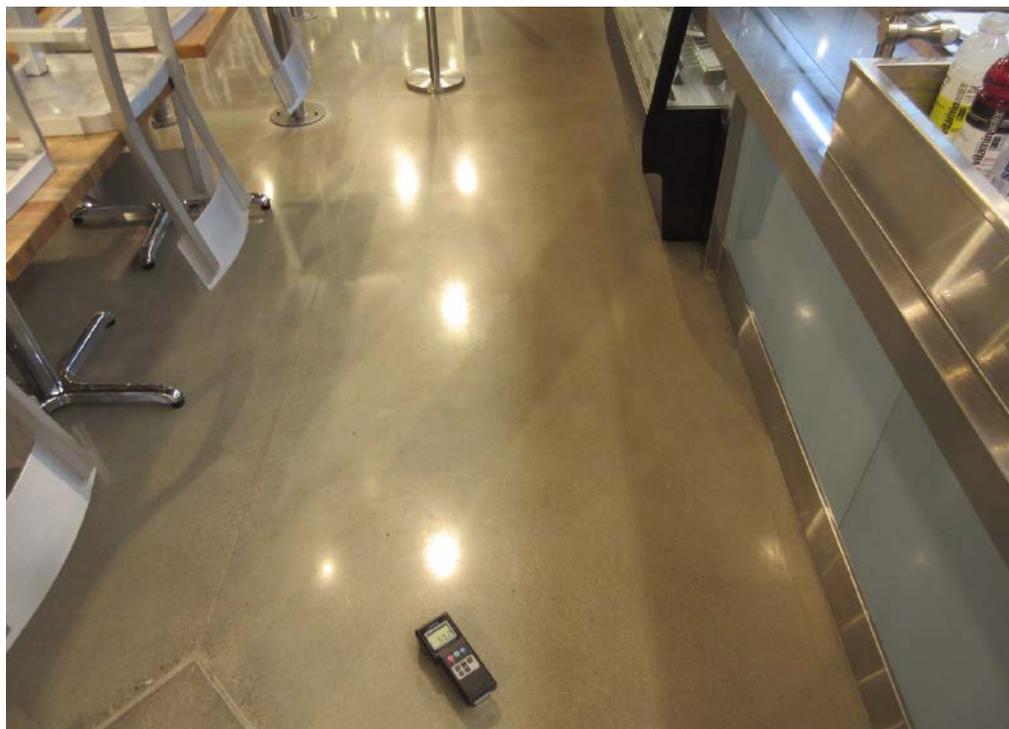
It didn't take very long for the next move. Some contractors figured out they could skip half the steps altogether and get a shine like mechanically polished concrete if they applied two or three coats of sealer/stain protection onto the floor. This realization started a pricing spiral from which the industry is still trying to recover.

By only grinding the floor with half of the steps — using much less labor

and buying a lot less expensive diamond tooling — contractors could install floors at less than half the cost of a full systematic mechanical polish. Once they were able to remove half of their expenses, these contractors figured they could still make a good profit while bidding the projects at a much lower price. If these contractors bid polished concrete floors at a lower price, they would in turn win a lot more work.

The overall price of polished concrete flooring went down by more than 50 percent in the following three years after topical stain protection was introduced. It became very difficult for traditional polishing contractors to compete and show a profit. The issue quickly started to cause additional problems because owners found their polished floors lost their shine in a short time. In high-traffic areas, the gloss was typically gone in 90 days or less.

I started looking for floors completed using multiple coats of stain protection or guard and following up on these jobs after six months. The customers would typically be frustrated but would gladly pay for a refurbish to correct their floors after they had lost their gloss.



The clarity of reflections on a floor where the gloss is created by stain protection isn't very clear.

This photo (*above*) shows a typical floor where the gloss is created by stain protection. Notice the clarity of the reflections is not very clear, and all the

lights have a halo affect around them similar to what's projected by wax on VCT (vinyl composite tiles) floors.



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Back to the basics

When you look at a floor with a stain protection gloss by itself, it looks good. Customers who don't regularly look at polished concrete can't easily tell the difference.

However, when you look at a floor that has been polished well mechanically, you can see the difference. This photo (*above*) shows a mechanically polished floor with a very thin coat of stain protection. The reflection is clear and all the reflected items, including the lights, are crisp and have clear edges. This is indicative of a polished concrete floor that will hold up well to traffic.

The issue of polished concrete floors sold using stain protection is still a big problem today. The industry has reacted in a few different ways. Some specifications call for gloss testing or refinement testing before stain protection is applied. This option sets the baseline before the sealer can be added to the finish.

Some manufacturers have introduced penetrating stain protection that handles the stains but doesn't have any visible effect on the surface polish. Some specifications call for specific grinding and polishing steps in addition to a gloss measurement. These are all attempts to get back to the mechanical polish that the industry was built on.

Resin transfer woes

Over the last few years, another issue has arisen. Due to pricing constraints, tooling manufacturers have gone to Asian manufacturing for some of their tooling offerings. (I discussed this trend in detail in an article titled "How to Choose Abrasives for Polishing Concrete" in the February/March 2017 issue of *Concrete Decor*, www.concretedecor.net/decorativeconcretearticles/vol-17-no-2-february-march-2017/abrasives-for-concrete/)

The lower quality control of this low-cost tooling supply market sometimes creates a situation where resin-bond tooling doesn't have enough diamond particulates, or the resin used to hold the particulate is especially soft. Either issue leads to "resin transfer" which can create a situation where a floor has a high gloss that's created when the resin melts and leaves a film over the surface.

Typically, the scratches from the grinding steps aren't removed but instead are filled in with melted resin. This can provide a high-gloss finish that also doesn't last.

This photo (*below*) shows a finished area where the shine is created from resin transfer. The lights have "tails" due to the rotation of the machines as the resin melts on the surface. Like those produced by stain protection, these reflections also have a hazy appearance. These floors typically lose all their gloss in six months or less.



Lights will have reflections with "tails" on floors that are tainted by resin transfer.

Proper polishing pays

The best floors have been mechanically processed and the gloss is generated from the concrete's flat surface profile rather than created by artificial means. Properly polished floors allow owners to use lower-cost maintenance options to keep the floors looking good with a high-gloss finish.

Knowing how to tell which type of finish you're looking at can help contractors and customers alike. There are plentiful contractors in the industry today installing floors that fall into these categories without intending to. Understanding the difference and what causes each outcome can help you be a better contractor. 🛠️

David Stephenson, based in Dallas, Texas, is president of Retail Polishing Management, a large national flooring installer. Prior to his new position with RPM, he helped as a consultant with retail polishing programs and troubleshooting concrete issues for companies around the globe. Throughout his career, David has owned contracting companies that installed floors as well as manufacturing companies that made products that changed the industry. He can be reached at david@the-rpm-group.com.



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The Value of Color is Important to Design

by Rick Lobdell

So far, I've written a lot about math and my love for it as it is truly my favorite part of my decorative concrete work process. Recently, however, I've been getting requests to turn my attention to color, which I think would be a nice change of pace. Let me warn you in advance: If you thought talking math with me was complex, wait until you hear my take on color theory. I can go on for days.

When I researched how to explain the values of color, I had a lot of trouble finding definitions that most people would be interested in. This article is not about explaining how light travels through the universe and because of it we see an array of fruit flavors. The key point I want to make is that people need to visualize that all color has a value. This is not just understanding black, white and gray but to also understand that all color ranges we use have value ranges within them.

When you look at figures 1 and 2, you can see a range of values for each primary color and a gray scale. From my perspective, pink is a light red, tan is a light brown, cream is a light yellow and so on. Compare those individual color ranges to the gray scale. You can see all the different ranges of color that can be achieved just from understanding the value you want to create.

Manipulating stains

For the most part, the decorative concrete industry is very limited on color. Most companies only sell one color of blue, green, yellow and so on. Most of them have an earth-tone component.

With acid stains, for example, you have to work with a basic color chart. Most color charts show you what the color will look like if you don't dilute it with water or if you seal it with a specific sealer. What they don't show you is the color range you can achieve by adding more or less water to the stain.

I rarely use any stain at "full strength" as this allows for huge value changes within just one color of any type of stain. For example, in figure 3 you can see four different values of a grayish brown and black. All these colors are obtained from the same black acid stain



Figure 3.



Figure 1.

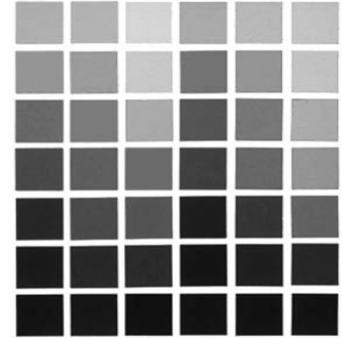


Figure 2.

I use religiously. Figure 4 has three different variations of the same black acid stain. To recap, there are four different values in figure 3 and three different values in figure 4.

An inside job

Aside from overall color choice, when we're working on an interior project, the first question I ask clients is if they want the room to feel larger or smaller. The rule of thumb is lighter colors will make a room appear larger and darker colors make it seem smaller. Another side point to this same theory is that light colors show less scuffs, scratches and dirt whereas dark colors show everything. Often this is because light — natural or controlled — reflects off everything. Darker colors absorb more light. Lighter colors tend to reflect the light. A darker color shows all the scratches and imperfections because it's holding in the light. The light colors reflect the light and help make the room feel brighter.

When clients say they want a brown floor, they need to specify a light or a dark brown. When they want a border to be darker, do they mean in relation to the walls or the floor?

If you put a dark border next to a very light baseboard around the perimeter of a room, the value of the baseboard makes the border



Figure 4.

Photos courtesy of Concrete Mystique Engraving



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

appear even darker. Every color used has a value to it. I'm not referring to a numerical value, but a black and white value. This is important when you are deciding the perfect color scheme for each of your clients. You want to visualize the result of your color choices and be aware of how each color choice affects everything around the space.

Look at figures 5 and 6. Figure 5 has a dark border next to a white baseboard. Figure 6 has a deep reddish brown next to a dark island cabinet. The darker border in figure 5 frames the room with a sharp edge around it. The borders in figure 6 complement the main color and keep the room looking larger or more open. Both look great.

I never decide which is better for a client. I show them options and work with them through these choices. I always tell my clients two things. First, every choice I show you will look great. Second, this isn't my house and you need to help me determine which colors and values to use because you live here not me.

Color relations

Check out figure 7 where you'll see orange, gold, red and brown. The gold is the lightest value. The orange is the next lightest. The red and brown are similar in value, but the colors are completely different. Even though orange is the next lightest color, it's not that light compared to the red and brown. Personally, I like to have more contrast within my color choices, but this project worked great with all the colors having a similar range in value. I can't say that will work every time but it did in this case.

The hardest thing to understand when talking about color value is that it always must be in relation to another color. Without the other colors, value only matters when talking about how it makes a room darker or lighter or how hot your feet get when walking on a pool deck.

When you're selling a pool deck, clients don't care about color value. Most only care to know the color isn't going to be too hot when they walk barefoot on the deck in the middle of the summer. During the sales call you, as the expert, must be aware of clients' expectations before they are. Understanding the value ranges of each color choice will help you have that advantage.

Art professor Steven Ochs of Southern Arkansas University says an easy way to check value is to make a black and white copy of the design. If it looks drab gray, you're lacking the contrasts between dark and light tones to help create separation between colors.

Beyond color choices

As you sell and create your next project, don't just pay attention to color choices. Be mindful of each color's value in relation to the others used and to the space around them. You always want the floor to be a different value than the walls. Most people choose darker values, but some opt for lighter. There is no steadfast rule as to what looks better. It is always in the eye of the beholder, which is your client — not you.

However, pool decks are good examples where the overall surface should always be lighter. On inside projects, evaluate your color's value in comparison to the

cabinets or wall paint. It will change your perspective of the value color has in the world around us. 📱

Rick Lobdell, a classically trained artist with a master's in fine arts in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design, has also studied math and drafting. In this series, the owner of Concrete Mystique Engraving in Tennessee will explain how he conceives his well-known designs. He can be reached at rick@concretemystique.com.



Figure 7.



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Circle Reader Service Number 25

Not Just Another Skate in the Park

By Stacey Enesey Klemenc

WHEN members of the Sioux City Skateboard Association lost their good friend Andrew Langin to brain cancer in January 2017, they wanted to do something to honor him. The 40-year-old single father of 13-year-old Sophie was an avid skateboarder, a “bad-ass drummer” and an amazing metal sculptor who had touched so many people’s lives in a good way.

Since the skateboard association’s inception in 1999, Langin had been an essential member of the group formed by local skateboarders to raise funds for concrete skateboard parks in the Midwest. The funds raised help build the concrete skatepark in Sioux City, Iowa.

What better way to remember Langin than to build something as solid as he was, thought association members David Hall and Trevor Osterholt. They set out to create a “skate-able memorial for Andy.”

“We wanted to design and construct a memorial for our brother that he would be stoked about,” says Hall. “So we designed an



Photo courtesy of David Hall



Photo courtesy of David Hall



Photo by Jake Rennaker

obstacle that would work for skateboarding and go with the flow of the skatepark.”

They came up with a raised design in the shape of an A and, as a more personal touch, decided to inlay a disconnected black base so from a certain angle people would see a spade. This feature, Hall says, might go unnoticed by the general public but Langin’s friends would get the connection.

“Andy was a big fan of the band Motörhead and after the passing of (bassist, singer and songwriter) Lemmy Kilmister that previous year we thought that would be fitting” as a nod to the band’s hit song “Ace of Spades.”

The concrete was integrally colored with Dark Charcoal from Butterfield Color and 400 pounds of 00 size lime-green glass. And it also contained one ingredient that

won’t be found in any other memorial — Andy’s ashes.

All grading, forming and pouring was done with care by members of the Sioux City Skateboard Association. “After the polishing was done, the glass and aggregate glimmered as a beautiful finish,” Hall says. “This project is a tribute to our skateboarding brotherhood and to a one-of-a-kind father, friend and fellow skateboarder.” 🛹

Special thanks to these Sioux City companies:

Polishing contractor: Rich Rawson of A&A Industrial Coatings

Excavation and disposal: Justin Emmick of JFE Landscaping

Concrete finish work: MJ Concrete, Sioux City

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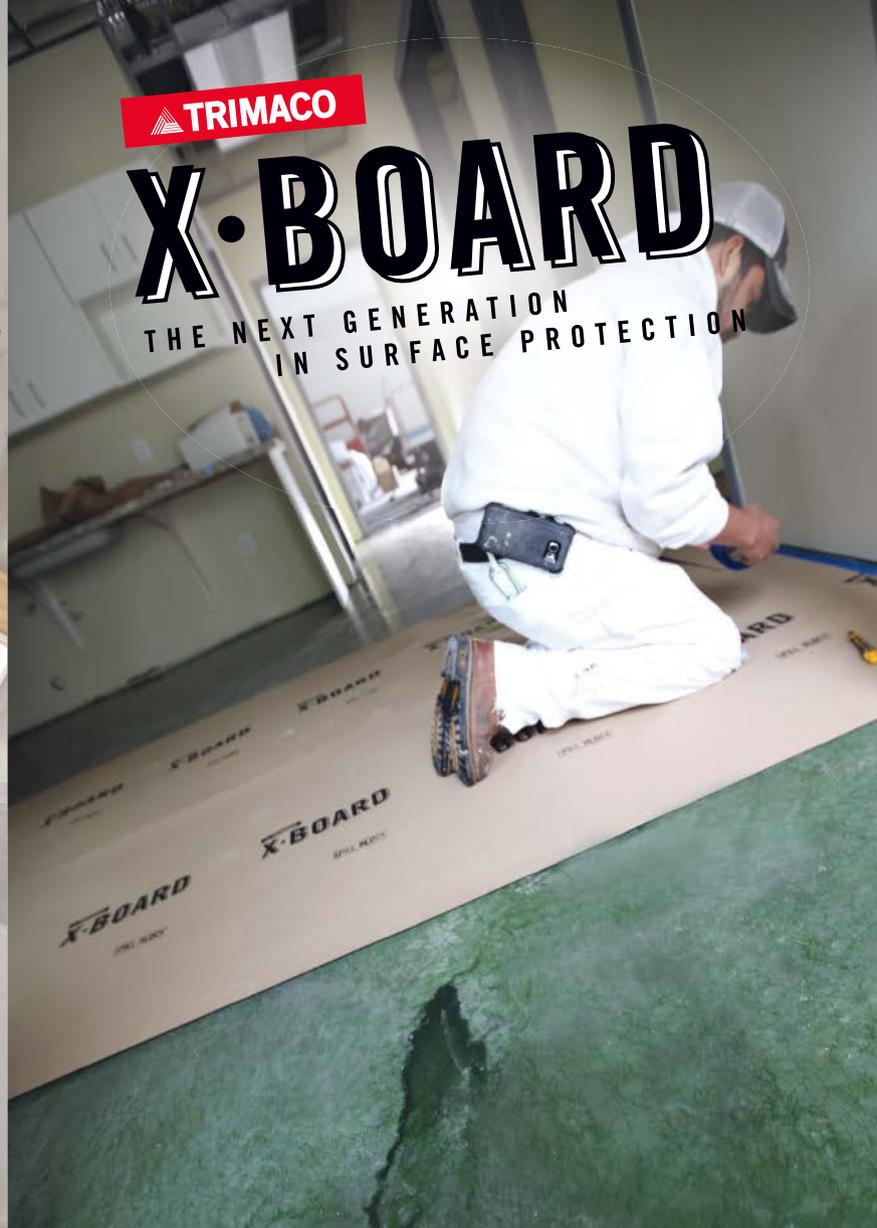
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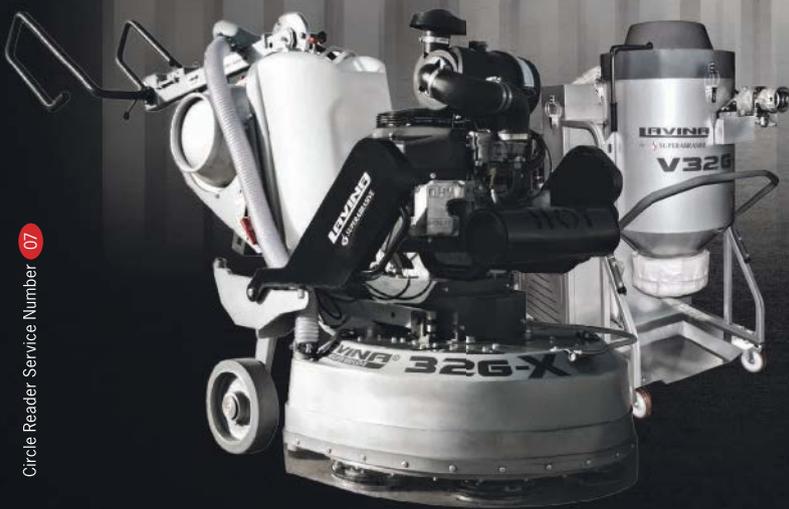
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