

[Login](#) [New User?](#)

Email address

Password

Remember Me

[Forgot Password](#)

[Home](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[2008 Media Kit](#)

[Updates](#)

[Breaking News](#)

[Columns](#)

[Features](#)

[Industry News](#)

[Web Exclusive](#)

[Products](#)

[Product Info \(Free\)](#)

[Calendar of Events](#)

[Resources](#)

[AEC Store, Books + Videos](#)

[Archives](#)

[Tool Buyers Guide](#)

[Bulletin Board](#)

[Buyers Guide](#)

[Underlayment Guide](#)

[Classified Ads](#)

[Industry Links](#)

[Installation Training Clinics + Schools](#)

[List Rental](#)

[Showcases](#)

[Career Center](#)

[Market Research](#)

[FCI Info](#)

[About Us](#)

[Back Issues](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Search in: Editorial Products Companies

[Want to use this article? Click here for options!](#)

[Email this Article](#) [Print View](#)

Make a Resolution to Improve Your Skills

by Christopher Capobianco

November 29, 2007



With the increasing popularity of floating floors, many resilient installers have learned how to install these products.

It's that time of year when things are winding down in a lot of ways and many of us look to the future and make plans and resolutions for the

coming year. At the same time, many businesses will assess their year and try to plan how to improve, do things better and make more money in the New Year. If you own your own one- or two-person business like I do, the personal and the business resolutions are

often intertwined. We ask ourselves questions like "How can I work less and make more money?", or "How can I expand into other areas to supplement my income?" Here are some ideas geared specifically to installers, but those of you who are dealers may also find some ideas here that could be helpful.

Professionalize Your Business

If you are a working installer, hopefully you keep good records, maximize tax deductions and keep your taxes and insurance in order. Maybe you work as a "DBA", an individual, or a corporation, or maybe you are "off the books". If you don't have a good understanding of these types of questions, the best resolution you can make is to get your financial house in order. It may make sense to incorporate yourself or take other steps to be sure you operate legally and keep as much of your money as you can. I can't tell you which way to go, but I will say that one of the best things I did for my business was to sit down with an accountant, learn to keep better books and learn when it is and is not a good idea to deduct "business expenses". A good accountant with an understanding of small start up businesses made a big difference.

Get Into Commercial

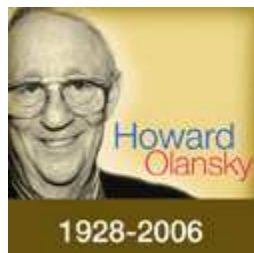


Learning the proper way to do concrete moisture testing can open up new opportunities for installers and other floor covering professionals as demand for independent testing continues to grow (photo courtesy of Tramex)

Having spent the first fifteen years of my career mostly on the residential side of the business and the last fourteen on the commercial side, it has been interesting to see how the two sides of the business are different from each other, not only in business practices but in the products that get installed, installation techniques that are needed on one side but not the other. Often times, the commercial flooring business can be booming when residential is slow, which is how things have been as of late. Installers or dealers that can transition into the commercial business are often able to weather the changes. For resilient flooring, the largest selling product is Vinyl Composition Tile (VCT) and although it is easy to install, it's a competitive business on larger commercial jobs, so it is sometimes a bit of "sticker shock" when you see how much lower the price per square foot can be compared to smaller, more profitable jobs. The other challenge is managing the job site when there are a lot of other trades involved. My advice is not to take on

anything too large so you can ease into it.

Another idea is to get into more "specialty" commercial resilient products like heat welded sheet vinyl, resilient stair treads, cork, linoleum, "safety flooring", athletic flooring, raised access floors and other products in the "specialty resilient flooring" category. If you can learn how to install these products you will be in a good place



because in many markets there is shortage of skilled installers to do this type of work, and installers that are good at it get paid top dollar.

One other area for installers to advance their career is to join a union, if you live in an area where there is a lot of union work going in. Union members have excellent benefits and a tremendous amount of available training. INSTALL is an acronym for the International Standards and Training Alliance, the floor covering arm of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and its training program. For many years, INSTALL has been providing the highest quality, most comprehensive training available for installers of floor covering materials in residential and commercial markets, which includes a lot of the major cities in the United States.

Learn New Resilient Products

This is my fourth year of writing a column about resilient flooring here for *FCI*, and we have covered installation of a variety of different resilient flooring products. One thing you hear out there in the industry is that resilient flooring sales aren't what they used to be – or at least the staple products like residential sheet vinyl and vinyl tile are not like they used to be. There is still a lot of vinyl on the commercial side but on the residential side it appears to have slowed down, or at least leveled off, despite the fact that the quality of the products has never been better. Because of changes in consumer preferences, there are a number of other products in the resilient category that are increasing in use so if you don't handle them it might be a good time to learn. Resilient products like natural linoleum and cork flooring are making a comeback because of the trend towards more "green" flooring choices and are installed for residential and commercial use. I find that installers don't understand how these products are different from vinyl from an installation point of view. In my column in January of 2005, we talked about the unique characteristics of linoleum and how you can't treat it like sheet vinyl or vinyl tile. The manufacturers of linoleum all offer training seminars and multi-day schools that would be a good investment for the installer or the dealer who wants to get into the natural linoleum business.

Rubber flooring and stair treads are another growth area in resilient side. Most of this type of product is used commercially, but I have always said that stair treads are a good product to sell for residential use such as indoor stairs down to a basement or garage. People are upgrading garage and basement floors and installing home gyms, and rubber is a frequent flooring option because of its durability. These floors are relatively easy to install, but there are specialized adhesives, techniques and tools that you many not have in your arsenal right now.

Non-Resilient Products



Training programs like this INSTALL resilient flooring class are widely available and the best way for installers to upgrade their skills and make more money.

When vinyl was slow, I know resilient installers who learned glue down wood flooring. It's a different type of adhesive system than vinyl and it's a different method of cutting, but I've been told it is not hard to learn.

Learning floating floor installation so you can install floating laminate, hardwood and cork flooring is probably not a bad idea either and, again, there are training schools available from some of the major manufacturers so it's a good investment of time and money to learn a new skill that can expand your business.

Nail down wood flooring is another skill that is in demand today so look into the Wood Floor Manufacturers Association (NOFMA), the National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) or some of the manufacturer training programs. Wood floors are booming right now, so see if you can get your piece of the action. The same holds true for Ceramic Tile and stone, although where I come from it seems resilient installers don't often branch out that far. Laminate? Yes! Wood? Yes! But tile....fuggedaboutit! If you decide to go that route the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation (CTEF) and a number of other organizations offer tile installation training.

Substrate Testing and Preparation



Concrete testing and floor prep are other potential growth areas for floor covering installers and dealers. Every day, more and more concrete moisture testing is being done independently and technicians are in demand. There is now an industry certification known as Introduction to Subfloor/Substrate Inspection (ISSI) that is offered by schools that are accredited by the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC). Whether you become an

This beautiful installation features a multi colored installation of resilient sheet flooring, flash covered up the walls and fixtures and installed with heat welded seams. This is an example of the fine art of resilient installation, which very few installers can do. Those who can are in demand and rarely lack for work. (Photo courtesy of Potomac Floor Covering)

independent that does testing or want to do testing for your regular jobs, this is a good skill to learn.

“Self Leveling” underlayment has become big business and there are companies who do nothing but level floors. Whether on new construction projects such as high rise apartment buildings or repair work on old floors that are damaged or out of level, there is demand for people and companies that can do this work, and the major producers of these products will be glad to train you for next to no cost.

Christopher Capobianco

Did you enjoy this article? [Click here](#) to subscribe to the magazine.



Advertisement:

FLOORINGINSIDER.COM
Daily News that Hits the Floor

© 2007 BNP Media. All rights reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#)