



Concrete

The Journal of Decorative Concrete

VOL. 3 NO. 2 • APRIL/MAY 2003 • \$6.95

Decor

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WEEKLY TIME SHEET

WORKER: Bill W. WEEK: Last Wk

DATE	DAY	START TIME	LUNCH	END TIME	WORK DONE	JOB	TOTAL HOURS
	Monday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Tuesday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Wednesday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Thursday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Friday	7:00	1/2	3:30	Driveway	Westgate	8
	Saturday						8
	Sunday						8
TOTAL HOURS:							40

REALITY?

Created 2/7/2003 4:52 PM

Employee Report

Bill Winston

Jobclock Name: Westgate Apartments

Date Range: 2/3/2003 through 2/7/2003

Start	End	Activity	
2/3/2003 7:13 AM	2/3/2003 12:02 PM	Surface Prep	4:49 hours
2/3/2003 12:50 PM	2/3/2003 3:17 PM	Surface Prep	2:27 hours 7:16 hours
2/4/2003 7:20 AM	2/4/2003 12:06 PM	Surface Prep	4:46 hours
2/4/2003 12:57 PM	2/4/2003 3:31 PM	Surface Prep	2:34 hours 7:20 hours
2/5/2003 7:08 AM	2/5/2003 12:01 PM	Pour/Stamp	4:53 hours
2/5/2003 12:41 PM	2/5/2003 3:07 PM	Pour/Stamp	2:26 hours 7:19 hours
2/6/2003 7:16 AM	2/6/2003 12:15 PM	Pour/Stamp	4:59 hours
2/6/2003 1:05 PM	2/6/2003 3:16 PM	Pour/Stamp	2:11 hours 7:10 hours
2/7/2003 7:21 AM	2/7/2003 11:50 AM	Seal/Coat	4:29 hours
2/7/2003 12:40 PM	2/7/2003 3:19 PM	Seal/Coat	2:39 hours 7:08 hours

Signature Bill Winston
Bill Winston

Employee subtotal

36:13 hours

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Dear Professionals,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the men and women of the decorative concrete profession. Your enthusiastic attitude, pursuit of higher education and excellence within your craft are the primary reason for our industry's current success. This positive attitude, I believe, will keep the industry thriving for generations to come.

It is apparent to me, time and time again, how important it is to have a good attitude. A healthy, positive attitude attracts others to us and to our way of thinking. It is not always the easiest to maintain, especially in the workplace. Workers make mistakes, products backfire, weather conditions change and timing gets pushed out of whack — all making it impossible to keep projects on schedule. Problems are inevitable, we all know that by now, but that's where our attention to a positive attitude can help us maintain our standards of performance, the performance of others and most importantly, the way others perceive us.

I can recall hearing from individuals in every kind of work environment that their workplace was terribly uncomfortable simply because of another person's choice of attitude. I myself can recall environments where I really had little interest in hanging around simply because of someone's attitude. It is a fact that having a good attitude will impact our life and the lives of those around us in a positive way.

Oftentimes our attitude toward something or someone will dictate how well we perform in a particular situation or environment. A good friend of mine, a 1980s defensive lineman for the St. Louis Cardinals who is now a contractor, still approaches work of all types like a machine. He is awesome at moving through the tough jobs in spite of any physical pain or mental frustration he must endure. And at the end of his day, he still relishes in the accomplishments of his crew, the job and himself. I would personally hire a guy like that for any job.

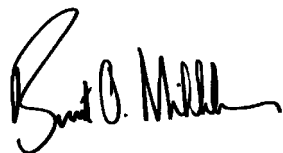
While helping a friend move one day I came across a piece of paper with the following message:

Attitude

by Charles Swindoll

"The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company ... a church ... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past ... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way, we cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you ... we are in charge of our Attitudes."

"Have a great day." A kind gesture, but totally your choice.



Bent Mikkelsen
Publisher



April/May 2003 • Vol. 3 No. 2
Issue No. 10 • \$6.95

Publisher: Bent O. Mikkelsen

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Concrete Decor The Journal of Decorative Concrete is published six times a year by Professional Trade Publications, Inc. Bulk rate postage paid at Lebanon Junction, KY and additional mailing offices.
ISSN 1542-1597

Subscriptions:

One year: USA \$19.95; Canada \$32.00;
Other countries \$60. All funds in U.S. dollars.

For Subscriber Services:

Call 866-341-3703 Toll Free

For Advertiser Services:

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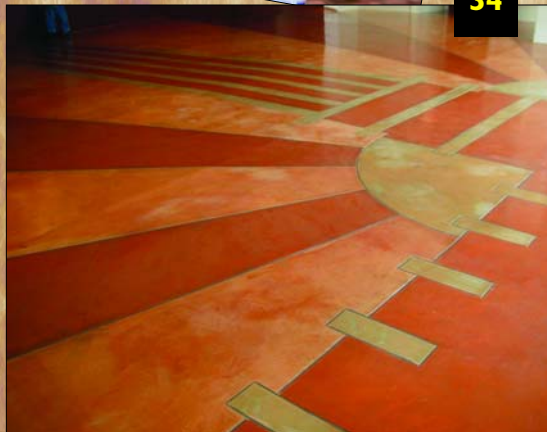
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Stain concentrates patented

Marvin Dodson of Rare Earth Labs has received a patent for his concrete stain concentrates. Rare Earth's stains provide a natural, translucent appearance that brings out the natural beauty of concrete. They are suitable for floors, walls, countertops or decorative accessories. The concentrates, which come in eight basic colors, can be diluted to the desired intensity by simply adding tap water. By buying a concentrate, contractors will not only have control over color, but will also realize savings in shipping and storage. Rare Earth offers a Contractor's Application and Test Kit, available for \$55, which allows contractors to evaluate the potential 64 colors, tints and shades available from the eight basic colored stain concentrates. For more information, visit www.rareearthlabs.com or call (800) 664-0670.

Stampcrete offers ADA-compliant stamps

Stampcrete International Ltd. has a new ADA-compliant stamping tool for producing detectable warnings for curb ramps, crosswalks and transit platforms. Detectable warnings — and specifically, truncated domes — are now an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirement for detecting the boundary between the sidewalk and the street. Grooves, exposed aggregate and other designs are no longer acceptable because they have been found to be too similar to pavement textures, cracks and joints. The Stampcrete ADA system satisfies the new requirement while allowing the contractor to continually pour one monolithic sidewalk. The stamping tools are placed on the concrete while in its plastic state, and then vibrated using a tamper tool to create the domes. For a free informative package on the Stampcrete System, including specification forms and a free video showing the process, call Bob Williams at (800) 233-3298. Visit www.stampcrete.com for more information.

Engineer honored by ACI

The American Concrete Institute has named Colin Lobo, vice president of engineering for the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, as a Fellow in its organization, placing him among an elite group of technical experts within the concrete industry. Founded in 1904, ACI is a technical and educational society dedicated to improving the design, construction, maintenance and repair of concrete structures. ACI Fellows have made outstanding contributions to the production or use of concrete materials, products and structures in the areas of education, research, development, design, construction or management, and must have made significant contributions to ACI

through committees and/or local chapters. Lobo joined NRMCA's engineering staff in Sept. 1991 and was named vice president of the department in June 1998.

Sika donates to NJIT

Sika Corp. has donated more than \$25,000 in materials to "Design for the Future, The Campaign for NJIT." The materials donated — SikaWrap, Carbodur and Epoxies — will be used for research by engineering students at the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

The annual fund provides a dependable source of unrestricted gifts, which can be applied to the areas of greatest need. It supports areas such as student scholarships and financial aid, curriculum enhancement, athletics, library and laboratory resources. Sika Corp., based in Lyndhurst, N.J., provides solutions and products for concrete production, repair and protection.

NRMCA boosts promotion team

The National Ready Mixed Concrete Association has hired industry veterans Brad Burke and Dan Huffman as directors of concrete promotion. Burke, who will be based near Minneapolis, has extensive experience as a master trainer for NRMCA's Certified Concrete Sales Professional program and has also served as a salesman for a number of industry companies, including Synthetic Industries (now SI - Concrete Systems). Most recently, he operated an industry consulting firm, Innovative Concrete Solutions. Huffman, based in Portland, Ore., has more than 25 years of experience throughout the ready mixed concrete industry, most recently with Master Builders as its executive business development manager in the western U.S. "NRMCA is very fortunate to be able to bring people of Brad's and Dan's caliber into the association," said NRMCA president Robert Garbini. "Their vast experience in selling and promoting concrete, along with their numerous industry contacts and affiliations, will prove invaluable in boosting concrete's market share." The association is also seeking to add an additional concrete promotion position, to be based in Silver Spring, Md.

Sto appoints new CEO

Sto Corp., a world leader in cladding, coating and restoration systems, has appointed David Boivin as CEO. Boivin was previously vice president of sales and marketing for the insulation group at CertainTeed Corp. of Valley Forge, Pa. Prior to joining CertainTeed in 1991, Boivin managed manufacturing operations in the appliance, rechargeable battery and ceramics industries over a span of six years. He began his career with General Electric, and was financial analyst for several divisions of GE Lighting from 1978 to 1986. Boivin is

succeeding the retiring Macon Lowe, who has been at the helm since 1993.

Business advice offered

Paradigm Strategies has launched a new Construction Division to help small to mid-size companies grow and prosper. Business consultant Kevin Lister offers advice on getting your business on the fast track, including management, human resources, sales and marketing, operations and finance. To learn more about the company's programs, or to schedule a free one-hour consultation with Lister, call (508) 871-7056 or visit www.paradigmstrategies.com.

New face at Vic

Francis Heck has joined Vic International Corp. as a technical sales and support representative. Beginning with his employment with W.J. Savage Co. and later, Sawing Systems Inc., he has enjoyed a long career in the stone industry. He can be reached by calling (800) 423-1634.

Kudos

Ahal Contracting Co., based in St. Louis, Mo., received a Quality Award for 2002 from the Concrete Council of St. Louis. The award was given for the 40,000-square-foot streetscape, the 4,000-square-foot sports bar floor and the 8,000-square-foot buffet floor at Ameristar Casino in St. Charles, Mo. The streetscape flooring, shown in this photo, is Bomanite imprinted concrete. The sports bar and buffet floors each received a reactive stain finish.

Companies plan alliance

Grace Construction Products and Davis Colors have agreed to form a distribution alliance. Grace plans to distribute Davis' Hydrotint liquid color and Chameleon T liquid color dispensing systems to ready mix and precast producers in North America. "Our agreement with Davis will provide us with the opportunity to combine Grace's leadership position in admixtures and fibers with the technology leader in liquid pigments," says Wayne T. Smith, general manager of Specialty Construction Chemicals at Grace. "The color concrete market is one of the most active segments in the industry. Our goal is to increase the penetration of color in concrete and make concrete an attractive building material from an aesthetic as well as structural perspective."

Davis Colors is a flagship brand of Rockwood Pigments NA Inc., one of the largest iron oxide pigment manufacturers

in the world. Grace Construction Products, a business unit of W.R. Grace & Co., is headquartered in Cambridge, Mass.


E-tool helps choose admixtures

Master Builders Inc., a leading admixture supplier, has launched a new electronic tool on its Web site. Durability GPS (Global Product Selector) helps users design and specify concrete that will provide the best possible performance and the longest service life. The e-tool functions as a multi-level selector system that considers project parameters and recommends specific admixtures to include in the concrete mix design to achieve improved durability. Users can specify chemical admixtures formulated to prevent various conditions that threaten and compromise concrete durability, such as corrosion, cracking, alkali-silica reactivity and chemical attack. They begin by selecting the type of structure they are designing and then consider the potential problems and possible environmental and performance influences that could compromise the concrete (such as cracking, corrosion, etc.) The modeling tool then presents possible causes for those conditions and offers admixture solutions to combat those challenges. To try the Durability GPS e-tool, visit www.masterbuilders.com and click on the "Support" icon. Then select "Etools" and click on Durability GPS.



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DECORATIVE CONCRETE TIPS

Decorative Concrete Tips is a forum for readers to exchange information about methods, tools, and tricks they've devised. We'll pay for any we publish. Send details to CD Tips, Concrete Decor, P.O. Box 25210, Eugene, OR 97402. We look forward to hearing from you!

Complete Estimate is Essential Part of the Job

For the decorative concrete contractor — or any contractor — the estimating stage of any project is critical. Here at the Renew-Crete Systems training seminars, I stress the importance of a complete and thorough estimate. The plain and simple fact is that a profitable job starts with a good estimate. On the same note, where the profit margin is slim, one will find there was something missed on the initial estimate or someone misjudged the amount of time needed for a particular element of the project.

Area Conversion Chart

Area of a Square = length X width
Area of a Rectangle = length X width
Area of a Triangle = base X ½ altitude
Area of a Parallelogram = base X altitude
Area of a Trapezoid = altitude X ½ the sum of the parallel sides
Area of a Circle = square of diameter X .7854
Area of a Circle = half diameter X half circumference
Area of a Circular Ring = sum of the diameter of the two circles X the difference of the two circles and that product X .7854

Here are some ideas I suggest at the Renew-Crete Training Seminars:

Most importantly, always be professional. Start by showing up for the estimate on time. If you are going to be late, call. Dress professionally. Don't show up full of concrete and release powder so that you are unable to sit down in their home and talk with them. Be sure to take a few actual samples as well as pictures and references to use in your presentation.

Make sure to complete a written estimate. Preferably, use a multi-copy, preprinted estimate sheet. Then when you leave, each party has a copy for later reference. The estimate sheet should have an area to make a sketch or drawing of the project. Remember, some of these projects may turn out to be tens of thousands of dollars or more. Not every customer will decide right at that moment to move forward with the project. It may be a week or six months until they call and tell you they are ready to start the job. When you have a copy of the estimate to refer back to the details, you will sound professional and prepared to answer any questions they might have. This will also save you the time of having to re-estimate. A complete estimate will help you plan out the job and your approach on how to complete it.

Another important point to remember is to be prepared. Most customers are expecting you as a contractor to handle all aspects of the project. You will need to be able to recognize potential problems, how to deal with them, and their associated costs. An example: You are called to estimate an existing pool deck that the customer would like renovated. The deck has an existing coating that is failing and needs to be removed. You will need to know what needs to be done as well as the costs associated with it. When estimating, if you are stumbling trying to figure footage, removal costs or other incidental costs, the customer may not have confidence that you can actually complete the proposed project. This can result in a lost sale.

Above is a formula chart used for figuring out the area of different shapes. I created it years ago, laminated it and kept it in estimate book to help with those complicated measuring jobs.



—Joe Francis, Renew-Crete Systems



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Concrete Works, Fairfield, California

For Lee Levig and his crew, creativity and craftsmanship are the foundation of every project

by Christina Camara

Lee Levig is always looking down, yet looking forward at the same time.

Levig, an innovator in decorative concrete and owner of Concrete Works of Fairfield, Calif., is constantly checking out what he's walking on — concrete floors, driveways, sidewalks — with the idea that new ideas can be found anywhere. It's not unusual for Levig to buy a disposable camera on the spot and start shooting pictures of a concrete floor when he's out with his family. It used to bother his children, he says; now they just roll their eyes.

Levig calls himself a mad scientist, and he is always experimenting. He pours about 200 samples a year. He mixes his own colors, makes his own texture skins and even makes his own embossing tools, giving his work a one-of-a-kind appeal.

This level of research, combined with a strong focus on art and design, has





earned him a solid reputation as a craftsman who is always looking ahead.

Concentrating on the San Francisco Bay area and Contra Costa County, Concrete Works takes on high-end residential projects that allow Levig and his crew to get creative with colors, acid stains, stamps and textures on driveways, pool decks and patios. Ninety percent of the company's work involves decorative applications for custom homes. Some are "super customs," Levig says, which can be as big as 33,000 square feet.

Creativity was not a requirement in Levig's first career — banking — but it was through the financial world that he found his way into concrete in 1987. He was working as the controller of a friend's concrete business, and was asked to pitch in when there was too much work and too few hands. Levig enjoyed the physical labor and working outdoors, and realized that his confining cubicle had to go.

"I love being outside, and when you're locked in an office doing paperwork every day, it's not a great way to make a living," he says.

Levig started helping one of the finishers, who spent his free time pouring patios. Levig started working weekends too, and eventually started his own business creating decorative patios for tract homes. He started experimenting with exposed aggregate borders, joints cut in different patterns, shells or leaves embedded in the concrete, and carvings — twining ivy for example — incorporated into the design. He became known as a

contractor with an artistic eye, and his business grew.

Since Levig struck out on his own right away, he had to teach himself the trade. His competition certainly wasn't giving out any free advice. For the same reasons, Levig won't say much about his own innovations. But he's always looking to learn more. He takes ACI courses every year and attends seminars at the World of Concrete. In fact, he believes education should be more accessible — and more affordable — to elevate standards in the fast-growing decorative concrete industry.

"It seems like we've strayed from the word 'craftsman,'" Levig says. "I'd like to see that come back. I'd like to see people take pride in their work. I get sick of hearing, 'That's good enough.'"

Levig now has a crew of seven, most of whom have been with him for six or seven years. He credits his company's success to the crew, who keep high standards and work as a team. In fact, they closely examine every third job or so, critiquing their work and giving themselves a letter grade, from A to F. "Every now and then you have to slow down and look back and not worry about whether you're paying these guys for three hours to critique themselves," Levig says. "It's one of the best things that we do, and you can find something wrong with every job."

This attention to detail led two of his crew members to design an embossing tool that creates an unblemished surface at the point where two stairs meet, solving a common problem when the release isn't clean and the concrete is flawed.

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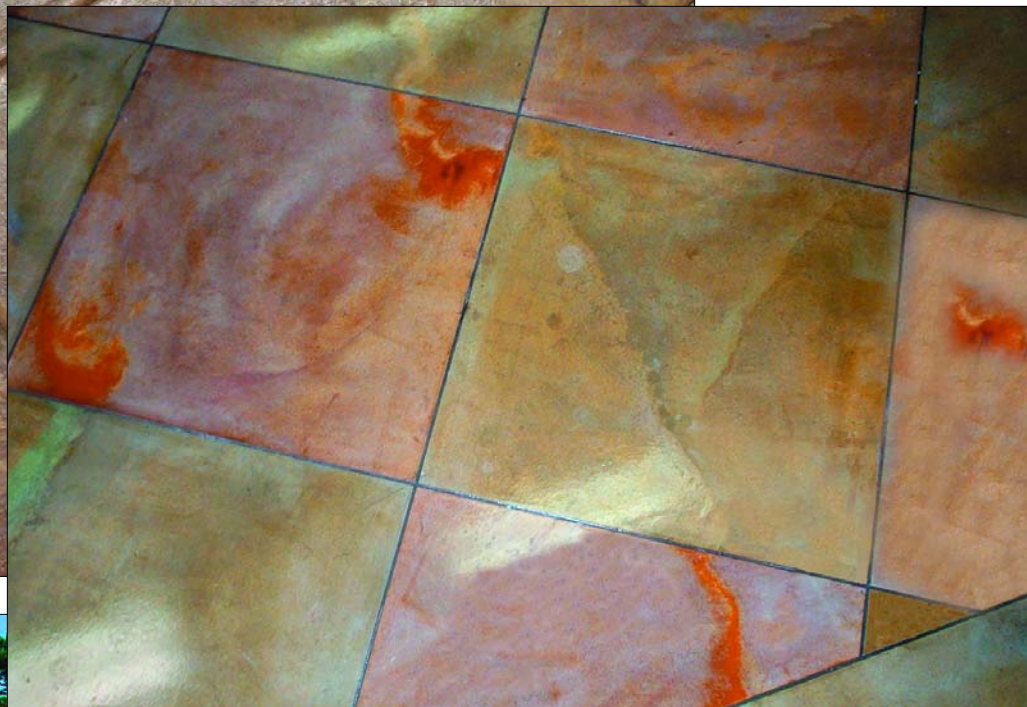
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CIRCLE 19 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Levig designs every job, but always listens to the crew's ideas and lets them be as creative as possible. Even if the idea won't fit that particular job, it might work well the next time around.

He enjoys working with color — he uses color hardeners with acid stains to bring different colors into the concrete — along with a constantly changing menu of other techniques. Many contractors get trapped in a “paint-by-numbers” style of doing things, Levig says, but he mixes mediums to get different effects. “There’s a lot you can do to change the texture and change the look from the guy next door.” His use of texture mats, stamps and custom colors is a good marketing tool, but Levig does it because he loves it. “I get bored doing the same thing.”

He’s doing a lot of work with texture mats lately, although he enjoys acid work and carving up a slab with a decorative element such as the Aztec sundial he recently cut into a driveway. He’s also started using embossed wallpaper to create crisp, detailed art nouveau borders.

“I don’t call myself an artist, but I am a craftsman and I enjoy using my passion for art as part of my craft.”

He is absolutely committed to making sure the colored concrete doesn’t overpower the natural environment. In fact, he believes the concrete should NEVER be the focal point.

“Colors are an important aspect of the job,” Levig says. “In order to get things to blend and look natural you have to fool the eye. One of the crucial elements to that is to make sure the colors blend in with the surroundings, so it’s not the focus when you walk up to a project.”

For example, he used different colors to make a concrete entrance look so neutral that the eye is drawn toward the door, which should be the main attraction. He also worked on a wood-sided house with a translucent green stain over it. Levig poured sample over sample until he could get the color of the driveway to match the house almost perfectly. Once again, the concrete was disguised so the entryway could be the focal point.

“I hate it when I see these guys do these vibrant colors,” he says. “The idea is to enhance what’s there, not draw the attention to your work. It’s not a painting you put on the wall.”

Concrete is a fluid medium and the variables have frustrated every concrete contractor, but Levig controls what he can. When the concrete truck arrives, the crew is ready for just about any problem that can come up. Good design and preparation are key. He doesn’t overpour, he stays on schedule and he keeps his promises.

His business is busy but manageable. He feels fortunate that he doesn’t need to market his work since it speaks for itself. His new jobs are based solely on referrals.

“If you work hard and you’re honest, everything is going to be OK,” he says, “and the guys around me believe that too.”



CONTEST!

Cutting Pictures in Concrete with Diamonds

Send us a photo of your best work and an explanation of how you did it using diamond blades, bits and/or grinders. The winning project may be displayed on the cover of *Concrete Decor*. All winners will be featured in the August/September 2003 issue. Other prizes to be announced.

Send your photo and explanation along with your name, address and telephone number to:

Concrete Decor magazine
P.O. Box 25210
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Please be sure the picture(s) you send are the best quality possible. Poor quality photos may limit our ability to use them in the magazine. Thanks.

All entries must be submitted by July 1, 2003



Acrylic Stains for Concrete: A Colorful Alternative to Acid Etch

by Denise Wendt

Contractors choose acrylic stains over chemical stains for a variety of reasons. Acrylic stains offer an array of colors that chemical stains cannot. Designers and applicators are no longer limited to the eight colors commonly available with acid-based stains. And when combined with a chemical-based system, the design possibilities are limitless. It is even possible to achieve the unique variegated look of an acid-etch stain. Add to that ease of use and you've got an unbeatable system.

Concrete Decor magazine recently asked contractors and manufacturers what they like — and dislike — about acrylic stains.

"Not all acrylic stains are created equal," says Chris Sullivan, regional sales manager and liquids product manager for QC Construction Products in Madera, Calif. He notes there are different types of acrylic stains, from pigmented acrylic sealers to penetrating water-based acrylic stains. Unlike acid stains, which all basically work the same, acrylic stains can be membrane forming and opaque or penetrating and translucent. "It is important to understand the difference and what the limitations are with each product," says Sullivan.

Wear and fade resistance

One advantage acid-based stains have over acrylics is that they can achieve a deeper wear surface. But when correctly sealed, acrylics can wear well. Resistance to wear and fade varies from one kind of acrylic stain to another and among manufacturers. "Typically we see acrylic stains holding up to UV exposure quite well," says Sullivan. "It depends on the type of pigments used in the particular stain." Applicators should ask their manufacturer about UV and long-term exposure results if using products in an exterior application.



Residence in San Antonio, Texas. Applicator is Randy Rogers, Blue Heron Designs/Concrete Impressions in San Antonio. Toffee QC Cementint lithium quartz penetrating acrylic stain.

Photograph courtesy of QC Construction Products, Madera, CA

Tina Anderson and husband Gary own Tri-Co Floors in La Mesa, Calif. "Most of our experience in using acrylic stains is on interior projects with no UV problems," says Anderson. But she, too, recommends using caution on exterior applications.

Diana Strongosky is a product manager for H&C/Sherwin Williams in Cleveland, Ohio. She urges applicators to look for 100 percent acrylic resins, but adds that not all such resins are created equal. "Some are better than others," she says. To achieve a durable uniform finish, she recommends putting down two coats of stain. "Two coats are going to give you the durability you need for abrasion resistance and wear resistance," she says.

Application methods

Application methods for acrylic stains vary considerably, depending on what the manufacturer recommends and what effect the applicator wants to achieve.

Mark Donaldson owns Skookum Floors Ltd., in Seattle. Donaldson applies his acrylic stains by sponging, spraying, ragging, bagging and mopping. He does not recommend rolling, however, because roller lines can appear and give an unnatural look.

Sullivan recommends spraying acrylic stains with either an HPLV sprayer (his first choice) or a pump-up sprayer (his second choice). "A roller or brush can be used with no application problems, but this tends not to provide as variegated a look," he says.

These stains can provide the unique variegated look of acid-etch stains, but applicator technique is critical, says Donaldson. "Numerous light coats are required; slight color shifts during subsequent coats will give depth of color, and different application methods will create natural mottling."

Sullivan adds that penetrating acrylic stains will produce much more variegation than membrane-forming acrylic stains. "The variegation achieved with acrylic stains depends more on the variegation and porosity of the concrete being stained," says Sullivan. "A hard-troweled slab with burn marks and color variations will allow for a more marbled look than a broom-finished slab with little color variation."

A non-chemical alternative

A near endless color selection is one of the major advantages of acrylic stains. "With some acrylic stains the entire pantone color wheel is available," says Sullivan.

Con Color Offers Permanent Alternative

There is no question that applicators can achieve a wider and brighter range of colors with acrylic stains than can be achieved with chemical stains.

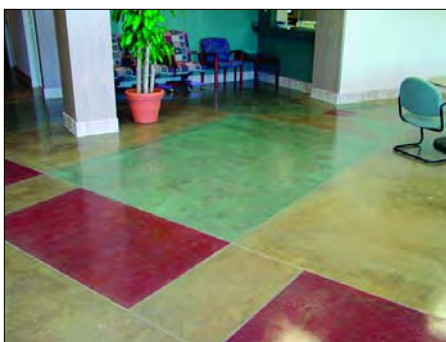
Dave Pettigrew owns Diamond D Concrete in Capitola, Calif. The licensed Bomanite dealer does not use acrylics. "I don't use them because I want to permanently stain the concrete, and I want to protect that stain with a top coat," says Pettigrew. "If that acrylic stain wears through, the client has to call an applicator back to match the colors. With my system all it takes is some wax on top; if that wears through, the client can get anybody to come and clear coat the floor again before they wear through the finish."

When Pettigrew wants to go beyond the limited colors available to him with chemical stains, he turns instead to a Bomanite system called Con Color. The permanent pigment coloring system penetrates the surface of the concrete.

"I hear a lot of nightmare stories [related to using acid-etch stains]," says Pettigrew. "Getting consistent color, getting the stain down right, making sure the slab is clean. There's such a learning curve," he says. "The acrylics are an easier system, and that's probably why people are using them."

But Pettigrew has found an alternative that works for him. "With Con Color I can go pink!" he says. "I can actually take a Pantone color chart, have the customer pick out the colors and match it just like I would a paint."

Pettigrew applies Con Color with a brush or sprayer and protects his work with a top coat of urethane, acrylic or epoxy sealer, depending on the look he is after. "The fun thing with this Con Color is that I can get that mottled look," he says. "I'm getting what I want this way."



(Above) Faracy Boys Jeep dealership in Colorado Springs, Colo. Applicator is Paul Helms, Groninger Concrete in Colorado Springs. Buckwheat, Ember and Jade QC Patina acid stains, along with Sangria, and Ireland QC Cementint lithium quartz penetrating acrylic stains.

(Below) Nortel Phase Three Building in Dallas, Texas. Applicator is Tolman Floors in Dallas. Six Pantone Colors of QC Cementint lithium quartz penetrating acrylic stain.



Photographs courtesy of QC Construction Products, Madera, CA



Your concrete profile can dictate the type of stain you use. While acid-etch stains must be applied to bare concrete, so that the acid can react with the concrete, acrylics can be applied to previously painted concrete as well as asphalt.

"We see best results when acrylic stains are applied to smooth-finished concrete that has some highlights and color variation," says Sullivan. Over-troweled or very hard concrete can sometimes retard the penetration, color development or adhesion of these types of stains. "The surface smoothness and porosity will have a major impact on color, penetration and adhesion," he adds.

"Surface prep is critical when using acrylic stains," says Donaldson. "Many dense or tight concretes will require a sand blasting or acid etching to meet coating specifications and guidelines." Donaldson recommends against shot blasting, however, because it can leave track lines in the surface.

Combining systems

Acrylic stains can be used on top of acid-etch stains to create a stronger and more authentic look. Anderson, Donaldson and Sullivan agree that when combined correctly and applied artistically, the results can be fantastic. "A wider range of color and effect can be achieved with the combination of systems," says Anderson. "It is absolutely necessary to use them [together] to achieve exact color matches and unique finishes," adds Donaldson. "We have seen our top-end applicators create stunning color combinations by blending our Patina acid stains and Cemtint acrylic water-based penetrating stains," says Sullivan.

Choosing a sealer

All acrylic stains are not the same, and neither are their sealers. Some stains are surface treatments, while others act as a penetrating stain. "A surface stain will wear faster than a penetrating stain in side-by-side wear comparison tests," says Sullivan. "That said, the sealer system used is intended to take all the wear. Properly maintained, the stain — no matter what type — should never be affected."

Photos are of 27,000-square-foot Dueck GM showroom, the third largest in North America.

Acrylic stains demand a durable topcoat, and our sources recommended a variety of sealers, depending on the job and desired effect. When UV and wear is an issue, Donaldson uses commercial-grade UV-resistant sealant and coating systems. Anderson recommends matching bases; that is, if your stain is water-based, choose a water-based sealer. "The wear resistance depends on the type and quality of sealer you use, as well as the maintenance program given to the client," she says.

"Sealer selection is one of the most important factors in stain application, and can also be one of the most confusing," says Sullivan. "Cutting corners with cheap sealers is the fastest way to fail," he says. He recommends spending a little more for a high-end sealer designed for high-end stain applications. "High-build sealers such as polyurethanes and epoxies provide the best wear, stain resistance and life span," says Sullivan. Because most epoxies will yellow over time, he recommends non-yellowing polyurethane sealers, followed by acrylic systems.

Sullivan recommends applying a base coat of medium solids (18 to 27 percent) water- or solvent-based acrylic sealer, followed by two to three coats of a high solids top coat sealer. These top coat sealers — or sacrificial sealers — are

growing in popularity and have become a staple for high-end stain applicators. "Top coat sealers provide a durable wear surface that can be easily and inexpensively reapplied without stripping previous coats," he says. "They also adhere to almost any type of base sealer, from polyurethane to acrylics."

As with any coloring system, moisture problems in the concrete can negatively affect acrylic stains. Moisture, if it gets trapped under the sealer, can change the appearance of the stain or bring a migration of salts (efflorescence) to the surface. Pressure from underneath can make the stain pop and peel off.

Make maintenance a priority

Maintenance is critical with acrylic-based stains. And the level and type of maintenance required depends on the sealer, coating and finishes used — not the stain underneath. Because the level of penetration is slight to none compared with acid stains, maintaining the sealer system is crucial.

Sullivan urges applicators to produce samples and get them approved prior to application. "Applicators also need to sell prospective clients on the fact that stains are not coatings and will produce random affects. That is the nature and beauty of all concrete stains," he says.

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The picture is a patio stained with H&C Shield Plus Ultra and stenciled using the H&C stencil.

The pros and cons of acrylics

Acrylics offer many advantages over chemical stains: With acrylics, applicators can create colors not obtainable by acid-based stains. When sealed correctly, acrylics can resist wear and exposure well. They typically need less time to react or cure

than chemical stains. Because they are water-based, they emit few volatile organic compounds and clean up is easier. In most cases a simple damp mop application is all that is needed before sealing. And depending on the quality of the application technique and the materials used, acrylic stains can be used on almost any surface, including previously painted surfaces and asphalt.

But there are disadvantages to acrylics worth noting. They often require initial surface preparation and acid washing. They aren't naturally UV stable. And they lack the permanence that acid stains provide. While they offer more color choices than can be obtained with chemical stains, they offer less variation in color. "Nothing can produce the natural variegation effects of acid-based stains," says Sullivan.

Their ease of use may explain their growing popularity, especially with do-it-yourselfers.

"A lot more things can go wrong in the application process with acid stains if you are not familiar with the product," Strongosky says. "An acrylic stain is easy for anyone to use."



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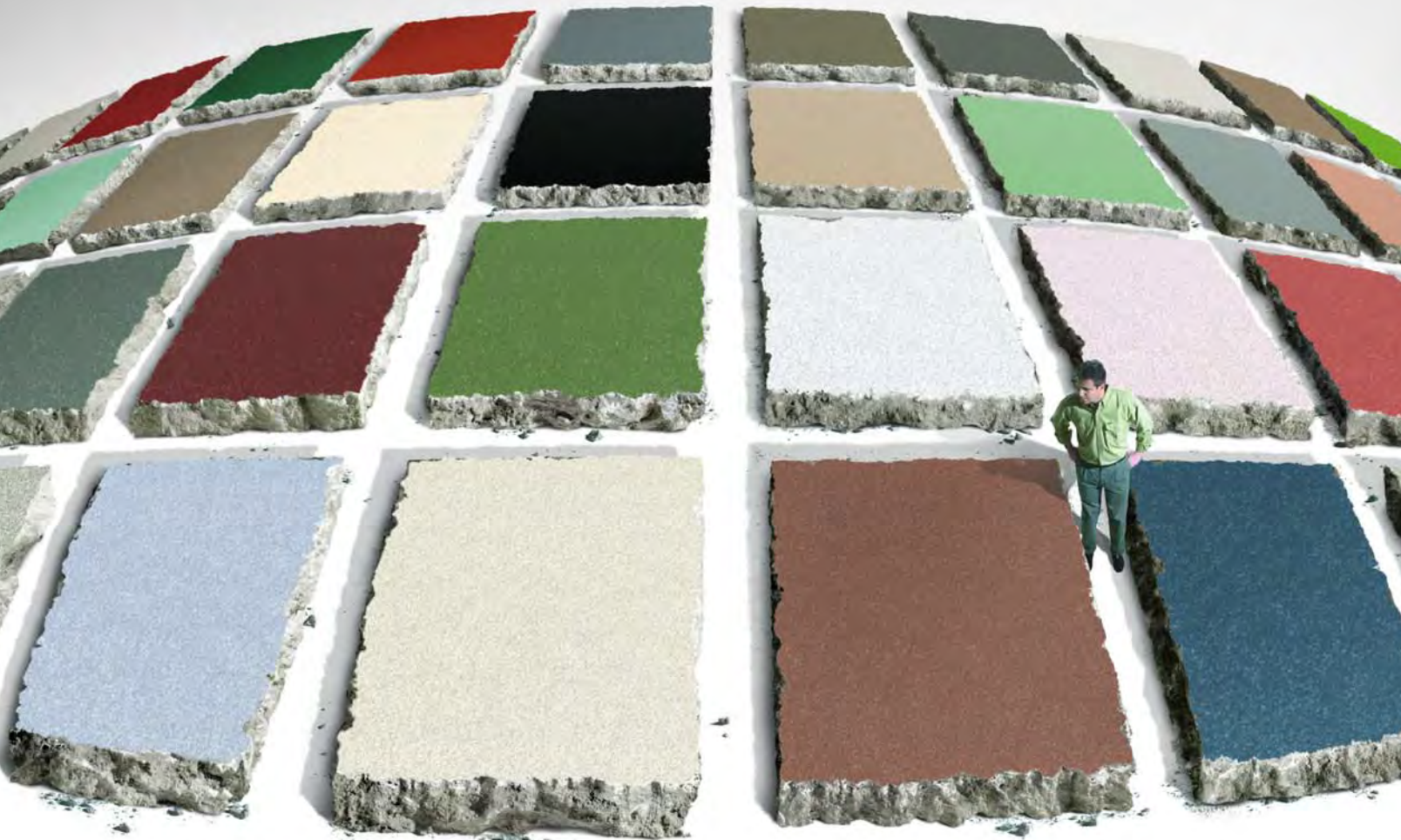
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CIRCLE #27 ON READER SERVICE CARD



A primer on polymers:

A look at the basics of these amazing chains

by Susan Brimo-Cox

Photographs courtesy of Ardex



The use of polymer-modified cement products in the decorative concrete industry is common practice. Unfortunately, these products are also commonly misunderstood. What they are, how they work, what they do — “There are a lot of misconceptions about polymers,” observes Stan Stratton, director of technology development at L.M. Scofield’s West Coast production location in Los Angeles.

And as Ronald Borum, executive vice president of Crossfield Products in Rancho Dominguez, Calif., points out, “You have to buy the right tool for the right job.”

What are polymers?

You don’t have to be a chemist to understand the basics. “Polymer” is a very generic term that refers to a chain of simple monomer molecules. If the monomers in the chain are the same it is a homopolymer. If the monomers are different you have a copolymer. When polymer particles are dispersed in water you have what is generally called a latex.

Natural rubber latex is an organic polymer. D. Gerry Walters, a 46-year veteran in the industry and now a consultant based in Pine Knoll Shores, N.C., explains that synthetic polymers didn’t start to appear until the early 20th century. While there are all kinds of latexes commercially

available today, most of them are not appropriate for use with hydraulic cements.

The polymers most frequently used with hydraulic cements include: styrene-butadiene rubber (SBR); styrene-acrylic; ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA; also called VAE); vinyl acetate homopolymers (PVA); and vinyl ester of versatic acid (VEOVA).

When polymers are added to concrete or cement mortar, the object is to have the polymer particles evenly dispersed throughout the mix in an appropriate ratio, so that, as the mixture cures, the polymers coalesce and form a co-matrix within the structure of the polymer-modified concrete or mortar.

Polymers enhance portland cement-based products

Polymers are used for two primary reasons: good adhesion and water-resistance, explains Walters.

They also help cement-based products adhere to non-cementitious substrates, such as wood, observes Dan Cook, president of A.W. Cook Cement Products in Atlanta. But don't equate adhesion with bond strength — they are not the same.

Other characteristics include “added flexural and tensile strength, [and] improved abrasion-resistance,” reports Matt Casto, vice president of technical services of Bomanite Corp. in Madera, Calif. What polymers don't add, he says, is compression strength.

Stratton echoes that observation. “Polymers soften the cementitious matrix. Instead of resisting load, it gives a little bit, which [helps] eliminate cracking and reduces brittleness. On a bridge deck that's an important property.”

And, while pour thickness is generally dependent on the size of the aggregate, polymers help enable very thin applications — as thin as one-sixteenth of an inch.

Each kind of polymer has individual properties, however, so it is important to select the right polymer for the project. Contractors should know the basic parameters of the products they use. What is adhesion? What is tensile strength? What do these properties mean? This information is usually listed on the product's data sheets

The differences between polymers can mean success or utter failure.

“SBR is probably the best for adhesion and water resistance, but, if color is important, [you need to know] it will discolor in ultraviolet light,” observes Walters. “For adhesion, water resistance and color stability, go to an acrylic.” For good adhesion and good color when water resistance is not as critical — such as in an indoor or dry application — a VAE can be used, he says.

You'll find polymers in a wide variety of decorative and repair products — self-leveling formulations; stampable, thick-section overlays and repair mortars; and micro-

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Photographs courtesy of Butterfield Color

toppings. "The best polymer cements are the ones that have hybrid polymers," says Casto. "Blends are better because you have the best of all worlds."

Polymers come wet or dry

Polymers are available in liquid and dry powder. Polymers are spray-dried to obtain the powdered form. "You can formulate a dry blend or use a liquid to get the same benefits," Cook says.

One advantage of liquid polymers is that they "can be supplied in different concentrations, which can be diluted on the job site," observes Cook. More-polymer-in-less-space, as far as transportation and storage considerations go. But "liquid polymers can't stand freeze and thaw cycles; they render the polymer inactive," he says.

Borum says that, over time, liquid formulations can also settle, but if stored in sealed containers they can be reworked.

In powdered form, polymers are usually already incorporated into the dry cement mix product and packed in bags. Out in the field, all you have to do is add water.

"Powders are not affected by freezing temperatures," reports Seth Pevarnik, technical field consultant for Ardex in Aliquippa, Pa. While cold temperatures won't hurt dry polymers, he says it's a good idea to let the product warm up

a bit before using. "If the powders are very cold, they won't work the same way as normal and may not flow."

While dry powder polymer formulations are easy to store, they are subject to moisture.

In hot weather, another consideration is how quickly dry and liquid polymer products can be cooled for use. Borum says with powders you might need to use cool water in the mix or let them acclimate over time, whereas with liquid polymers you can set the container in a cool water bath or chilled room. "It's a minor detail, but something someone should consider, especially in the Sunbelt."

The proper ratios are critical

Not only is the type of polymer important but the amount is, as well, explains Cook. "When you engineer a topping, overlay, decorative or repair product, you're concerned with the polymer-cement ratio to achieve the characteristics you want." Too little, or too much, can be detrimental. If it's too sticky to trowel, the product will be too hard to work. If it's too flexible, you'll have lower compressive strength and less wearability, he says.

You need the proper density of polymer for good hydration and cross-linking. If the ratio is watered down (such as by adding too much water to the mix or overloading integral color) the physical characteristics of the polymers will be affected.

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"It's important to strictly adhere to the liquid dosages specified by the manufacturer, whether it's for a liquid polymer or pre-blended polymer product," Cook cautions.

If conditions in the field call for mix modification, check with the manufacturer for recommendations so the final product is not compromised. Typically, however, admixtures that are used with cement-based products can be used with polymer-modified products (though pre-blended dry polymer products are considered already "engineered").

In this vein, the polymer industry is continuing to make advances in technology to incorporate additional traits to the polymer chains to address other mix issues. There are "new polymers that have grafted functional materials on the polymers," reports Stratton. "They have a polymer backbone and function as a polymer, but have added functional groups of pendant chains — polymers with plasticizers, with accelerators, with defoamers, with hydrophobic agents."

Tips for working with polymer-modified products

All the rules of traditional concrete apply to polymer-modified concrete. Moving and control joints need to be honored, active cracks need to be corrected, and appropriate site preparation — including substrate priming, if required — needs to be done. But polymer-modified products are not the

same as traditional cement-based products — a little extra finesse is required.

"I think polymer-modified cement toppings require a different level of technique than standard concrete work," advises Mark Donaldson, director of operations for Skookum Floors USA in Seattle. These products "require you to get it right the first time. Repairs are difficult to hide or blend in."

Walters says you need to get off on the right foot. "From an application standpoint for PMC (polymer-modified cements), the substrate needs to be damp. If you put your hand down, you should feel moisture, but no standing water."

To use polymer-modified products you normally need the temperature to be above 45 degrees Fahrenheit and no more than 85 degrees. But, as Walters points out, that's really a requirement of the cement rather than the polymer; though temperature does affect how quickly the surface of a polymer-based product skins.

You have to work quickly. Polymer-modified products typically have a short finishing time because they tend to skin over. "You have about 15 minutes to finish it," Walters says. "High humidity is a good environment to work in because they are typically low-water-to-cement ratios." Avoid hot sunny days, he says. "Early morning under heavy mist is best." However, using water on the surface is not a good idea because it will weaken it, Stratton adds.

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The finish technique you use will depend on the product; for example, is it self-leveling or trowelable? Once you have a good finish, stop! You don't have a lot of time to fuss or you'll mar the skin as it develops.

When you're done with the finish, Walters says, "You need to cover it to prevent water loss ... so the surface film cures correctly. If the surface dries too fast, you get plastic shrinkage cracking — not harmful, but very unsightly, like wrinkles on someone's face." Keep the cover on for 24 hours, he recommends, then remove it and let the product harden as fast as possible.

Speed is definitely a plus with these products. Donaldson explains, "As a time-frame issue, [traditional concrete] needs 28 days for a full cure before decoration. Topping systems can be turned around in three-to-four days — complete!"

Donaldson's experience is that polymer-modified products are generally designed to accept various color systems out on the market, but he recommends "in-house testing to make sure the coloring and sealers are compatible."

When it comes to cost, polymer-modified products are more expensive than traditional cement-based products, but there can be valuable cost savings in increased lifecycle, reduced maintenance costs, and the time and labor required for a job.

Don't reinvent the wheel

"There are so many variables, a lot comes down to experience," remarks Donaldson. You may have to try different products out in different situations, but "it's hard to learn the variables of all the products."

That's where manufacturer training and technical advice come in.

"This is the fastest-growing section of the decorative concrete industry," says Casto. "There are a lot of players in the market. If [contractors] go to companies that have technical expertise ... you'll have a better product."

"Training helps contractors become familiar with the products. Look for in-the-field as well as formal seminar training [at the factory]," recommends Pevarnik. "I'd want to be as educated as the manufacturer on the materials."

Different products, different characteristics, different applications. As Stratton aptly observes, "a polymer isn't just a polymer." Contractors experienced with polymer-modified products say they are exciting; that they expand the possibilities, options and opportunities for decorative concrete. As the technologies continue to evolve, there are new experiences ahead for the whole industry. Just remember: Pick the right polymer for the application.



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Stamp Collecting for the Pro

by John Strieder

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Concrete stamp mats have come a long way from the cookie cutter designs of the 1960s.

Today, one company alone, Matcrete Inc., sells roughly 200 stamp patterns, from basket-weave and herringbone to tile, octagons and squares. "I've seen some really tricky stuff in stamping," says Matcrete vice president Kris Kaitanjan. "It's such a diverse field. It's really limitless."

Stamping's popularity peaked in the early 1990s, before the public imagination turned to staining, says Bob Harris, director of product training with The Scofield Institute, operated by manufacturer L.M. Scofield Co. But decorative bordering, custom mat design and other innovations are driving a new wave of interest in putting a distinctive stamp on concrete





jobs, he says. "People are becoming more creative."

Chris McMahon, owner of Architectural Concrete Design Inc. in Levittown, Pa., says his company budgets \$15,000 a year for stamps, adding new textures, expanding sets and replacing broken stamps or tired designs. "Textures get better all the time," he says. "The new ones are more realistic."

A contractor can build word of mouth with just one good-looking effect, McMahon notes, so picking the right stamp is crucial. "When we have a brick tool that looks a specific way, we become known for having that brick tool."

So — how does a contractor go about finding the perfect set of stamp mats?

McMahon says he goes to training seminars to test new products. "You can use their tools in real situations," he says. "But you can't really tell how good a tool is until you use it on a large job in variable situations. Sometimes it's a leap of faith."

Doug Carlton, of Doug Carlton Concrete in Visalia, Calif., says that when he shops for stamps, he sticks mainly with manufacturers who have been in business for awhile. "You want to be able to add to your collection when you need to," he says.

He grills manufacturers to test their know-how, especially at trade shows. "That's really the only chance we get to look at those mats before we buy," he says. "We ask some pretty hard questions."

The perfect mat

To ask the right questions, a contractor needs to know what makes a good stamp. "If a tool is a great tool, it takes a lot of the variables out of the stamp portion of what we do," McMahon says.

Stamp mats should be lightweight, yet rigid enough to support a worker's weight on wet concrete, he says. "The more rigid the tool the sooner you can start stamping."

The mats in a set should be equal in thickness and size, and fit together without gaps. Stamps in some sets are not snug matches, according to Steve

Johnson, a former contractor who does marketing and product development for Solomon Colors. "You really have to know those stamps to work them," he says. "It made it really tough to bring in a new employee."

Mats should also be strong enough to support their own weight when they are lifted, so the edges of a freshly stamped section of concrete are not disturbed, says Carlton.

Harris of The Scofield Institute fires off a list of considerations: Cost, weight, uniform height and width, the quality of the urethanes used in manufacturing, the



manufacturer's reputation, recommendations from other contractors, and samples of completed work.

A good stamp is defined by character of texture, says Kaitanjan of Matcrete. It should come as close as possible to replicating the look and feel of actual slate or stone.

Johnson's company, Solomon Colors, makes oversize stamps, longer than they are wide. Johnson says they support

more weight and are easier to pick up than a smaller, squarish mat. Bigger mats also mean less bend-downs by workers and fewer push-ups on the concrete.

But Carlton, for his part, is not enthusiastic about bigger mats. More square footage means more weight per lift, he says, which can make a day's worth of stamping pretty tough. "I haven't seen bigger patterns cut down on time that much."

Still, there is one concept that nobody disputes: One of the most crucial factors in buying mats is quantity. "Everybody knows the secret of collecting is to have plenty of stamps," Carlton says.

Care and cleaning

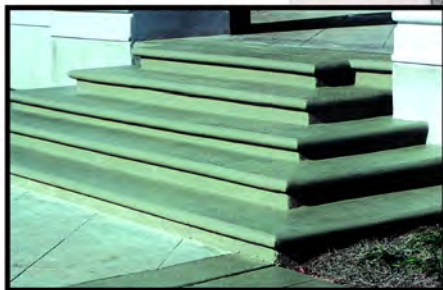
While mat maintenance is important, it's not exactly the hardest part of stamping. "I've got to tell you I've never destroyed a mat," Carlton says. "We have yet to ever just wear them out."

"It's not uncommon for stamps to last indefinitely, 10 or 15 years, if they're taken care of," Harris says.

And even a torn stamp can be used as a finesse tool. "You can get so much out of a stamp if you cut it up and use it to your advantage," Johnson says. Stamps can be cut in half and used on wall edges or stairs, he says. In fact, he often tells contractors that if they haven't carved up one mat in a set, they're not using the set correctly. "In

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the long run, the cost of one stamp will save you more than that in labor.”

The mats should be stored flat, stacked square on top of each other. If possible, each set of stamps ought to have its own pile.

And it helps to store them indoors — the sun can deteriorate some stamps, particularly the handles, Johnson says. When mats are left outside, they should be flipped over to protect the handles from sunlight, recommends Carlton.

Mats can be cleaned with a broom, soapy water or a pressure washer. Carlton admits he’s reluctant to use any moisture on a mat. “A stiff brush with a little elbow grease will go a long way,” he says.

Contractors should also be careful when using liquid releases, warns Kaitanjan — some can eat away at the compound that makes up a stamp.

Stamp explosion!

For newcomers to the stamping craft, a good place to start is with mats that imprint texture instead of joints or shapes.

Harris of Scofield recommends setting up a 20-foot-by-20-foot sandbox with wet, compact sand and learning how to use mats there. Also, he says, formal training is a must.

As for the future of stamping, Kaitanjan of Matcrete says the market is trending toward less busy patterns and bigger-looking stones and tiles. There is also a growing market for stamps in overlay work, he says.

“Right now everybody’s trying to find some difference, a different type of texture,” he says. “You can see a lot of similarities between me and my competition. Everybody’s almost the same now. Contractors who have been around 10 or 20 years are tired of seeing the same busy patterns. They’re tired of seeing the same textures.”

While custom patterns typically come into play when imprinting specialized designs, such as a candy bar for a chocolate factory or a name and logo for a university, contractors have

also been known to order more general designs like starfish or seashells.

However, custom stamps cost considerably more and bring a lot of unknowns to a job, both in terms of performance and time spent perfecting the mold. “It’s not for everyone,” Kaitanjan says. “It’s up to me and my competitors to break new innovations.”

And anyway, Carlton says, who needs to make their own tools these days? “There’s been such an explosion in the decorative industry that there’s everything out there a guy needs,” he says. “It’s all out there now. It’s a good time to be in this business.”



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Manufacturer Profile: Concrete Solutions

San Diego, California

by Bob Graham



In an industry with more than its share of quick-and-easy but undependable concrete solutions, Rod Sadleir and his brother Gerry have attempted to separate themselves from the pack. "In manufacturing, we believe in using quality raw materials to produce products that are beyond the ordinary. Over time, a good quality product wins out," Sadleir says.

Their San Diego-based company, Concrete Solutions Inc., wholesales products, stamps and tools for repairing, restoring, beautifying and protecting existing concrete surfaces. The company provides products and services to contractors and suppliers in the U.S. as well as in Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and throughout the Pacific Rim.

The Sadleirs started the business in 1986 and were contractors for nine years before they decided to concentrate exclusively on manufacturing, so their product systems were tested and proven successful through actual job applications. Now they also provide their expertise to others through a monthly training class and telephone or on-the-job support.

Two-day seminars are held monthly at Concrete Solutions' training facility in Las Vegas, where the product systems have been used extensively on floors at the major hotels and casinos. The training seminar includes a job tour to show contractors that the systems are really working even when subjected to heavy pedestrian traffic.

"Choosing the right resurfacing system is so important to a contractor," says Sadleir. "You want something that



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"I believe that one's reputation is their most important asset," he adds. "Providing quality in products and services is key to building a successful business."

A variety of resurfacing products

Concrete Solutions carefully tests and evaluates its product systems before promoting them to others. In 1997, after five years of testing and evaluating its ¼-inch stamping system, the



company was the first to introduce ¼" stamped overlays at the World of Concrete show in Las Vegas. The secret is in Ultra Surface Concrete Polymer, an additive that is mixed with cement, sand and water to provide a polymer-modified cement that is stampable in a thickness of ¼ to ½ inch. The system involves integral color using iron-oxide pigments and color powder release agents for antiquing. This creates the look of natural brick, tile, slate and stone in various textures and patterns.

The system achieves the beauty, elegance and natural appearance of traditional four-inch stamped concrete, yet the contractor doesn't need to remove and replace the existing surface if it is stable. Using Ultra Surface Stamped Concrete Sealer and Ultra Surface Acrylic Urethane Sealer provides a protective sealcoat over the stamped concrete finish to enhance color and make it easy to clean.

Concrete Solutions also offers other product systems: ⅝" Resurfacing in a fine broom finish; a Spray-Texture system in a trowel-knockdown finish; a Color Flake system that has the appearance of granite or terrazzo; a Tuff-Grit system for durability and slip-resistance; and the Spray-Top system, which allows the contractor to spray a thin coat of Ultra Surface polymer-modified cement to restore or change color for staining.

The company launched its Spray-Top system at the 2002 World of Concrete Show. This application consists of a polymer-modified cement formulation applied with a specially designed paint pot and modified paint gun to cover an existing concrete surface with a thin coat of cement that is gray, white or integrally colored. The Spray-Top package sells for \$2,500 and includes the equipment and enough product to cover 1,000 square feet.

After a year of testing and evaluation, Solutions recently introduced its Ultra Surface 200 Epoxy, a 100-percent solids epoxy that bonds

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to a dry, damp or wet surface. The product achieves a tenacious bond with the concrete substrate and makes an excellent prime coat, Sadleir says. "Contractors love to apply coatings to wet or misty surfaces and most of the time they get away with it, but if there's too much moisture, there can be problems later," he says. "I tell guys to put our Epoxy 200 on and go to bed, knowing that when they arrive there the next day, it's dry, even when the surface was wet during application."

Concrete Solutions sells the epoxy in concentrate, figuring that every contractor has access to water, one of the main ingredients. By not shipping water, they save on the price of shipping and have more product to use when the concentrate arrives.

Manufacturers and contractors learn from each other

Much of Concrete Solutions' success has come from product systems they developed through their contracting



experience. Also important has been listening to contractors in the field who have requested various needs and product solutions. "Here's where you learn, when they call you up and talk to you. They use it in different ways than you thought of," Sadleir says.

When a contractor is trying a product system for the first time, Sadleir suggests that a test area is done to learn first-hand about the application, the coverage rate of each product used and the actual cost per square foot. This information and the overall result will enable the contractor to personally evaluate the product system and give him or her confidence to recommend it to a potential customer.

Business is booming, Sadleir says. "Contractors and their customers are increasingly more aware of the options available in decorative concrete coatings over existing concrete and other surfaces. Even existing tile and linoleum floors can be coated rather than replaced."



For additional information about Concrete Solutions, visit www.concretesolutions.com or call (800) 232-8311.

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PRODUCT PROFILES

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Concrete Artwork, located in Alberta, Canada, currently offers 10 stamps, including a boat, a bear, a lion, an eagle, and even a golfer. Other designs are in the works and custom work is always available from the company's artist, Nikolaus Burgardt, who learned his craft growing up in Russia. Demand for the stamps has been so great since the company's inception in 2002 that Burgardt is now training two additional artists to create designs.

Concrete Artworks used a qualified chemist to develop long-lasting and durable mats that release with ease. They work equally well with concrete slabs or with overlays and are available in either 4-foot circles or 3' x 4' rectangles.

For more information, visit www.concreteartwork.com, e-mail info@concreteartwork.com or call sales manager Elmer Stang at (403) 519-6007.



Kwik-Top

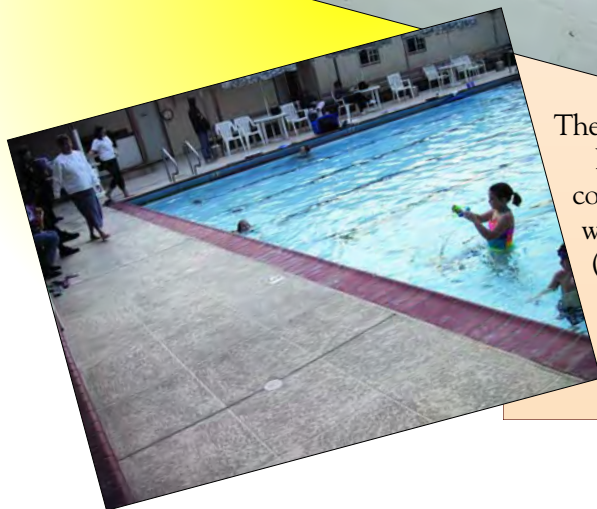
Kwik-Top, from Versatile Building Products, is a polymer-modified cement specially formulated to renew concrete. It can be used to apply broom, troweled, knockdown or orange peel finishes over driveways, sidewalks, pool decks, patios or any other floor surface.

A single package product, Kwik-top consists of a proprietary Dry-Tech polymer, specially formulated cement blend, aggregate and modifying additives. The only thing you have to add is water. It stores for up to 18 months with no adverse effects (even if it freezes and thaws).

This versatile product goes down thin (usually $\frac{1}{8}$ ") and allows you to use many finishing techniques, including incorporating existing cracks into your design. A new development is the Weathered Finish (shown in photos), which is achieved by using regular Kwik-Top with a fine Kwik-Top grout coat on top. Each layer is colored by adding a color pack, and as the different materials accept color differently, you'll end up with a weathered, mottled look.

The project shown was sealed with a breathable epoxy.

Kwik-Top is a "just-add-water" product that requires no complicated mixing or measuring of the polymer. It comes in white and natural concrete gray, and may be integrally colored (by adding a color pack) to one of 12 standard colors or painted with a durable acrylic topcoat for 18 additional colors. For more information on Kwik-Top, visit www.deckcoatings.com or call (800) 535-3325.



When California contractor Julio A. Hallack agreed to renovate the floors in Modesto's State Theater — once a prime example of art deco architecture — he knew he had a big job ahead of him. Half the lobby consisted of terrazzo installed in 1934 and the other half was covered by filthy carpet that reeked from years of spilled beer and wine.

Many areas under the carpet had been patched with unbonded mortar. These would have to be cleaned out and patched again. Other sections of carpet had been laid over wood. These areas would require additional

Floor restoration brings historic theater to life

by Rosemary Camozzi



"Half the lobby was covered with carpet and the other half with 1" terrazzo installed back in 1934. After we removed the carpet, we scarified the floors to assure good bonding for the new materials, and we noticed that some areas had been filled with 2" of mortar that was not bonded. After removal we used a fast-setting concrete mix to fill back to grade."

"Between the line of terrazzo and carpet we found a high difference of 1" that had been filled with mortar. It came loose once we scarified the floor. We floated these areas with Miracote Repair Mortar in order to bring both floors to even grade. We also repaired cracks using metal lath with membrane and repair mortar."





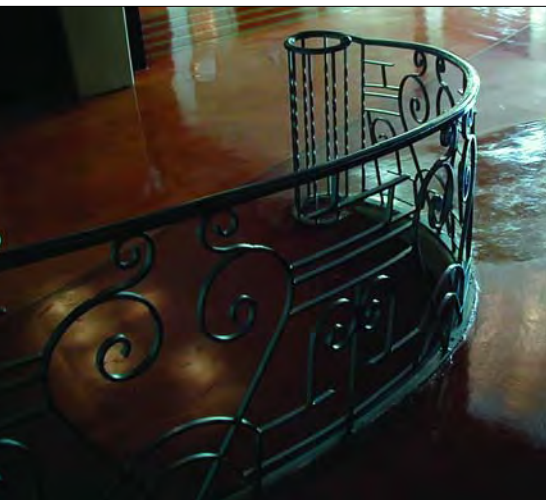
"In order to have an acceptable grade within the floor we used a 12' metal screener to help us spread out the Miracote repair mortar for more evenness."



"Upon removal of the carpet on the ramps going into the theater, we found that the base was made out of wood, not concrete. In order to maintain the same look within the project, we installed metal lath, stapled every 6' o.c. and used Miracote repair mortar base."



"We floated the ramp in order to create an even transition between the wood ramp and concrete lobby. This was extremely important in order to comply with the disabilities act for people in wheel chairs."



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strengthening, in the form of metal lath, to accommodate an overlay.

Another problem: a one-inch height difference between the terrazzo and carpet. It had been filled with mortar that was now very loose.

Hallack's challenges were to make the floor both sound and level and then to create a gentle transition between the lobby and the ramp to accommodate wheelchairs. Once that was done, he could get to the fun part — returning the decorative design to its former glory.

Hallack, owner of Concrete Innovations by Hallack, was ready for the challenge. The eye-catching results he achieved are a showcase for his skill and artistry in decorative applications.

Architect's drawings provide inspiration

Hallack first consulted the architect's original drawings. With those in hand, he set out to restore the floors.

After the patched areas had been filled with Quikrete and the floor screeded to make it level, Hallack installed Miracote Repair Mortar, a polymer-modified resurfacing compound that can be installed in any thickness from 2" to featheredge. Using the product, he says, allowed him to bring the ramp out at a soft angle so that wheelchairs could easily negotiate the transition.

After all the repairs were done and the floor was leveled, he installed two base coats of Miracote Protective Coatings with color. Then he applied two thin coats of Miracote smooth protective coatings. These coatings do not have sand in them and create a very, very smooth finish.

Then he sawcut the design and filled the cuts with colored grout to add extra definition to the design. Acid stains were applied, and then the project was sealed. The floor — whose design represents film (going left to right) and a ray of light that projects from outside the theater towards its center — had become a powerful piece of art.

Maintenance: an important component

After the project was completed, the theater's board of directors agreed to monthly maintenance, an essential component to maintaining the floor's beauty. Once a month, Hallack's crew goes in at night and strips off the top layer of sealer. Then they remove any major marks from the floor, buff it, and put on a coat of high-gloss sealer. "It looks more beautiful every time we do it," Hallack says.

After paying his crew, himself and his suppliers, Hallack donated his profits back to the nonprofit theater group. His work has more than paid off, he says, by the free advertising he has received from the project and the satisfaction of having brought the building back to its original grandeur. "We felt motivated to invest back into our community," he says, "and that has provided our company with unlimited opportunities."



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CIRCLE #33 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Estimating Decorative Concrete

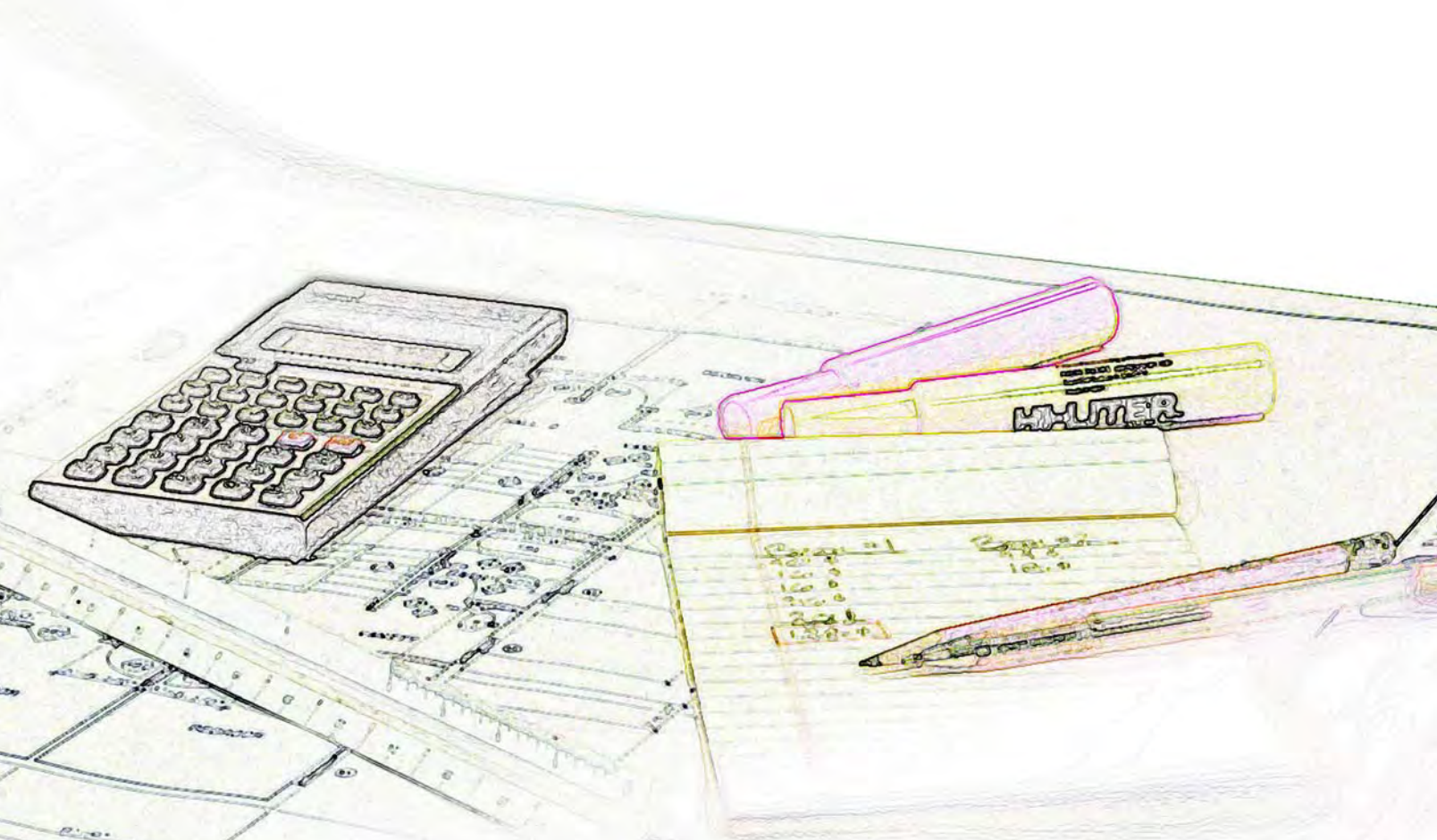
by Christianna McCausland

Whether your next job involves stamping, texturing, staining or sealing (or all of the above), working up an estimate requires lots of advance planning. Seasoned contractors agree that if you want to make a profit, you have to take time to consider every factor of the project.

The good news is that you can make more money on decorative concrete than on plain old flatwork. Prices can increase by anywhere from \$2 per square foot to as much as \$13 per square foot in some states. Your crew will need to be better trained, so you will need to pay them more, but of course you can charge them out at a higher rate as well.

Here are some estimating tips from industry veterans:

A large staining project is generally bid at a lower price per square foot than a single room, says Wes Vollmer, owner of Alternative Finishes in San Antonio, Texas. Other factors to



consider: What is the layout of the area? How elaborate is the design? How many colors will you use? Will there be a logo?

Don't bid too low, he says, or you will compromise quality. "It hurts the industry as a whole when guys are staining concrete for \$1 or \$1.20 per square foot. They have to do it in too much of a hurry."

For stamping, what pattern you are using makes a big difference in how much time you need to allow. The stamps may be difficult to line up and difficult to move. If it's complicated, be sure to allow more time, Vollmer says. Spend time troubleshooting potential problems. Is everything going to line up so it looks good? Also, think in advance about working your control joints into your pattern.

Around San Antonio, stamping generally goes for between \$4.50 and \$8 per square foot. If you're using texture skins rather than stamping tools, you can charge less, because you can stamp up to 2,000 square feet per day with 5' x 5' mats, Vollmer says. "But if you're estimating pool copings or stairs," Vollmer says, "be sure to charge by the linear foot."

Dana Boyer, of Arizona-based ConcretiZen, is earning a reputation for pushing the envelope in decorative concrete. "I look at what the people want and how they're going to use the finished product. Will it be maintained? Will there be color separations? How many days will the job require? There's a lot involved. I price according to what they're asking for." Boyer notes that it also helps to be a part of the project from its onset so clients can readily communicate their expectations.


Square footage is an obvious consideration, says Rick Smith, president of Richard Smith Custom Concrete, but it is the hidden costs like gasoline for travel to far-flung project sites that the contractor needs to remember. "There's so many factors that go into it that unfortunately the only way to

learn it is by bumping your head up against a wall or not seeing it on the initial walk," says Smith. "Every client wants to have something a little bit different, so you have to be more creative. In the estimating part, the most important thing is your labor and your man hours."

Overhead is another consideration. Bob Bauer, president of Concrete

Coatings of Illinois, explains that he generally looks at materials and labor when estimating and that approximately 18 percent of his sales is figured for overhead. Boyer has calculated that \$2.50 a square-foot is the minimum she can charge to cover her operational expenses. Within her overhead, she generally estimates a three to five percent variable for any hidden

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expenses a job may incur. The few hundred dollars become profit if all goes well but act as a safety net guarding her profit if extra costs arise. Other contractors routinely figure on hard costs plus 30 percent.

Location plays a role in estimating as well. Boyer notes that while the market in New York might support concrete staining at \$60-\$100 a square foot, those prices would never be competitive in, say, Texas. Location may also explain why some areas seek out the best decorative concrete experts and others still hone in on the bottom line.

Vollmer notes that staining in the San Antonio area generally nets about \$2.50 to \$5 per square foot, stamped concrete about \$4-8 per square foot, and overlays about \$6-11 per square foot.

Reputation makes a difference

From his base in Los Angeles, Smith finds his clients seek out his expertise and are willing to pay more for it, no doubt a benefit of being in a market where decorative concrete is in high demand.

Vollmer agrees that contractors who are on time, organized and dependable can definitely command a higher price. "The more organized you are, the better your reputation, the more you can charge," he says. "They are trusting you to think of every little detail."

"We sold some jobs last year even though we were the highest bidder, because of the client's confidence in us," says Concrete Coatings' Bauer. "But there are about 20 percent of our customers where bottom line price is what will make the decision."

Boyer often fields calls to correct concrete done by lesser artisans at a bargain price. "I run into a lot of people who are unhappy with their concrete," she says. "My prices are reasonable and I probably could charge more, but I don't because I'm trying to push decorative concrete in a new direction."

Still, I would tell people, 'you get what you pay for.'"

She asks a lot of questions before creating her estimate, probably more questions than the average contractor. But her thoroughness and the time she takes crafting her estimates hopefully translate into profit in the long run.

Estimating software

Estimating software programs range in price from \$2,400 to \$10,000. These programs offer digital take-off software linked to a custom database. They are aimed at making the contractor more efficient and accurate in his estimating process, thereby saving time and money. But the software does not seem to have caught on among decorative concrete contractors, who find the variables on a job can be tremendous. "We don't use estimating software," says Bauer. "We'd need three programs for all we do." His company uses QuickBooks to handle estimates, while others have found that a well-organized Microsoft Excel template also works.

Vollmer has used estimating software and eagerly awaits the time when a program is designed specifically for decorative concrete. "For the bigger guys, estimating software is a must," he says. "It cuts your time in half." If a contractor ends up working up five or six plans in a day, he says, he could go home, scan them in, and come up with an almost instant total for each job. "It would tell you how much release you need, how much stain, how many guys ... I'd be very interested in that," he says.

Training improves speed, workmanship

The consensus among contractors is that the only way to cut price would be to cut labor, not a good idea in a field where artistry is essential. "This business is pretty much all the same in the sense that it's all labor. That's what's going to make or break a profit margin," says Smith. "If you can move

faster with less people — that's where you're making money."

It's generally agreed that sending your crew to decorative concrete workshops more than pays off in good workmanship and time-saving techniques.

Like decorative concrete itself, estimating is a learned craft requiring meticulous attention to detail. The time you spend in compiling your estimate will more than pay for itself when you find yourself getting things right the first time.





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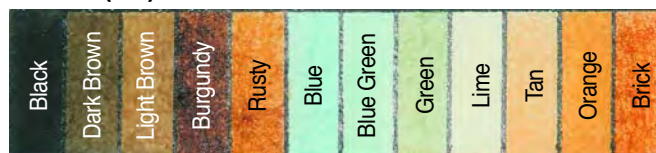
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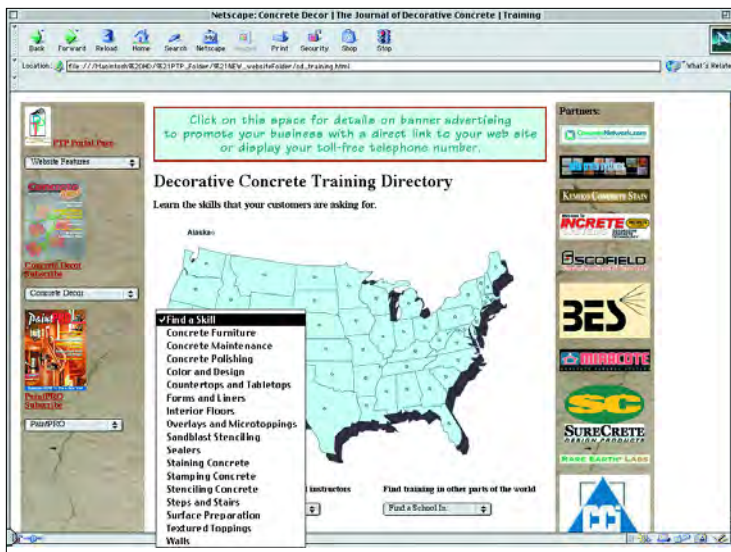
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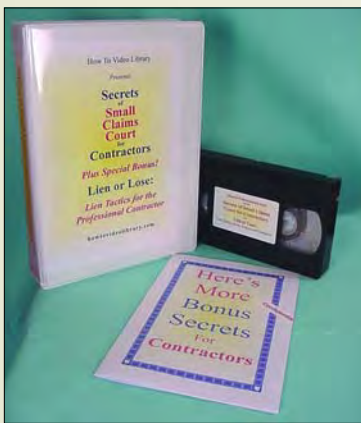
SuperSoft knee pads

Hyde Manufacturing Co. has introduced professional quality SuperSoft Gel Knee Pads to its product line. The knee pads contain heavy duty gel cushions at pressure points designed to lessen worker fatigue and long-term knee pain. Contoured to cushion and protect the knee for all-day wearability, the pads have 3-inch wide front-fastening elastic straps. Neoprene contact areas will not mark surfaces and the knee pads are completely washable. For more information, call (508) 764-4344 or visit www.hydetools.com.



Video addresses conflicts with customers

Got a client who won't listen to reason? The HowToVideoLibrary has released the first in a series of legal programs aimed at helping small businesses handle conflicts with clients. The first program is focused on the needs of independent contractors when faced with an adversarial client. The video covers how to file a small claims court suit, specific issues that can make or break a case, and how to win (as well as how to avoid



small claims in the first place). The video also explains the difference between winning in small claims court and actually recovering a loss. The bonus section, "Lien Tactics for Contractors," is broad-based, current information on using liens to secure a

project. Lien laws have changed dramatically in the past few years and most contractors are not aware of the changes and how they affect their right to payment for services rendered. For more information, call Walter Green at (770) 592-3303 or visit www.howtovideo-library.com.

Sika offers new silicone sealants

Sika Corp. has launched a new line of high-performance silicone sealants to complement its existing line of polyurethane construction sealants. SikaSil-C 995 is a one-component silicone sealant with movement

capability of +50 percent/-50 percent. The key target applications for this product are glazing, perimeter seals, glass-glass and glass-metal joints in curtainwall construction, and other weatherseal applications. The other new product, SikaSil-990, is a one-component silicone sealant with +100 percent/-50 percent movement capability. It is targeted for EIFS (exterior insulation finish system) façade joints and other weatherseal applications. Both products are available in six standard colors as well as custom colors for those applications that are color critical. For more information, visit www.sikausa.com or call (800) 933-SIKA.

New trowel from Marshalltown

Marshalltown Trowel Co. has introduced the new lightweight Spred-Krete trowel with a tough magnesium blade. The Spred-Krete comes with a 57-inch aluminum handle, powder-coated with a non-slip grip. Another option is a contoured 60-inch wood handle. The bracket can be used with or without a $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch diameter hook. For more information, call (800) 987-6935.



Walk-behind saws from Multiquip

Multiquip's new "Street Pro" Series walk-behind saws are designed for rental operators, offering superior strength, durability and high performance. Three models are available, all featuring a steel-box frame design to extend saw life and reduce vibrations for maximum effectiveness while cutting concrete or



asphalt. The saws, which combine the best of Multiquip's predecessor FS series along with many new technological and performance enhancements, are compact, user-friendly cutting machines that

demonstrate the excellent cutting results normally associated with larger, more expensive units. Each model boasts rugged roller bearing wheels for longer service life, dependable Honda gasoline or electric engines, an easy crank for raising and lowering cutting depth, a saw position guide for straight cuts, and a hinged front, lift-up blade guard for easy blade replacement. For more information, call (800) 421-1244 or visit www.multiquip.com.

Sika CD offers technical data and how-to advice

Sika Corp., a worldwide leader with more than 90 years of experience in concrete materials and restoration technology, has introduced its new Construction CD. The CD contains Technical Data Sheets and MSDS sheets for all admixture, repair and protection products, as well as how-to information for its more recent line of Contractors' Choice products. Since this type of literature is updated frequently, the CD has a direct link to a section on Sika's Web site, www.sikausa.com, where updates can be accessed. To receive a copy of the CD, email Nicole Giguccio at Nicole.Giguccio@sika-corp.com.

Masonry saws get the job done

Multiquip's new "Mason Pro" Masonry Saws provide high-quality professional cutting performance for a wide variety of materials — stone, ceramics, pavers, brick, block and other masonry products.

The MP1 Series is designed for vigorous masonry cutting applications and combines high performance and portability in one compact package. The saws are built with a reinforced, jig-welded steel frame that provides rigidity for cutting

accuracy and promotes a long service life. Three saws make up the series, with power ranging from 1.5 to 5.5 HP. Each saw has a 14-inch blade capacity and cuts 5 inches deep.

Three electric motor-powered saws are offered in the MP2 Series, with power ranging from 5 to 7.5 HP. A 9-HP Honda gasoline engine with a Cyclone air filter drives the heaviest saw in the MP2 Series. All four saws have a 20-inch blade capacity and cut to depths of 8 inches.



To enhance the performance of each "Mason Pro" Masonry Saw, a number of wet and dry segmented diamond blades from Multiquip's Diamond Back Cutting Division are available. For more information, call (800) 421-1244 or visit www.multiquip.com.

New epoxy regulates moisture transmission

Key Resin Co. offers a solution to moisture-related failure in seamless concrete flooring with Epocon, a unique epoxy technology that helps regulate moisture vapor transmission through concrete substrates. With 100 times greater permeability than standard epoxy slurries and mortars, Epocon systems offer a unique solution to moisture related problems and provide long term protection to seamless polymer flooring.

In addition to controlling moisture transmission rates, Epocon offers high-impact resistance without fracturing,

excellent ultra-violet stability, and stable bonding to cool, damp substrates. The systems are ideal for fast-track construction projects and can be applied to concrete slabs that have only been installed for four to five days.

Epocon is designed for multiple uses, including as a base for self-leveling systems, as an underlayment to prevent moisture vapor transmission and as a matrix for thin-set Epoxy Terrazzo. The product serves as a base for several Key Resin offerings, including Key Quartz Systems, and as a binder for Key Mortar Systems when moisture is a concern.

For more information, call (888) 943-4532 or visit www.keyresin.com.

Full-depth repair mortar

Sto Full-Depth Repair Mortar with integral corrosion inhibitor is a single-component cement-based mortar for structurally repairing or overlaying deteriorated concrete. It can be used on horizontal surfaces for repairs from 4 to 12 inches (10 to 102 mm) or be extended with aggregate for deeper applications. Its benefits include low shrinkage, thermal compatibility with concrete, and high abrasion resistance. It is a one-component product and recoatings may be applied 72 hours after application. For more information, call (678) 553-3278 or visit www.stocorp.com.



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North Safety Products has introduced the CFR-1, a particulate respirator that combines a reusable half mask with formed, disposable filters. The reusable elastomer facepiece is comfortable and provides an excellent sealing surface. The disposable filters do not come in contact with the face, so they are protected from sweat and moisture and generally last for an entire day. The CFR-1 features a built-in

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Get a grip

Marshalltown has made a proven line of tools even better by adding the patented Durasoft handle to all of its corner trowels and edgers marketed under the Marshalltown brand.

The handle permits an ergonomically friendly soft grip while offering excellent control of the tool. For more information, visit www.marshalltown.com.

Side Winder saws

Multiquip's new Side Winder Gas Cut-Off Saws are high-speed, lightweight alternatives for a multitude of applications. The saws are ideally suited for concrete and masonry cutting but can also ease through piping and ceramics. Two models are offered, both of which have 12- and 14-inch blade capacities. Both also feature a proven triple air filtration system for maximum engine protection and a reversible blade flange to handle both 20 mm and 1-inch blade arbors. The Side Winder Gas Cut-Off saws are powered by EPA-approved 2-cycle gasoline engines and feature an infinitely adjustable blade guard, a reversible cutting arm for close-in cutting, a simple cam V-belt adjuster, and a sturdy roller bar assembly. For more information, call 800/421-1244 or visit www.multiquip.com.



Decorative Concrete, Thai-style



Gail Elber, one of our writers, took these photos of a concrete entryway in front of the Thai Hotel, located in the city of Krabi in southern Thailand. It looks to us like the pattern was created with a piece of rope. Not a bad idea!

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