

Trowel & Error: When good jobs go bad

Vol. 6 No. 4 • August/September 2006 • \$6.95

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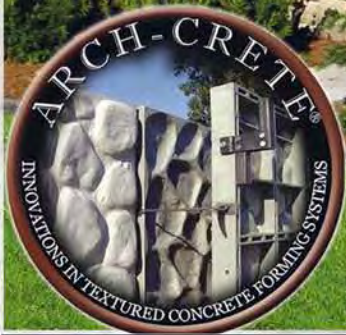
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WEEKLY TIMECARD

NAME: Bill Owen DATES: 14-18

	START	LUNCH	END	JOB CODES	JOB SITE/PROJECT	HOURS
Mon.	7:00	1/2	3:30		Davis	8
Tues.			3:30			8
Wed.			4:00			8 1/2
Thurs.			4:00			8 1/2
Fri.			4:00			8 1/2

SIGNATURE: Bill Owen TOTAL HOURS: 41 1/2

GIVE THEM THE JOBCLOCK.

Employee Report

Bill Owen

Jobsite Name: **Davis Property** Date Range: **8/14/2006 through 8/18/2006**

Day	Start	End	Activity	Hours
Mon 8/14	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Placing	4:57 hours
	12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Placing	2:41 hours 7:38 hours
Tue 8/15	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Placing	4:55 hours
	12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Placing	2:40 hours 7:35 hours
Wed 8/16	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Placing	4:50 hours
	12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Placing	3:03 hours 7:53 hours
Thu 8/17	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Finishing	5:02 hours
	12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Finishing	2:56 hours 7:58 hours
Fri 8/18	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Finishing	4:54 hours
	12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Finishing	2:55 hours 7:49 hours

Signature: Bill Owen Bill Owen

Employee total 38:53 hours

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Dear Readers,

However well-defined, each of us has certain convictions for growing our relationships with others. For me, there is a particular principle that, with age, gains increasing value as experience shows that it's one of the best tools for growing my relationships with family, friends and others.

This principle is not always the most popular or easiest to follow. In fact, it's founded in my Christian faith, and it holds me increasingly accountable for my thoughts and actions, which can often lack consideration for others—even for those I appreciate most. Can you believe that?

As laborers who are challenged daily to build the good name of decorative concrete, the principles we choose for building our relationships in business and in our personal lives are critically important. No, this is not an indiscriminate attempt to convert you to my way of thinking. You're already good thinkers! If you weren't, there wouldn't be so many great articles and pictures in this magazine. That said, please read on...

During communion at church one Sunday, John, our pastor, shared a rather insightful perspective on life, one that I know you will relate to and likely appreciate as I do.

In this trade, as with many other professions, we labor morning, noon and even some nights to accomplish the jobs we have been commissioned to perform. However, for a moment, let's take money out of the picture. Challenge yourself (I know it's difficult) to look strictly at a job without any motivation for earning money. So, there you are, exhausting yourself physically and stressing over a project. You labor for countless hours, even weeks or months, and finally the project is complete. Your customer now delights in the work you've done, but in a matter of minutes you've packed up your tools and are walking off the job, maybe looking over your shoulder to notice a homeowner delighting in his new possession.

Getting back to that Sunday morning, I was reminded of a Carpenter's life of labor, his trials and tribulations, and ultimately, His life's sacrifice. Certainly, there were some struggles I could relate to; however, one glaring distinction remained. His handiwork had no strings attached, not even a required payment for services rendered. No, His life of labor was performed free of charge, with undeniable pride, and totally out of love and appreciation for us.

If you're still with me, and you've been able to separate your work each day from your motivation to gain compensation, then I think you'll understand what I'm going to suggest. In light of the example that this unconventional Carpenter affords us, placing the interests of others ahead of our own is a principle that I believe you'll find invaluable for growing relationships that last a lifetime.

Remember, it's not an easy one to apply, personally or professionally. However, disciplining yourself is the most important first step in getting your team to act in a consistent manner. People who notice this principle in action will undeniably be attracted to you.

Sincerely,

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How to treat concrete

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Concrete dyes are tailor-made for color adjustment on staining jobs, and on their own, they offer an endless array of colors. So release your inner artist and give 'em a try!

by Amy Johnson

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Whether you're working on a decorative wall in a backyard or the exterior walls of a 15-story building, consider stencils for vertical surfaces.

by John Strieder

40 Surface Prep for Microtoppings

The most important thing about a microtopping is what lies underneath.

by Mike Dawson

Consider This

"For every client for whom I lowered my price, I worked three times as hard to please them. I have learned from that, and I simply don't engage it anymore. If they aren't willing to pay my price, then they don't want a professional job. What you are selling is time — time and expertise. Price it accordingly!"

Valerie Wells, owner of Artscapes in Albuquerque, N. M.



On the Cover: Kelley Burnham and Mike Speech (of Tropical Toppings) work on a 900-lineal-foot stylized map of The Chattahoochee River, running from its headwaters in northern Georgia to its terminus in the Gulf of Mexico. The floor is located in a new Whole Foods Market in Duluth, Ga. The design was transferred freehand onto a ground and polished concrete slab, and then needle-scaled and/or scarified to provide relief. It was then dyed in a watercolor style and filled with a hammered texture clear epoxy casting resin. Burnham, Speech and Mike Miller were the designers and art directors and the installation was in conjunction with Bob Harris of The Decorative Concrete Institute.

Photo by Mike Miller.





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Doug Carlton offers tips for transitioning into decorative concrete work.

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In this new column, we'll be talking about decorative concrete projects gone awry. Rick Smith starts off by sharing his solution for fixing another contractor's botched job.

by Rick Smith

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Wisconsin is not exactly the epicenter of the decorative concrete universe, but this determined contractor is making a splash with his beautiful work.

by Susan Brimo-Cox

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Protect your business with these proven techniques for pricing jobs.

by Wendy Ardolino

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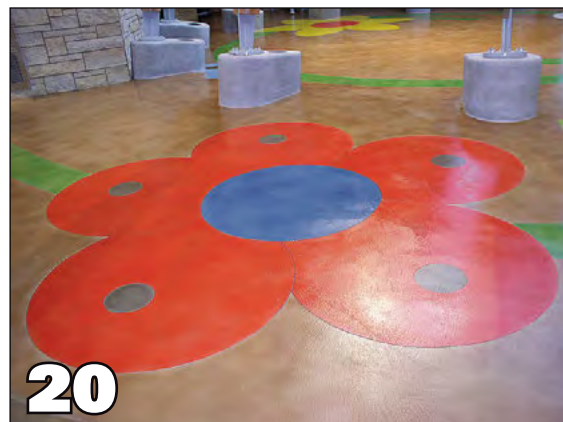
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Industry News



Kids clubs get a GoldenLook

With more than 7,000 kids attending eight inner-city Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) locations in Fort-Worth, Texas, the clubs' flooring saw a lot of wear and tear. "Given the non-profits' stringent budget, it was imperative that we sought out 'lifetime' flooring solutions that could sustain high activity challenges that the VCT [vinyl compression tile] and carpet didn't," says Sharon Driggers, the vice president and CFO of the BGCA Fort Worth branch.

In her search, Driggers was referred to GoldenLook International Inc., which manufactures and distributes custom-formulated epoxy aggregate resurfacing systems. The company's system, GoldenLook (GL) Technology, presented a variety of new-generation, proprietary custom formulations to fulfill the BGCA branches' facility performance needs.

The GL system is allergy-free and includes selections of professional-grade epoxy aggregates, sealants, resins and overlays. The epoxy formulations are 100 percent solids, solvent-free and do not emit VOCs that are common in carpet and VCT coatings.

The system typically installs in one day, which allowed the BGCA to stay

open during its regular hours. After the application, the slip-resistant floors do not require stripping, waxing, buffing or polishing.

The products used were:

Sunflex, an elastomeric urethane resurfacing system with over 500 percent elongation capabilities. Sunflex is waterproof, resilient, and slip-and-wear resistant. It was used for multi-purpose athletic activity floors and ergonomic flooring areas.

Poly G-Flex, a two-component aliphatic polyaspartic polyurea coating. Used for the clear topcoat, the roll-out coating provides a superior wear surface with high chemical resistance, wear/abrasion resistance and UV resistance. It cures in two to three hours.

Epoxy-Stone, an epoxy-aggregate resurfacing system that can be applied directly over existing solid surfaces. Providing a textured look, it can usually be installed in one day and provides a minimum downtime solution to cracked, aging or weathering concrete. Epoxy-Stone is moisture-resistant, 100-percent solid, landfill approved and requires no solvents to install.

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Architectural Enhancements adds more distributors

Architectural Enhancements, a Montgomery, Minn.-based manufacturer and supplier of decorative concrete products, has added three new distributors around the U.S.

Jade Pinley is now stocking product in the state of Wisconsin, Russ Adamski is stocking product in Elk River, Minn., and Greg Smith is a new distributor located in Maryland. In addition to



Greg Smith

distribution, Smith will be holding classes starting in September.

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Sullivan named QC's national sales manager

After five years with QC Construction Products, Chris Sullivan has been named national sales manager. He will lead the sales force of four U.S. regional managers and 31 manufacturer's representatives. Sullivan will remain directly

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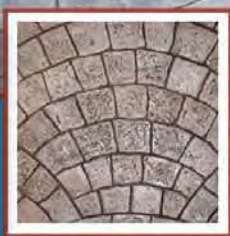
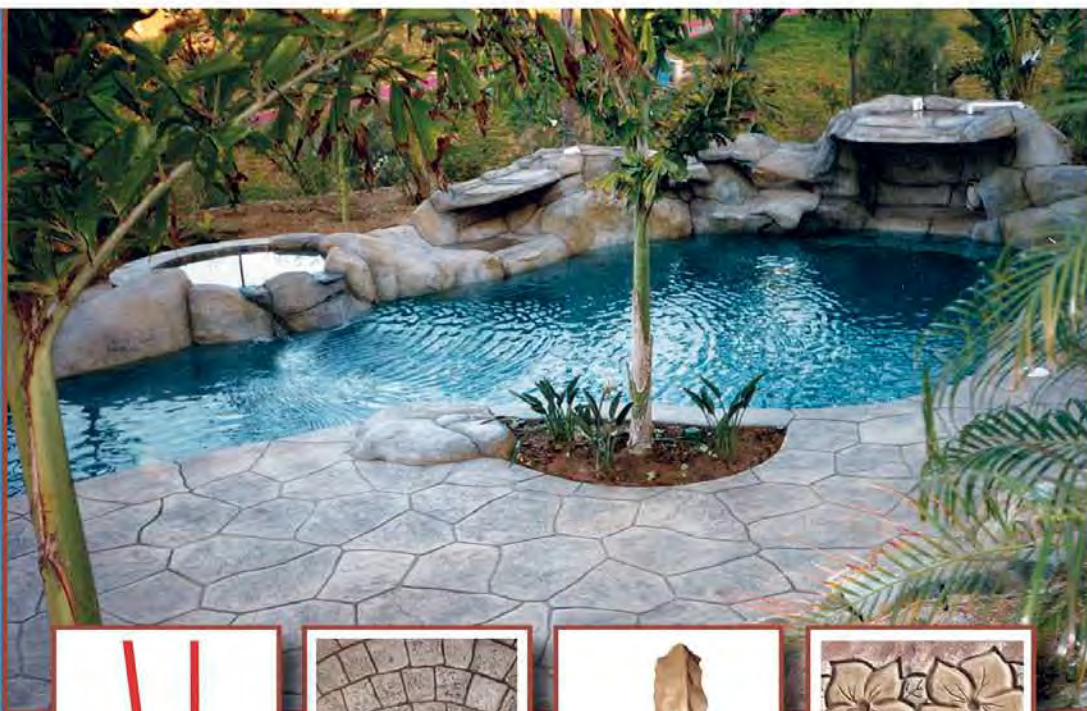
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responsible for sales in the Northwestern U.S. and Western Canada, as well as for technical direction and specifications assistance. With 12 years in the industry, Sullivan is well known for his technical expertise.

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Cemstone names commercial account representative



Rachel Seykora

Cemstone has named Rachel Seykora commercial account representative. Seykora will be responsible for sales to commercial accounts throughout Ramsey and Washington counties in Minnesota. Prior to joining Cemstone, Seykora was a sales representative with Metro Sales Inc. of Minneapolis. She has also worked for Owatonna Concrete Products of Owatonna, Minn.

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Mapei names CEO for the Americas



Rainier M. Blair

Mapei has appointed Rainier M. Blair to succeed Nick Di Tempora as president and CEO of Mapei Americas. Although Di Tempora is going into retirement, he will remain as an advisor to Blair.

During this period, Blair will function as Deputy CEO.

Blair joins Mapei after 16 years with BASF Corp., where he most recently served as group vice president for BASF's coatings businesses in North America.

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Bergin achieves environmental engineering licensure

Cemstone announces that Pat Bergin, environmental manager, has



Pat Bergin

achieved professional engineering licensure for environmental engineering. Bergin currently oversees the company's entire environmental initiative, including

compliance with regulatory issues, design, construction and restoration. This licensure will allow Bergin to certify and approve site plans and designs for all Cemstone facilities in Minnesota.

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Winter joins Sika staff

Rusty Winters is now director of marketing, new construction, for Sika Corp. He will be responsible for the marketing of concrete admixtures and related products in the U.S.

Winters has a professional background in concrete technology and marketing. He was previously employed



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University of Wisconsin-Madison team members paddle their canoe into first place at the 2006 National Concrete Canoe Competition.

with W.R. Grace, Tape Services Inc. and most recently as a consultant with Video Construction.

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Multiquip adds Shanghai office

Multiquip has opened a new office and manufacturing facility in Shanghai, China. MQ-Shanghai carries Multiquip's complete line of lighting solutions, trow-

els, pumps, mixers, saws and other concrete and masonry products. It also markets STOW Construction Equipment's concrete and masonry products.

While MQ-Shanghai serves primarily as a distribution center, light assembly of many products is also conducted in conjunction with local Multiquip business partners. The facility is under the direction of Xiwen Shi, Multiquip's

business manager in Asia.

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Concrete champions float away with fourth victory

University of Wisconsin-Madison took first place in the 2006 National Concrete Canoe Competition. The team captured its fourth straight title this year at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla. The team's 21-foot, 162-pound, natural gray canoe, called "Forward," defeated entries from 22 other top engineering schools from around the country.

The team's closest competitors were California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and Clemson University. Cal Poly paddled into second place with the white, 250-pound, 21.25-foot "Katana," and Clemson finished a close third with a brown granite, 151-pound, 18.667-foot canoe deemed "Take It For Granite." For their top finishes, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Cal Poly and Clemson earned \$5,000, \$2,500 and \$1,500 in scholarship money, re-

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spectively.

The three-day event, organized by ASCE and hosted by Oklahoma State University, is sponsored by Degussa Admixtures Inc., as well as the American Concrete Institute, Baker Concrete Construction, CEMEX, ICS Penetron, Pennoni Associates Inc., Propex Concrete Systems, Bentley Systems Inc. and U.S. Silica Co.

<http://www.asce.org/inside/nccc2006/index.cfm>


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The Surface Preparation Academic Resource Center is a surface preparation training program taught by factory ex-

perts skilled in Blastrac equipment and Sawtec hand tools. SPARC class dates for the remainder of 2006 are: Sept. 19-21, Oct. 17-19 and Nov. 14-17.

A comprehensive training program on popular surface preparation methods and equipment, the course is designed for contractors, coatings specifiers, facility owners, architects, engineers and others involved with application, specification or use of coatings. The two-and-a-half day program includes discussion of common surface preparation methods such as shot blasting, diamond grinding, scraping, milling and scarification. Participants are taught when to use different surface preparation techniques, based on job site characteristics, speci-

fied coatings, desired results and costs. The instructor also includes discussion of industry standards and testing methods. Training is focused primarily on intensive hands-on instruction, including training in the start-up, use and maintenance of equipment.

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Photo courtesy of Doug Carlton

Taking the leap to decorative concrete requires careful planning.

Transitioning to Decorative Concrete

I had looked forward to this day for a long time. I'm guessing it must have been 10 or 12 years ago. This would be the morning my concrete crew started the decorative concrete work for one of the most successful entrepreneurs ever to come from my area in the eastern San Joaquin Valley of California. His name was Leonard Whitney and he had masterminded what is today one of the largest grocery store franchises in the business. What a great opportunity for me to ask questions and receive useful information to leverage my contracting company to a higher level, from someone who obviously held the keys to success.

After I rushed through color samples and pattern choices to the point

where Mr. Whitney felt comfortable with my abilities, I asked the question I had been dying to ask: "How? How, Mr. Whitney, did you manage to build such a successful and respectable business?" His reply was shorter than I expected. "The grocery business is all I know, so it is all I do," said my client.

Inside, I'm thinking, "This is where he clubs me over the head with the hard work, integrity, never quitting, blah, blah, blah," but he simply turns and walks off. A man closer to 80 than 70, with nothing to prove and no shortcuts: another lesson learned.

The decorative concrete industry is in transition and has been for some time. Yes, this is an article on transitioning your business into the decorative

side, and I will give several useful tips on doing just this. But please remember, there are no shortcuts. These tips will help you segue into decorative, but the real key is perseverance.

The decorative industry is made up of two types. The first is the scraped-knuckle, dirt-in-the-eye, old-school contractor who has been doing this for a generation or three. The other type is artistic, free, creative and broke. Somewhere in the middle of these two types is the most powerful combination ever to enter the decorative market. Harness the best of both types and the result is nothing short of incredible. Regardless of what type you are, here's the bottom line: Winners do what losers won't. All of the creativity in the world will do little good without the discipline and organization it takes to run a business. Enough said, let's get you started in the decorative side of the concrete business.

Step One: Give away your first decorative jobs

Take the pressure off yourself and

realize that there are many steps you and your crew must learn in order to successfully complete a decorative project. I know there are good seminars and deminars available and I recommend attending one or two for the base knowledge you will need. But make no mistake about it — the real training will come on the job by learning to deal with the day-to-day adversities that every project presents. So to start with, turn one of your projects into something decorative at no additional cost. This is how I started. I did it with stamped concrete, but it makes little difference what type of decorative work you're developing.

Make it very clear to your client they are receiving a huge discount so you are creating a win-win situation for both parties. Do not expect your clients to rant and rave about how great your work looks when completed. The project is not going to be perfect and that is understandable. Also, it is human nature to show less appreciation for things unpaid for. You are simply trying to develop experience as well as test the market in

your area. Get good pictures and ask for a one- or two-line testimonial when the project is completed.

Confidence comes from experience and experience comes at a price. Consider this a paid education and a time to ask if this is a direction you want to take your company. I remember one time a gentleman realizing, after the fifth on-the-job training day, what he didn't want to do for a living. He hadn't realized how complex or labor-intensive decorative work could be. It's better to realize this and redirect early on rather than do it after you have invested more money. Complete two or three discounted projects and closely evaluate each project on ways to improve.

Step Two: Don't quit your day job

It took me years to evolve into a full-service decorative company. My crew would pour structural concrete and mix in stamped projects as the market developed. I noticed we would forget steps because of the time-lapse between projects. After working on structural



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concrete, my enclosed trailer would be missing tools or supplies needed for a successful decorative project. It is difficult for a crew to switch gears from day-to-day and it requires strong organization to pull it off. These are the growing pains necessary to develop into something better, regardless if it's decorative concrete, acting, or sports.

Most of us have house payments and other obligations that require


thoughtful expansion of our companies. Develop at a safe pace without jeopardizing the things you and your family have worked hard for. Phase out traditional jobs and replace with decorative ones. Develop the market in your own way. You should be spending a little money to market your new service. Put decorative pictures and a testimonial letter or two into a portfolio binder and take it everywhere. Change your busi-

ness cards to help describe your new service and maybe include a decorative project as the background. Develop job-site signs so potential customers can put a name to a project. Develop a logo and put it on everything. Send out a press release talking about your new services and certifications. The local papers love this stuff and they are very effective for new work. Keep the press release short and to the point and be sure to leave a contact number.

Step Three: Yellow Pages or Web site?

I read two articles last month that declared Yellow Page ads obsolete and outdated. Well, before we pull the plug on Ma Bell, let me say this: Yellow Page ads still work in most markets. Some markets are more technically savvy than others and we must market accordingly. More traditional areas are more likely to refer to the Yellow Pages than the Web. I'm sure this is slowly changing, but I would closely evaluate my market to get the best bang for my buck. Another consideration is the baby boomers and how they look for new services. Start with a Yellow Page ad and use colorful pictures to describe your service. Keep the wording to a minimum — decorative concrete is visual. Next, develop an open-ended Web site. This will allow you to add and change it as you grow and redirect. Link to other sites related to the decorative industry. Talk to Mark Dixon at Concrete Decor for more ideas on building a great Web site.

Final word

Every step and idea mentioned above is exactly the way I built my business. I'm not saying it's the only way, but it is proven. Give your own twist and flavor and monitor the outcome. One other tip to try is to use publications as sales and marketing aids. High-gloss magazines are very effective and will help develop a client base among builders, architects, landscapers, and designers. Talk to Concrete Decor about a direct mail marketing approach (subscription sponsorship) and how they can help you build your business. Let me know how it goes. 

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Photo courtesy of Rick Smith



Fixing another contractor's mistake

Editor's note: As every contractor knows, projects sometimes go awry, and whether it's your own work or someone else's, you may be called upon to fix it. Trowel & Error is a new column that celebrates making lemonade out of sour lemons — recognizing that there's always a solution to every decorative concrete problem.

If you've solved the problem of a job gone wrong, and you'd like to share your solution with our readers, please write to rosemary@concretedecor.net. We look forward to hearing from you!

In this business we are used to fixing our own mistakes. However, we are sometimes required to fix another installer's decorative concrete mistake. This can be an uncomfortable experience for all involved. It is important to be sensitive to the client's fears, insecurities and possible anger. It is also important to be sensitive to the fact that money has been paid out to the other installer and that good money will have to be paid out after bad. Last but not least, it is important not to bad-mouth the other installer's work, as this will be a bad reflection on you and do no good for the situation as a whole.

Recently, we were called by a homeowner who had asked us to bid on his

project a year earlier. He had decided to use his painter, who had given him a lower price to do his floors. Upon going to his home and looking at his floors, we sat down with him and asked him to give us as much information as he could on what was done in the installation of his floor finish. We then asked to speak to the installer of the floor to get any other forensic information we could gather. At this point we spoke to the manufacturer's rep regarding the products that were put down and got those spec sheets sent to us.

Once we had all of the information we could get regarding this failure, we sat down and analyzed it so we could get a game plan of how we could fix the

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problem. We structured our proposal to the homeowner in a way that gave him choices for how far he wanted to go to get his floors fixed. This way the client did not feel backed into a corner. These choices were not only based upon scope of work, but price and the potential longevity of the products we were bringing to the table.

In this case, we had a new concrete foundation that was acid-washed and then stained with an acid-based stain, a problem that happens way too often. The stain did not take due to the acid reaction that precluded the acid stain application. This floor was then sealed with a water-based acrylic sealer, which compounded the problem because it did not enhance whatever reaction did take place when the floor was stained. The owner was not at all happy with the results, so the installer then used a water-based tinted sealer to color the floor. That product never bonded with the already sealed floor and within days, the floor started peeling and scratching.

After careful consideration and discussions with the owner in regards to his needs, we came up with a plan of action. He did not want to remove the wood base molding, and had finished cabinets and stainless built-in appliances. We pre-scraped off all the finish that we could and then proceeded to buff and sand the floor using a soy-based product that would not harm any of the finishes we were working around. We then acid-stained the concrete using enhancers and sealed the stained concrete with a solvent-based sealer to enhance the acid stain color.

The floors turned out beautiful, the owner was happy, there was no residual damage left from our stripping the floors and within a short amount of time, the whole situation will be but a distant memory. From our standpoint, there is real satisfaction in taking a problem that seems to have no solution and turning it around to a positive. Isn't that what problems are all about? 🛠️

Rick Smith is the owner of Richard Smith Custom Concrete, based in West Hills, Calif. In his spare time, you might find him fishing for sharks, diving for lobsters or working in his garden, where he grows 400-pound pumpkins.



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Specialized Construction Services, Waterloo, Wis.



by Susan Brimo-Cox

"In Wisconsin, we're never on the cutting edge of things," says Shawn Wardall, president of Specialized Construction Services Inc. in Waterloo, Wis. "New things start on the East and West Coasts and migrate here. That aspect of being behind the curve is one of the greatest business challenges we have." But tackling that challenge consistently, every day, is propelling, he says, and has ultimately led him to succeed.

Wardall says people in his area read about decorative concrete in home and lifestyle magazines or see television segments about it on HGTV, so homeowners

and the design community are aware of it, and they want it. "But I find they really don't understand it, so I spend a lot of time educating them."

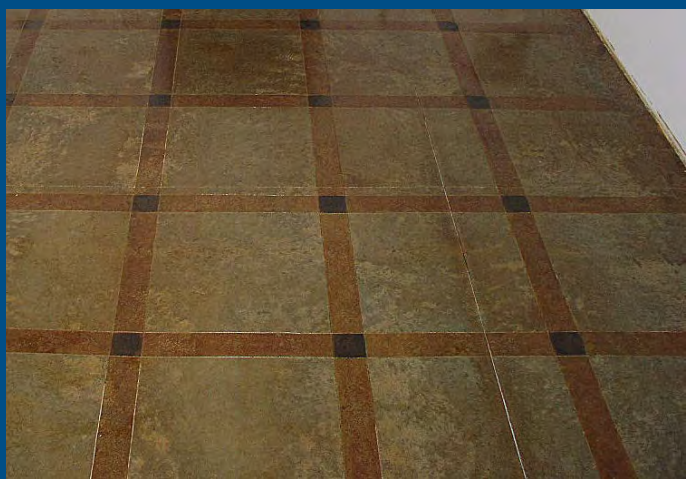
With his business situated between Madison and Milwaukee, Wardall racks up the miles on his vehicle. He is busy with residential and commercial projects across a broad geographic region year-round, something a lot of northern concrete contractors can't say. "About 85 percent of my work is interior," he reports.

Perhaps what helps keep him on the cutting edge is that he's relatively new to decorative concrete, so as he learned

his craft he learned the latest technology, techniques and procedures. But don't scoff at his "youth" in the industry; his background is solidly in construction, giving him a strong foundation on which to build his decorative concrete business.

"I was introduced to the construction industry 30 years ago," Wardall explains. His uncle was a general contractor. Wardall started by sweeping floors and moved up through the ranks. Then, for many years, he worked for a large general contractor as a project manager. That's when he dipped his toe in concrete, so to speak. "We were bidding





on a job that included stained concrete. We threw in an extra \$1 per square foot to cover it. I quickly learned that \$1 a square foot extra wasn't enough," he recalls.

His interest was further piqued when he went to Georgia to attend an L.M. Scofield seminar. A couple more decorative concrete projects followed, but he needed to leave the general contracting firm to do more. So in 2000, he launched a contracting business with three partners. Within a span of three years, he saw the number of decorative concrete projects double but, still, he wanted more. Again, the general con-

tracting aspect of the business limited those aspirations. To really focus on decorative concrete he would have to strike out on his own to do it — and he did, in 2003.

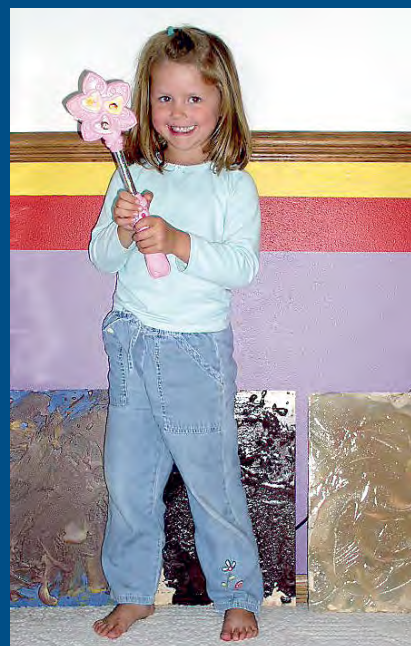
Since then his business focus is decorative concrete, and his personal focus is on concrete artistry. One of his favorite aspects of the job is working with his customers, figuring out what they want and then matching products and processes to give them the results they're looking for. "I work with a lot of different manufacturers to match up the product to the design concept and expectations of the customer," Wardall says.

In the upper Midwest, the residential market for decorative concrete has been strong for about six years, but it seems to be flattening out, he says. Fortunately, commercial projects have increased to offset that, he says, and he's finding a lot of opportunity in this market segment. "My current work is predominately staining applications — they are more familiar with staining. But they're not quite as familiar with overlays, so I have a lot of opportunity to educate business owners and designers as to what you can do with overlays."

Wardall practices on his own house first. "My house is my research and de-



Shawn Wardall's daughter, Amber, is always eager to help her dad make decorative concrete samples in their basement "lab." When asked what her father does, Amber replies, "My daddy plays with concrete!"



velopment lab," he says. "We bought a house in the country and my first project was applying an overlay on my front walk. A lot of people said it wouldn't last in our climate, but it has lasted and it still looks good."

Since then, renovation projects at his house have turned into decorative concrete experiments and often, he's challenged to try things that others say won't work. "I'm very motivated and I enjoy the challenge," he says.

Wardall points to a couple of recent projects that were particularly challenging and fun, both involving a theme concept that appears to be growing in

popularity: interior street scenes. He just completed a project for Epic Systems, a computer software company, where they wanted the main entry area to look like a street in New York City. It was a three-story space, so there were skyscrapers painted on the walls as well as build-outs of storefronts. "I worked on the floor, creating a surface that included a street and sidewalks. When you're there you really have the feel that you're walking down a street in New York," he says.

In a residential project, he worked with a team of other artists to achieve a historic Milwaukee street scene effect. It included murals, old-fashioned

street lights, and a cobblestone-stenciled street.

What's ahead for this budding concrete artist? "I think the future is quite bright," Wardall says. "I try to meet with people and plant seeds for the future. I make my work a calling card for the future. When I'm working, I'm creating a new expectation level and a new awareness of what's available. I believe I'm the only full-service decorative concrete artisan-contractor in the area." 📱



Flowers in the woods: The Potawatomi Executive Building



Shawn Wardall is a gardener of sorts. This summer he coaxed flowers to bloom in concrete, much to the delight of the Potawatomi tribe at the Forest County Potawatomi Reservation near Crandon, Wis.

Last fall, the architects and designers working on the construction of the new Potawatomi Executive Building developed an elaborate stained-concrete floral pattern for the rotunda floor.

The design was a very important aspect of what the tribe wanted for the project, because it had sacred meaning to their heritage. Eugene Shawano, tribal administrator of the Forest County Potawatomi, says the floral design was the kind of design the woodland Indians used in their beadwork. As compared to motifs used by American Indians in the southwest or plains states, these floral designs reflected nature in the Potawatomi's environment.

The problem the architect had was finding someone who could actually make the floor a reality, since decorative concrete artisans are not in great supply in northern Wisconsin. So they asked the advice of the folks at L.M. Scofield, who recommended Wardall for the job.

Due to construction delays, Wardall didn't get to start until July, when he and his crew created the concrete garden in two weeks time. While waiting for the OK, he took care of the preliminary work, including working with a sign company to manufacture the design templates out of stencil material. "The floral design included flowers, vines and leaves on a field color, and I worked with a 10-color palette of greens, blues, yellows and browns," Wardall says.

Wardall made test pieces for approval, but when he got on site he found that he had five different shades of gray to deal with on the concrete floor, due to the different sections being poured at different times and not always with

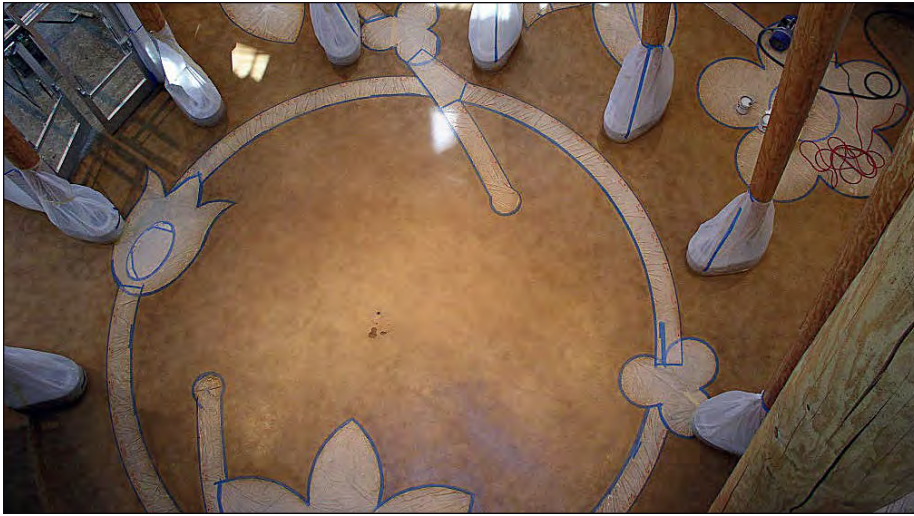
the same mix design. The field color instantly became a challenge. New sample boards were made and approved, and most of the stains he used needed to be customized on site to match. "There were a lot of red hues in the floor. We wound up having to add blue to offset this effect in just about every color we used," he says.

The stencils Wardall had made were large enough that he didn't have to peel and stick them to the floor, giving him flexibility to move them around and make adjustments. He then traced the pattern with chalk, used a 4-inch grinder to make his saw cuts, and "from there it became a large paint-by-numbers."

"I thought about this job for six months and completed it in my head a hundred times," Wardall recalls. And he had prepared for any possible situation to crop up — after all, you won't find a local decorative concrete supply store in the Wisconsin north woods.

The result was a flower garden in concrete that even the best "real gardener" would be proud of. Shawano says initially the floor was going to be made of another material, but he is glad the tribe went with concrete. "We didn't realize how decorative you can get with concrete," he says. "When you look at tile, carpeting [or other flooring materials], you don't get the opportunity to lay out your design as well as with concrete."

And, Shawano points out, you can be real specific in what you want or need. "Most people think concrete is white or gray, or sidewalks, and don't think of it being something to create artwork on." In the case of the Potawatomi's rotunda floor, not only do they have beautiful artwork, it has special meaning to the tribe and is educational, too.




Concrete to Dye For



Photo courtesy of Colormaker Floors

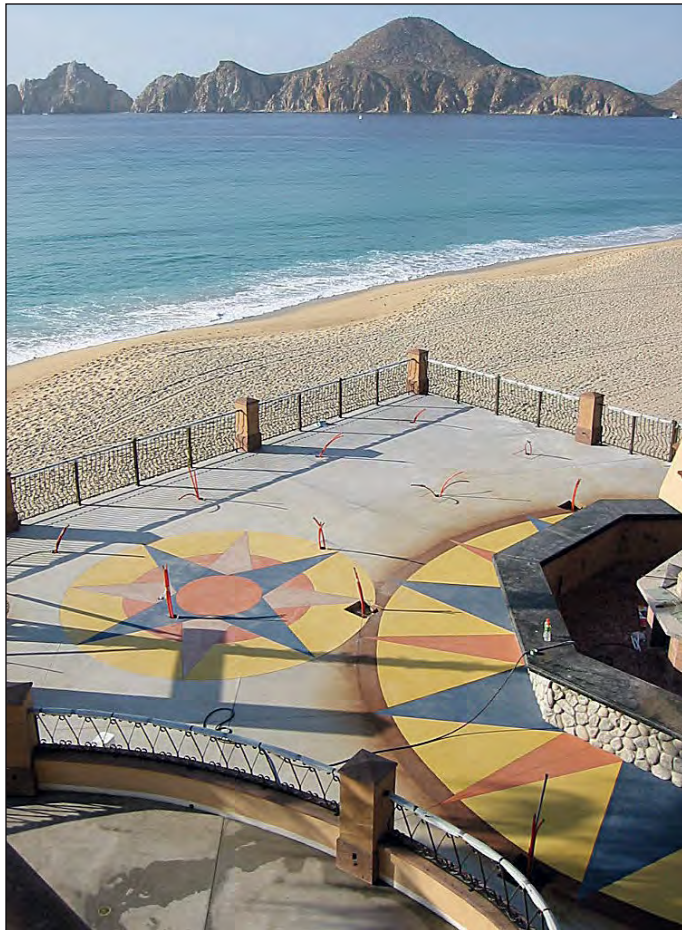
by Amy Johnson

Decorative concrete just keeps getting more ... decorative. Does anyone use gray concrete anymore? Why would they, when concrete dyes can provide just about any color, however subtle or vivid? By using dyes either alone or in combination with reactive stains, designers and contractors can achieve just about any look imaginable. "If you think of a watercolor artist, that's the way you might think about using dyes," says Mike Miller, managing principal of The Concretist in Benicia, Calif.

A photograph of a well-maintained backyard patio. The patio is paved with large, square, light-brown stone tiles. In the foreground, there are two lounge chairs with black metal frames and cushions featuring a vibrant floral pattern. To the left, a small round table with a matching floral chair is set up. In the background, a tall, dark metal fire pit stands near a wooden fence. Several potted plants with colorful flowers are scattered around the patio. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Dyes are quickly becoming a must-have item in a decorative contractor's bag of color tricks.

This patio was colored with dye-stains from Smith Paint Products.



Photos courtesy of Colormaker Floors



Dyes or stains — what's the difference?

Sometimes the words are used interchangeably, but understanding the difference helps contractors choose the right products to get the effects they want. Basically, a dye is a coloring agent, usually supplied in concentrated form, that is diluted in water or solvent (alcohol or acetone) to the desired shade. The dye may be mixed with other colors on site. It is usually applied with a pump sprayer, but may be applied with an airless sprayer, airbrush, sponge or brush, depending on the desired effect and the size of the area to be colored. The solvent or water carrier penetrates the concrete, taking the

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color with it. The final effect is transparent, so the concrete is visible through the color.

Chemical or acid-based reactive stains color concrete by a very different mechanism. The acid catalyzes a chemical reaction with the lime in the concrete, creating a variegated, dappled effect. Pigments in the stain impart color. Colors of reactive stains are similar to colors that occur naturally in stone, so the palette is somewhat limited.

"Not all concrete can be reactive-stained," says Janine Lutz, CEO of SuperStone, Opa-Locka, Fla. "A stain has to set at least four hours and then you have to wash and neutralize it. With a dye, you just put it on and seal it — no washing, no neutralizing."

There are some water-based stains on the market, consisting of pigments in a water-based carrier, usually acrylic. Because they don't react with the concrete, they are often confused with dyes. Gary Jones of Colormaker Floors, British Columbia, explains the difference. "The particle size of a dye is one thousand times smaller than the pigment in a water-based stain, so the dye penetrates more deeply into the concrete, while the stain is a more opaque-looking surface color." Art Pinto, president of Decosup Inc. in Miami, Fla., adds, "A water-based stain is an acrylic resin with a pigment. A dye isn't carried in a resin and there is no binder. So a dye penetrates the surface, while a water-borne stain lies on the surface."

Smith Paint Products, Harrisburg, Pa., makes a water-borne stain that performs more like a dye by grinding pigments to a smaller molecular size so they penetrate more deeply. The effect looks more like acid staining, but the water base allows a greater color palette. This "dye-stain" also offers greater resistance to ultraviolet (UV) and alkali degradation than regular dyes, so it can be used outdoors.

In terms of the final appearance, there are two major differences between dyes and reactive stains. "The thing with dyes is they offer much greater color variety and brightness than stains, and also better color control," says Mike Miller. Basically, according to Lutz, "You get what you expect."

Dyes and stains — a winning combination

In spite of, or maybe because of their differences, dyes and reactive stains work wonderfully together. For example, a

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customer may want the graphic variegation of a reactive stain, but in a color not available. A dye can be applied over the stain to give a brighter color while allowing the pattern created by the reactive stain to show through. Dyes might also be applied by hand over parts of a stained surface to “paint” a picture or add highlights or accents.

Dyes are often applied over stains to even out variations in the reaction. For example, if the stain fails to “take” in one area, it can be colored with a dye to be more consistent. “Acid stains sometimes don’t turn out as expected,” Pinto says. “Contractors can dilute a dye with acetone, spray it over the floor and seal it and it looks just fine. I know some people who take stain color charts and match dyes to it so they can deliver predictable color.”

Miller expands on this idea. “I consider every stain job a dye job too,” he says. “I always bring dye with me even if I don’t use it. If you have to correct a simple stain application with a dye, it will only take an extra hour. So I build in that hour as a margin of safety.

“I use the dye for fine adjustment. It enables me to do colors others can’t do and to be a bit more fearless on a stain job.” Miller also uses tints added to the first coat of sealer, saying, “That way I’ve got three shots to get the color right on the job. I hardly ever sample a job anymore, I just send the stain in the direction it’s going to go and then work with whatever happens.”

A note of caution

As versatile as they are, dyes cannot be used in every application. While some contractors use them outside, most agree that dyes will fade when exposed to sunlight. Lutz is one who recommends dyes only be used inside, for countertops, for example. Pinto likes them for what he calls “go-to-Vegas disco” — commercial and retail interiors where bright colors accent the theme of the business.

Lutz recommends applying dyes only to unsealed concrete. Pinto, on the other hand, uses dyes to color-correct applications that are already sealed. “A stain job can’t be fixed without removing the sealer,” he says. “But you can spray a dye over the sealer — the acetone re-emulsifies the sealer, the dye goes through, and you reapply the sealer. It rejuvenates the color and fixes the problems quickly and safely.”

It is imperative to seal any job with dye on it. Otherwise the color can be washed away over time.

Finally, as with any decorative application, the concrete must be sound. “A thin coat of dye or stain won’t help bad concrete,” says Chuck Brunner, Sr., of Smith Paint Products. “It won’t seal cracks.”

Special effects

Dyes are great to use with stencils, bleeds and resists. They can be applied by hand to small areas to create intricate patterns. Colors can be layered on top of one another. The same color can be diluted to give gradations of color. For




example, Miller describes a job designed to echo Lake Tahoe, with deep blue in the center becoming progressively lighter and warmer toward the edges.

Typically, more vivid colors are achieved with dye carried in solvent. Also, acetone flashes off so quickly that according to Lutz, "when you spray it on, you can step on it right away. Dyes in acetone are very popular for polishing applications." Gary Jones agrees. "We have a big following of those using solvent-based dyes at a ratio of one part dye to one part solvent on polished concrete."

But Jones likes water-based dyes too. They smell better. He also likes the fact that these dyes remain workable longer. "With water you can move the colors around a bit," he says.

"You can mop the dye around, mix colors on the surface, or layer it. It will take differently to wet surfaces than dry ones, so you can get some nice variations."

And the next generation? "There's new technology every day," Brunner says. "We're working on flip-flop colors that change as you walk past them. Think of the scales on a fish mounted on the wall." He also says metallic colors are making a comeback and pearlescent colors are popular.

So dyes, originally viewed by some as a corrective for stain jobs gone awry, are coming into their own. Used with reactive stains or by themselves, they give contractors and designers more options to be creative in concrete. 



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Vertical Stenciling

By John Strieder

Suppose a real estate speculator buys an old tilt-up warehouse, hoping to fix up the dingy structure and turn it for a tidy profit. The to-do list will most likely include replacing those plain concrete walls with a finish that is more appealing. And for help with the facelift, the developer will probably turn to a decorative concrete contractor — someone like you. How will you get it done?

Sure, you could attach slabs of slate or bits of brick to the walls and call it good. But you could also provide a result that looks just as good for less money — by stenciling the look of rocks or bricks onto the walls instead.





Photos courtesy of Concrete Surfacing Systems Inc.

Contractor Rod Scott used stencil tape and an overlay to create the look of slate on this high-rise.



Rod Scott, president of Concrete Surfacing Systems Inc. in Sacramento, did just that for a developer who hired him to spruce up two office buildings for resale.

Scott's crew mimicked the look of 18-inch-wide pieces of slate on a 15-story building in downtown Sacramento. The developer had attached authentic slate at the ground-floor level but turned the top 14 over to the concrete team. Not only was the stencil tape and overlay job cheaper than rock, Scott says, it was easier and safer: "Stencils are not going to fall and hurt people."

For the second structure, a 4-story building that was four blocks long, Scott's team used custom-cut vinyl patterns with an overlay to build a faux brick surface on the sides.

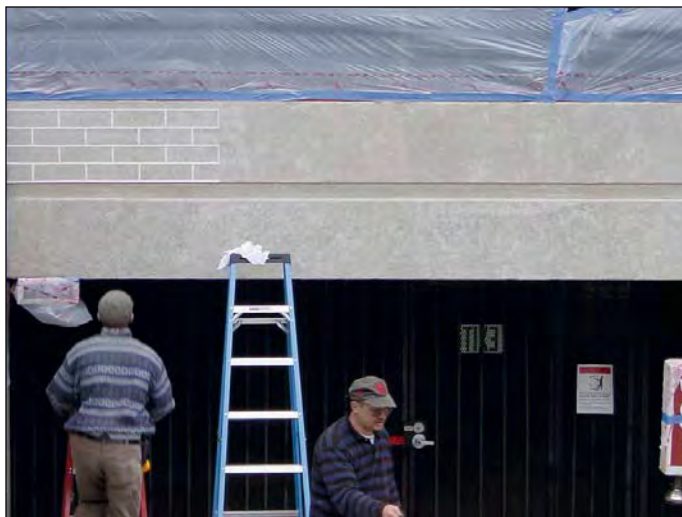
While stenciling floors is a fairly familiar concept to most decorative contractors, stenciling walls is still a novelty. "But you know what? It's coming up," Scott says. "People don't know they can do it yet. It looks like fake brick and it's a lot cheaper."

Heather Monroe, senior operations manager for Decorative Concrete Impressions LLC, has also noticed an uptick of interest in stenciled applications in general, including on vertical surfaces. "The appeal of using stencils for the contractor is that they are easily promoted and offer the customer a variety of pattern options," she says.

The same stencils used in interior and exterior flatwork can work with vertical applications indoors and out. Stencil patterns can be cut from paper or vinyl, while grout lines can be pulled from a roll of tape, helping artisans achieve the look

This "brick" surface was created with custom-cut vinyl stencils and an overlay.





of brick, stone or tile. As always, custom designs combined with borders and accent pieces allow contractors to mix it up.

How it was done

After using window-washing equipment to scale the sides of the 15-story office building, Scott's crew used lasers to get their lines straight. Starting at the top and working their way down, they also did what they could to square their pattern with pre-existing joints in the poured-in-place building. The old hand-cut joints weren't exactly laser straight.

After a skimcoat of grout-colored, polymer-modified stucco material, they taped down the grout lines with fiberglass



embossed stencil tape. "The surface was so rough, it needed, a skimcoat anyway," Scott says.

The team applied three colors of overlay to match the colors of the slate on the first floor. After the tape was pulled came a coat of clear acrylic sealer.

For the 4-story structure, a couple of 90-foot cherry-pickers gave them all the access they needed. The team worked with 4-by-8 sheets of self-adhesive vinyl stencil. As the client wanted simulated bricks a little larger than the standard size, they used a pattern cut to order by their supplier, Multicoat Corp. The supplier also custom-mixed the red for the bricks. "There are a lot of 'brick reds,'" Scott notes.





After the concrete was skimcoated, the crew drew chalk lines across the top of the walls for guidance, and affixed the stencils from the top down. Then they sprayed red polymer-modified material over the stencils. This time, to avoid a stucco look, they troweled the material to get a smooth surface, then swept it with concrete finish brooms to give it the feel of brick. "It really warmed up that building," Scott says. "Now it looks like a brick building, whereas before it was a tilt-up building."

The stucco-style plastering technique is the most common way to apply stencils to a vertical surface, Monroe says. The other common method is to use stencils and colorants when creating decorative flatwork for tilt-up construction. "Either a nonadhesive stencil can be applied to a base coat while still tacky, or an adhesive-backed stencil will work successfully on a smooth-troweled surface," she says.

The project requirements will dictate the type of mix used, she says. "The material used can be as simple as a three-coat hard stucco mix of sand, cement and lime, or can be any commercial synthetic coating products that are used with polymer."

Generally, color is mixed into the overlay as liquid or powder pigments. Acid stain can be sponged onto the surface, applied as a fine mist, or brushed on for accenting, Monroe says.

Even carefully applied stain can bleed under a stencil pressed against a rough concrete base. So if stain will be used,

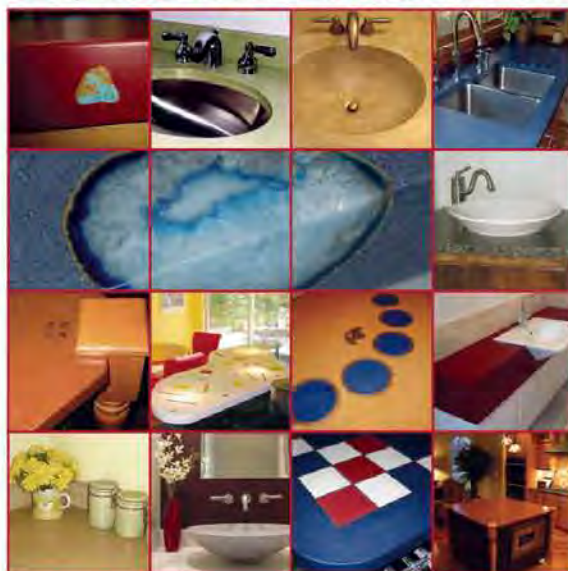


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it might be prudent to seal the concrete first, so the stencil's adhesive can grip a smoother surface. A thickening agent mixed into the acid stain will help prevent excessive running.

Finally, Monroe recommends that a cap piece be installed along the top of the wall to help prevent moisture from getting behind the layer of plaster. "A properly maintained vertical surface, sealed and kept free from hydrostatic pressure, will indefinitely retain its integrity and beauty," she says.

Another way

Concrete stencil supplier Artcrete Inc. offers both the spray-on and tilt-up approaches to vertical concrete applications. "The use of stenciling on vertical surfaces is just now becoming more popular," says Artcrete national director of training Steve Peters. "The more panelized and modular construction becomes, the more stenciling will grow in use and acceptance. Also in some areas, some masonry materials are becoming harder to get in a timely manner."

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When stenciling wet panels, Peters recommends using self-consolidating concrete with strength of at least 5,000 pounds per square inch. "If a special aggregate is desired, it can be placed as a face mix on the down side of the panel and then immediately covered with a standard mix," he says.

He also recommends a three-step process for keeping stencils straight: Keep form work straight and square, measure the first stencil to make sure the pattern is parallel and square, and when placing consecutive stencils, overlap them and match the pattern bond. 🛠️



A decorative cap atop this stenciled wall keeps moisture from getting in behind the overlay.

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In case you had any doubts...

SURFACE PREP IS EVERYTHING



Photo courtesy of G/A Shotblasting

Waylon DeCanio, of G/A Shotblasting, uses a Goff E15-13 to prepare a concrete surface at Dahlgren Navy Base in Virginia.

by Mike Dawson

If a microtopping looks good on the surface, don't be too impressed until it's proven to perform. When it comes to these thin overlays, beauty is only skim deep, but ugly goes all the way to the slab.

In other words: A beautiful microtopping over concrete is only as good as its preparation. A poor substrate will show its character flaws sooner or later, costing money and making somebody look bad. That's why the voices of experience advise spending more time on prepping the surface than on the microtop application itself. "We do more prep and cleaning than we do decorative work," says Wes Vollmer, a consultant and owner of Alternative Finishes, based in San Antonio, Texas.

A microtopping is thin by definition, less than 1/8-inch,



and is often applied by squeegee, trowel or broom. Some, like CemLogic MT-200 from Floric Polytech, can be sprayed.

But first the concrete substrate must be free of any bond breakers, including grease and solvents spilled on the surface, as well as alkali and moisture generated from within the concrete. So whether your substrate is an old garage floor or a fresh pour, you have a lot to consider before applying a microtopping.

"No single factor accounts more for the success or failure of an installation than substrate preparation," says Bruce Newbrough, director of technical services for Ardex Engineered Cements. "Regardless of the underlayment or patching compound used to level, smooth or repair a substrate's surface, the ultimate strength of the bond will only be as strong as the substrate itself."

Profiling your concrete

When overlaying concrete, the manufacturer specs on most premixed microtoppings will indicate which International Concrete Repair Institute profile guidelines to follow. ICRI profiles 3 and 4 are common. There are several ways to achieve the profile, as well as varied opinions about whether all should be employed. The most widely accepted method is shot blasting. "Only mechanical methods are recommended to properly clean a concrete substrate down to a sound, solid surface," Newbrough says. "Sanding and grinding may be sufficient for smaller projects, while shotblasting or scarification is generally most efficient on larger jobs."

Most other manufacturers, distributors and contractors agree. Mechanical profiling sets your surface up for what Chris Sullivan of QC Construction calls "lock-and-key adhesion."

Contractors who take the more expensive step of shot blasting sometimes cut costs by renting a machine and doing it themselves. Vollmer, who subs out such work regularly, says it's not worth the risk. "Unless you're an expert at shotblasting, let the professionals do it," he says.

For jobs of less than 1,000 square feet, a rotary grinder is often used in place of shotblasting. This is generally acceptable for small areas, particularly

when radiuses are involved.

One method of profiling that is seldom accepted is acid etching. It has its fans, but most experts say to avoid it except in very small areas. One reason, Vollmer says, is "the acid has to be so strong you can do more damage to yourself than the concrete." Another reason is that the surface can be left too smooth, or the pH level of the surface can be left too acidic, which can ruin the bond and create other problems with the

application, such as dusting.

The most comprehensive substrate preparation, says Steve Meyer of Floric Polytech, is to get the profile right with a light brush blasting, followed by an acid wash, which is then neutralized with an ammonia wash.

Dealing with moisture and alkalinity

Once the substrate is profiled, moisture vapor emission must be considered. Most decorative concrete contractors and microtopping suppliers we spoke with said that vapor emission is not a common problem, because cementitious toppings are somewhat breathable. But when vapor emission causes failure, it's a disaster.

When deciding whether to test, the experts say, consider whether the slab is on grade or below grade. The deeper below grade, generally, the greater the vapor emission.

The typical curing time necessary for new concrete is 28 days. However, it is not unusual for concrete slabs to have relatively high moisture contents at three months, six months or even a year after they're poured.

There are several ways to measure water vapor emission, but a calcium chloride test is the method most commonly specified by microtopping manufacturers. This test will provide readings in pounds of moisture being emitted from 1,000 square feet of concrete over 24 hours. One source for pre-measured, ready-to-use test kits can be found on www.vaportest.com.

Newbrough has written an extensive report called "De-mystifying Moisture Control Systems" (www.ardex.com/main-news.htm) and has some advice on how to avoid product failure and warranty rejection.

First, he says, bear in mind that the calcium chloride test only tells you about the moisture that has reached the surface. "The fact is that there is moisture lurking below the surface that the calcium chloride test can't see." He compares the situation to an iceberg, with the calcium chloride exposing only the tip. As that berg melts, the vapor will continue heading to the surface. Even if the rate is only 3 pounds, blocking it with a non-breathable product could



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force the pressure to build.

He says that once a moisture control layer is applied, the moisture below the surface redistributes, accumulating a greater amount near the surface than was measured before. That means you need to pay attention to what the moisture control system manufacturer says about the amount of moisture the system can handle after installation. "That's what really counts," Newbrough says, because the pressure is likely to rise. If it

rises beyond the manufacturer's specifications, the product will not likely be backed up by the warranty.

The same logic applies to pH, even if the pH test of the substrate surface doesn't raise a red flag. Newbrough advised finding a moisture control product that is guaranteed to perform in a high pH environment, because after application the pH is likely to rise beyond the accepted limit of many polymer-based products. "When the failure occurs, the

manufacturer declares the warranty void and the installer or owner loses again," Newbrough says.

Another area where contractors get in trouble with vapor control is thickness. The ability to hold back moisture is in direct proportion to thickness, Newbrough says, and on an uneven shot-blasted surface you may have thin spots, which could lead a manufacturer to void the warranty. He advises using a second coat for insurance. Two coats may be like using a belt and suspenders to hold up your pants, but once you know there is a moisture problem, he advises taking "unnecessary risk out of the installation so as to not be embarrassed again."

This is probably the reason that Ardex created a two-coat formula when it entered the moisture control market with its Ardex Moisture Control System. Another popular system is Miracote's MVERS (moisture vapor emission reduction system), which is designed to reduce relatively high rates of emission.

Alkalinity is another potential bond breaker to test for prior to application. However, like moisture vapor, it is more of an issue with other flooring systems and less with cementitious overlays, which carry a high pH factor of their own, says Sullivan of QC Construction. But if you are using a product that requires a neutral or specified pH level, it can be done with a simple pH pencil, color chart and distilled water.

Some manufacturers suggest rinsing the surface with water to reduce the surface pH. As was mentioned above, some experts suggest rinsing with an acidic solution, followed by an ammonia bath. There are also penetrating compounds that will react with the soluble hydroxides in the concrete to encapsulate them so that they can no longer boost pH at the surface.

Cracks and seams

Another issue to deal with is cracks and seams. Cracks must be repaired or they will bleed through. Vollmer says that when his crew chases cracks they fill them with epoxy for flexibility. Sullivan noted that cementitious products can be used as well, but the important thing to remember is that cracks must be bridged with a rigid substance and

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the surface profiled.

Another important part of prep is knowing your microtopping. There are a lot of manufacturers out there, large and small, and some contractors even make their own microtoppings by mixing portland cement and polymers. But manufacturers and distributors advise contractors to buy products from a known supplier who will back them up.

Vollmer says he uses only one brand for all his work and he advises others to do the same, not out of loyalty, but for predictability. Mixes from different manufacturers can react differently on the job site, and can go wrong for different reasons, he says.

But if the prep is done right, there is less room for error. And when it comes down to it, Sullivan says, it's all about giving your substrate the right profile. "That will take care of 99 percent of your problems." 🛠️



Photo courtesy of Ardex

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Business Strategies

by Wendy Ardolino

Photo courtesy of Doug Carlton



Estimating and Bidding

If you do quality decorative concrete work, more work is sure to come your way. But what should you be charging? Mastering the art of estimating and bidding a job is important to your company's success. Bid too high and you will lose the job. Bid too low and you won't have enough revenue to cover the costs of your materials and labor.

Three contractors share their experiences with estimating and bidding — what can go wrong, what they have learned and what tips they have for other contractors.

Bad Experiences

To get really good at estimating and bidding, first you have to make some mistakes. Wes Vollmer, owner of Alternative Finishes in San Antonio, Texas, learned early on how important it was to take his time when bidding a job. One time when he was starting out, he was looking over a potential job site and thought he would only need to use one pattern. After his bid was accepted, he

realized the job called for three separate patterns. He didn't make nearly as much money as he thought he would because pouring the concrete took much longer than he had originally planned. After that, Vollmer learned to slow down and develop a checklist — which he now refers to every time he puts together a bid.

Valerie Wells, owner of Artscapes in Albuquerque, N.M., learned the hard way not to discount jobs when work is slow. "A Santa Fe client to whom I extended a 'discount' because work was slow proceeded to pick apart my price and question my every move. When her expectations weren't met, in my absence, she took it upon herself to throw acid in the middle of the project area in an attempt to 'lighten it.' That was the only job I ever walked out on."

Wells doesn't lower her bids anymore.

Luckily, it usually only takes one mistake to develop a game plan to be successful at estimating or bidding. Also, by learning from other decorative concrete contractors, you can avoid a few mishaps

along the way. Here's their advice:

Develop a standard routine

The best way to learn from your mistakes is to develop a standard routine when bidding a job.

"I try to triangulate all of my estimates," says Dave Pettigrew, owner of Diamond D Concrete in Capitola, Calif. "I have a square foot price and then I look at the labor and material cost. When I look at all three of these I make sure all three are within the same range, which helps insure I haven't overlooked anything."

Vollmer's standard estimating and bidding routine for his company is to do all of it himself — he trusts only one other person beside himself to bid a job. "A lot of people have this new way of bidding — I do it the old way."

Instead of using a computer program for estimating jobs, a method that is becoming more popular, Vollmer uses a checklist that he has developed over the years to cover every detail of a job. And it seems to work — he says he gets about

eight out of 10 jobs that he bids. "If you do the same thing every time, if you have a system, you are more likely to get a bid," says Vollmer. He recommends sticking to the checklist and seeing the site if possible before making a bid.

Wells' technique is all encompassing. First, she determines who the competition is and what they would bid. Then she looks at the square footage of the site, scope of work, location of project, travel expenses, labor, materials cost, and taxes for that area.

You should also consider whether you want to bid on out of town jobs. All the contractors in this story agreed that you should, but Vollmer, who does consulting work as well, warns to be careful when taking a job out of town. In addition to labor costs, he says you have to look at other things that can add costs to a job outside your area, such as employees having to leave for family emergencies, injuries or sick leave or needing temporary help to finish the project. "The good contractors have plan 'a,' 'b' and 'c.' When you go out of town, you better have plan 'a,' 'b,' 'c,' 'd,' 'e' and 'f'...because something will go wrong."

Safeguard your company

One of the most important things the contractors have learned is to develop systems that will safeguard their company through estimating and bidding.

Creating his system through trial and error, Vollmer advises contractors never to throw out numbers before doing an estimate. "Everyone says 'give me a ballpark figure.' But I like to give them a hard bid, because when people hear that first number, they get stuck on that number. They will hear the first figure and say, 'You said it was going to be \$2.50 a square foot,' when really I said it starts at \$2.50."

After winning a bid, Pettigrew continues to safeguard his company by writing his contracts with progress payments that have to be made when the work progresses. "Twenty-five percent when work begins, 25 percent when ready to stain, 40 percent when floor is stained and ready for sealer — never proceed until you get this payment in full, receiving this payment makes it harder for the client to say they didn't like the color of

the stain," he says. "Once the customer accepts the color, the sealer is applied and the work is complete. I set them up so I only leave 10 percent of the total contract price on the table after the work is complete."

Get along with builders and developers

Learn to develop a good relationship with the builders and developers you work with.

"It is essential to build trust, especially when we are doing decorative concrete, as it is still a new concept to most builders and developers," says Pettigrew.

For any job you work on, make sure the builders and developers know exactly what your bid entails. "They may expect you to do something which is not in your scope of work, and which you did not price out because you assumed they understood that," says Wells. "Rule number one, 'Never assume anything!' Get it in

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writing, and if it's a large contract, have your attorney go over it to make sure there are no hidden obligations."

Wells says that it is important to build a relationship with the builders and developers, but points out that it is not always possible if the job went to a high-bidding contractor from out of state. "I try to call certain sources within the industry to get the lowdown on general contractors I haven't worked with to see what sort of reputation they may have, such as: Do they pay on time, do they treat their subs well, what sort of site do they run, are they safety-conscious and so on."

Whether or not to lower your bids

A largely debated question is whether or not to lower your bids when work is slow.

Pettigrew said he likes to leave room to negotiate a bid because people enjoy bartering, but he uses that technique whether or not business is booming. "The most important thing is to look at each job and know your bottom line, material,

What you are selling is time — time and expertise. Price it accordingly!

labor and overhead are a set price. The profit is negotiable."


Wells suggests not budging on price at all. "Don't give in to the potential client who says, 'If you give me a good price on this project, I have three other houses I want you to do,'" she says. "Those are what's called 'carrots' — carrots don't pay my bills. For every client for whom I lowered my price, I worked three times as hard to please them. I have learned from that, and I simply don't engage it in anymore. If they aren't willing to pay my price, then they don't want a professional job. What you are selling is time — time and expertise. Price it accordingly!"

Final words of advice

Developing a sure-fire plan to ac-

curately estimate and bid is essential to developing your decorative concrete business. "You can do the best job in the world, but if you grossly misbid, you are going to lose money," says Vollmer. "The main thing is take your time. Bidding is the most monotonous thing, but also the most important."

In addition, you should look at what kind of budget you are beginning with. "Bidding and writing a successful contract is the one of the most important steps," says Pettigrew. "Know your costs and know how much profit you want to make. I know what my competition is doing. I try to keep an ear to the ground. If I am bidding an interior stained floor, I research the cost of tile or wood flooring that my customer could possibly use so that I can try to stay competitive."

Wells agrees on watching the competition. "Artsapes has been in business since 1993. We are constantly looking beyond the curve. There is more competition out there all the time, so you have to set yourself apart from the pack." 

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Technique



Photo courtesy of Rick Smith

Are you seeing spots?

You may have noticed that when you mix dry powder color with water and add it to your microtopping, you end up with little dots of color in your finished product. That's because color grains are the size of sugar, whereas cement is more like powdered sugar. Xylene is commonly used to break down the color granules for more efficient blending.

Contractor Rick Smith takes it a step further by using acetone, and says his method gives him better control of color in finely detailed applications.

Among his crew's jobsite tools is a big commercial blender, the stainless steel type used in bars and restaurants. Color powder is measured in with acetone and a little water, then blended, beaten, whipped and frapped to a fine liquid. "The acetone breaks everything down and melts the color," Smith says. "It meets California VOC regulations and is one of the few mineral spirits that blends in water." There is no exact speed or time, he says. Just rub a pinch between the thumb and forefinger until it feels right. More tips are available at www.richardsmithconcrete.com.

Do you have a great technique or tip that saves you time, hassle or money? If so, please give us a call or e-mail editor@protradepub.com and we might feature it in an upcoming issue of Concrete Decor.



1. Add acetone.



2. Add water.



3. Add dry powdered color, cover and blend.



4. The blended mix is ready to go. 🚚

The Results



Traditional Mixing Method

Notice dots of color in the microtopping.



Blender Mixing Method

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■ ■ ■ Tooling: Trowels



Walk this way

STOW's four walk-behind trowels have several features to improve operator comfort, control and flat finishes.

The four-blade Honda-powered trowels are offered in 36- or 46-inch diameter guard rings with power options ranging from 5.5 to 11 horsepower.

Two trowels with 36-inch ring diameters are available — the lightweight SCT36H55 and SCT36H80 — weighing 166 and 188 pounds respectively. Each trowel has a rotor rpm of 60-125. A 5.5-horsepower gasoline engine powers the SCT36H55 model while an 8-horsepower engine drives the SCT36H80. Both models can finish 7 square feet of concrete per revolution.

The 46-inch ring diameter SCT46H80 and SCT46H110 Stow trowels are designed for larger, more challenging applications while still allowing the operator to maintain complete control with optimum comfort from start to finish. Both models feature rotor rpm of 60-125 and weigh 211 and 224 pounds respectively. An 8-horsepower engine drives the

SCT46H80 while the SCT46H110 uses an 11-horsepower engine. Both trowels have the capability to finish 11.5 square feet of concrete per revolution.

All four Stow trowels come fitted with the standard handle with a star wheel for precise adjustment. An optional quick-adjust handle with a tensioned lever mechanism can be added. To improve user safety, all handles feature fingertip throttle control and a durable centrifugal safety switch that automatically stops the trowel should the operator lose control of the handle.

Additional features on Stow concrete trowels include: cast aluminum gearboxes with cooling fins; large tapered bearings and high oil capacity to reduce heat and ensure cool operating temperatures; one-piece hardened worm gear and bronze composite drive gear for unmatched durability and performance; a spider hub composed of high-quality class-35 cast iron and hardened spring steel wear plates to eliminate wear on the thrust collar and reduce maintenance costs.

☎ (877) 289-7869

🌐 www.stowmfg.com

Smooth operators

Stone Construction Equipment manufactures a full line of professional power trowels available in 24-, 36-, 46-, and 48-inch diameters. The power trowels are dynamically balanced with an extra strong cast iron spider, a rotating stabilizing ring, and infinitely variable blade adjustments. Also standard are one-piece precision-machined gear cases with hardened worm gear and tapered roller bearings.

The power trowels come equipped with a shock-mounted ring guard to reduce vibration and chatter. The patented Dyna-Clutch system, which delivers precision handling and stops blade rotation without shutting off the engine, is standard on all models. All Stone trowels are available with a choice of engines — Honda, Briggs, Robin and Wisconsin — in four-blade models. Stone trowels can be outfitted with either finish or combination blades, and are shipped completely assembled.

The 24-inch Stone Smooth Operator Trowel is an edger trowel that features a



rotating edger ring to finish along walls or other obstructions without scuffing or gouging. This model is powered by a 4-horsepower Honda engine and is available with combination blades only. The 36- and 46-inch models are available with either a standard handle configuration with an infinitely variable, fine-tuned blade adjustment or the Stone ProPitch handle, which allows for quick

adjustment of the blade pitch. Both triple tube construction handle configurations include the patented Dyna-Clutch, heavy-duty T-throttle and an adjustable handle bar.

All Stone Smooth Operator trowels are backed by a same-day parts response, technical service and support.

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A wide variety

Ingersoll-Rand's WT-Series walk-behind trowels have quick-change blades and precision controls. The WT-Series models are built to work in a variety of applications, including driveways, floors, foundations, concrete patch repairs, sidewalks, walkways, and slabs.

Five trowel models are offered: WT2440H, WT3055H, WT3655H, WT3690H, and WT4690H. These trowels are manufactured with a screw pitch control that adjusts the blade angle to produce a flatter end product. A quick-release safety lever stops the trowel instantly, providing the operator total control on every jobsite. Each trowel is constructed on a heavy-duty steel frame to provide a solid platform, resulting in smoother finishes.

Each unit is equipped with a four-cycle Honda engine. These engines run quieter, use straight gas and are more fuel-efficient than two-cycle engines. Each engine is solidly mounted to the trowel frame, to prolong engine life.

The centrifugal clutch on the WT-Series is designed to engage smoothly. The gearbox is configured with high-quality bearings and double-lip seals. These features minimize gearbox maintenance. The trowels are also constructed with three guard rings that provide extra machine stability and safety to the operator.

Several options are available on the walk-behind trowels: a 36-inch float pan, quick-change combo blades, quick-change finish blades, quick-change float blades, and a two-wheel trowel dolly.

www.ingersollrand.com

Direct drive trowel



The Arrow-Master F-Series features a direct-drive, walk-behind power trowel. The direct-drive gear case and lower center of gravity provide consistent, reliable power, with less wobble and side torque, for a smoother, flatter finish. Direct-drive means more power to the blades, so slipping or breaking a belt is not a problem. The F-Series also features an exclusive, fully enclosed spider assembly, which protects the blade-

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arm and pitch-control components and allows for faster and easier cleanup. The trowels have an electric deadman switch. Available in 30-, 36-, and 46-inch diameters, a wide range of engines and horsepower ratings makes the F-trowel ideal for any application — including the use of pans.

☎ (800) 325-4151

🌐 www.arrowmaster.com

Light as a feather

The HoverTrowel is a very light power trowel that is capable of changing its pitch during operation. Created for use on polymer-modified systems, its weight range is 35 to 45 pounds. This weight dramatically reduces swirl and chatter marks.

The HoverTrowel can be modified in many ways for use on epoxy quartz, natural stone, terrazzo, aggregate-filled polymer-modifieds, cementitious urethanes, microtoppings, color hardeners or just plain concrete surfaces. "It's a power trowel that also does things that a man can do," says Drew Fagley, president of HoverTrowel. "It's sort of a hand trowel standing up."

The design of this trowel makes it easy to change from various rpm and torque loading pneumatic motors to a 4-cycle engine. The standard extension handle doubles in length at 6-inch increments. A selection of options is available, from multiple motors along with gas and pneumatic handles, various blades and float options. Blade, float and pan options come in two sizes to be used with the interchangeable guards. This design feature allows the trowel to be set up for 25- or 34-inch trowel paths. Plates and pins can be attached to the guards for additional weight. 🛠️

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Product Profile

by Wendy Ardolino



Stenciled Concrete Stains lead stamper Jason Davies tests his hand at designing a wood pattern on concrete with LesCoat.

LesCoat

LesCoat is a concrete stain block with a surprise ending — it's peelable.

Les Stever, the inventor of LesCoat and owner of Stenciled Concrete Stains in Lansdale, Pa., says he was looking for something that blocked the migration of stains and came up with this product. "It is like a peelable caulk that blocks stain migration on concrete, and is also sandblast-proof," he says. "It is the same as regular caulk; the only difference is you can peel it off when finished."

Since 2002, contractors and homeowners have been sponging LesCoat on over stencils or drawing it straight onto the concrete with various techniques, such as using a squeeze bottle, to create decorative effects. Stever says it is so simple, it is almost foolproof. "If you make a mistake, just peel it away. Try that with scoring."



LesCoat is peeled up after drying.



Lead stencil artist Tamara Ryan uses LesCoat to follow a pattern she chalked from an artist's sketch.



After applying the peelable caulk, a Brickform dye is added.

LesCoat is a proprietary, water-based, gel material. After it is applied and allowed at least 24 hours to dry, it is sandblast-resistant and impervious to acid- or water-based stains as well as water-based or solvent-based sealers. It can be peeled completely away after the stain or dye sets, or in stages to allow for the

use of multiple color applications to give an infinite array of designs and effects.

As far as Stever knows, there is no other product like it. "There is no other way to get this effect. It is a method in itself," he says.

www.stenciledconcretestains.com



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Product News

Folding earplugs



Howard Leight has introduced PerCap, a semi-aural protector. PerCap's soft polyurethane ear pods seal the opening of the ear canal, ideal for workers exposed to low levels of hazardous noise.

Extremely lightweight, PerCap's multiple-position band can be worn under the chin, over the head and behind the neck. Replacement ear pods are available separately.

www.hearingportal.com

Colorants prevent float, flocculation

Ferro's new "Series 28" line of stable colorants for epoxy floor coatings consists of 40 standard, single-pigment dispersions and custom blends in a highly stable, 100 percent-solid, epoxy resin vehicle. The colorants significantly reduce the float and flocculation of additives that cause colors to vary depending on when in the cure cycle they are applied.

These stabilized dispersions are totally reactive with all epoxy resin formulations. Special processing breaks down pigment agglomerates into individual particles that are wet-out in suspension, preventing re-agglomeration and increasing opacity of the original pigment by 50 to 80 percent.

Series 28 epoxy colorants are pourable and pumpable liquids that blend rapidly and uniformly with epoxy base resins. The colorants are available in 5-, 30-, and 55-gallon containers. For more information, request "Product Properties Bulletin #22."

☎ (800) 233-6712, ext #2837

www.ferro.com



Not your average mixers

CS Unitec features two new variable-speed hand-held mixers, the EHR23/1.2R and the EHR20S.

The EHR23/1.2R has features that make it ideal for the most demanding mixing applications. It is equipped with a rugged paddle that can handle high-viscosity materials, including concrete, mortar and epoxy, in batches up to 176 pounds. The mixer has a high-torque, variable-speed 100-275 rpm motor designed to eliminate splashback.

The Model EHR20S is designed for mixing mortar, plaster, epoxy, gypsum, lime, concrete, cement, and other materials of medium-to-high-viscosity up to 110 pounds. It features a 10-amp, high-torque motor with speeds variable up to 580 rpm.

Both mixers have ergonomic handles to ensure comfortable operation and also protect the mixer's motor from dirt if it is put down at the job site. The mixer's heavy-duty galvanized paddle has a helical design that mixes the batch from the bottom up, keeping air from being sucked into the material.

☎ (800) 700-5919

www.csunitec.com



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☎ (800) 769-6565

www.rustoleum.com/virtualsolutions

Water-repellent sealers



OKON introduces a full line of water-repellent sealers for concrete and masonry. The sealers are formulated to protect concrete and masonry from the damaging effects of water absorption without changing the texture or hiding the underlying substrate. They penetrate the surface to prevent deterioration caused by freeze-thaw and efflorescence and the loss of structural strength caused by rusting of rebar, nails and fasteners. The sealers form a water-repelling barrier that prevents exterior moisture from penetrating and causing damage to interior drywall, carpeting and flooring.

The product line includes four water-based micro-emulsion sealers: OKON W-1 Water-Repellent Sealer, OKON Multi-Surface Water-Repellent Sealer, OKON W-2 Water-Repellent Sealer and OKON Plugger Water-Repellent Sealer; and two water-based silane/siloxane penetrating sealers: OKON S-20 Water-Repellent Sealer and OKON S-40 Heavy Duty Water-Repellent Sealer. The new line also features OKON Plus Color, a water-based stain base for vertical concrete and masonry that, when mixed with latex paint, produces a decorative semi-solid, water-repellent stain. All OKON Water-Repellent Sealers are low-VOC, low-odor and clean up with soap and water. They are re-coatable and resist high alkalinity, chloride salts and blushing. And, they're backed by a 5-year warranty for qualifying projects.

☎ (800) 237-0565

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Balancing act



STOW Construction Equipment's new CS Series pavement saw, the CS-7060, is a walk-behind saw with stay-level handles (SLH) that remain level regardless of the saw's operating position. The saw's moving center minimizes operator fatigue and significantly reduces the risk of back injury.

Fueled by a 60-horsepower Deutz diesel engine, the CS-7060 saw has a 36-inch blade capacity and a maximum cutting depth of 15 inches. The unit weighs 1,725 pounds. The CS Series pavement saw features a patent-pending, clutchless bladeshaft-disengaging system where, with a flick of a switch, the bladeshaft rotation can be stopped or started while the engine is running. The saw also has automatic parking brakes, a vibration control mounting system and an electrical depth stop that lifts and controls the cutting depth. A night-light is optional. The saw has only five lubrication points that require service at 125 hours, which matches the engine oil service.

☎ (877) BUY-STOW

🌐 www.stowmfg.com

It's just so EZ

The McTech Group Inc. has introduced several EZ products for concrete flooring. The EZform Board is a concrete construction joint board made by bonding an overlay of resin-impregnated Kraft paper onto the surface of specially engineered OSB board with advanced resin technology. The overlay provides a smoother finish than is possible with BB Plyform or CDX sheathing. The board resists twisting, warping and cupping due to stronger fiber orientation and advanced resin composition.

EZdowel provides optimal use of



steel, shape, and thickness to provide a stronger dowel for concrete construction joint forming. The unique design of EZdowel provides 20 percent more steel closer to the higher stress area in a typical construction joint vs. other plate dowels, and can also help promote easier consolidation under the dowel. It has a specially engineered colored covering (top and bottom) allowing a bond break between the steel load transfer plate dowel and concrete. The dowel's unique edge banding allows lateral movement when the slab contracts.

EZdowel, in conjunction with the EZform board, is designed to help minimize labor costs when forming a large slab-on-grade where a superior concrete joint forming system is a necessity. Due to its simple installation method, the EZdowel eliminates the need to install external dowel holders or repair crushed ones. To install the dowel, simply slide it into the pre-cut dowel slot in the EZ-form board.

Also available from EZform Inc. is the EZcover. This protective blanket covering is a natural-colored cellulose product designed to help protect colored or gray slabs, or other flooring material during the construction process. The product is available in standard 8-foot width rolls, weighing approximately 100 pounds each with each roll covering approximately 400 square feet on application.

The EZcover helps protect against surface contamination, condensation, abrasions and other harmful occurrences that are possible on the job site. To install, the protective blanket is simply

placed (or rolled out) to cover the desired area, and can be moved from one area to another easily. High friction coefficient keeps the blanket in place. EZ-cover is disposable, biodegradable and landfill friendly.

☎ (866) 913-8363

🌐 www.ezform.net

The UltraCure for wet concrete



The McTech Group has also introduced UltraCure NCF, a wet cure fabric for concrete. It is a proprietary natural cellulose fiber (NCF)-based product that incorporates the super absorption technology used in hygienic applications to wick and hold moisture for long periods of time on concrete surfaces. It is disposable, lightweight, and requires only 2 to 3 inches of material overlap. It was scientifically developed to hold moisture longer (up to 7 days) and absorbs more than 30 gallons of curing water per roll. It was designed for use on SOG, RCC, and pervious concrete applications. The clear backing allows for easy determination of the moisture content present in the blanket through passive observation.

With typical application and proper installation, the superior absorbency

means there's no need to re-wet the slab. It lays flatter longer on the surface than most other methods, and helps prevent foreign material such as dirt and debris from accessing the surface. A cleaner concrete surface will allow easier installation of surface hardeners.

Each 94-inch wide roll is designed to blanket approximately 1,600 square feet of surface.

☎ (866) 913-8363

🌐 www.ultracure.net

Durable Dura line

Proline Concrete Tools announces the addition of its new Dura line.

Proline's Dura Dust-on Color Hardener is a high-quality color hardener. The Dura Dust-on Antique Release agent comes in a powder form and is the complementary product to the Color Hardener. Proline's Dura Liquid Release is a non-staining sprayable release agent designed to make your stamps release clean. Proline's Dura Sealer HG is a high-gloss VOC compliant solvent-based sealer. It's fast-drying characteristic



makes it ideal for use in cooler climates. Finally, the Dura Acid Stain is a high-performance, fast-reacting acid stain available in eight colors. Proline's Dura Acid stain may be diluted to match hundreds of other colors and most colors can be achieved in a matter of minutes.

☎ (800) 795-4750

🌐 www.prolinestamps.com

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The Ryobi Ry80030 Premium Pressure Washer allows users to cut down job time with the power of 3,000 pounds per square inch in a single blast and a maximum water flow of 2.7 gallons per minute.

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Predator 3200

Predator 2400

Photographs courtesy of Concrete Restoration, Inc. (Seattle, WA)

commercial grade Subaru engine. It also includes an easy start system and a task match system, which lets the user match different nozzles to specific jobs for more or less pressure. The Twist N' Store handle turns out 180-degrees for cart-style transport and turns back for space saving storage when not in use. It also features an auto-lock quick disconnect wand coupler, an on-board bucket, dry-storage compartment and a wand caddy.

The Ryobi Pressure Washer is available exclusively at The Home Depot, and is UL certified.

www.ryobitools.com

360-degree work light



The Wobble Light Jr. is a smaller, portable version of the Wobble Light, a 360-degree, self-righting work light produced by Petersen Brands.

The junior version is 27 inches high, has a 13-inch base and weighs 15 pounds, making it a good option for powerful illumination in smaller spaces.

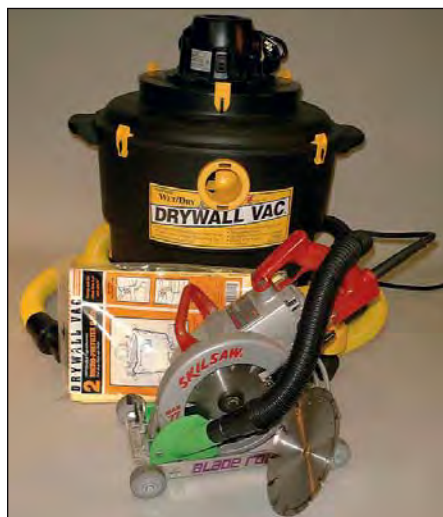
The Wobble Light Jr. has a rounded, counter-weighted base that is self-righting and keeps the unit upright, and the floating shock system protects the bulb from jarring and strikes. The polycarbonate dome delivers a 360-degree light source, and three different models provide lighting output from 10 to 30 feet. The internal ventilation system ensures that the unit stays cool, and the protective dome prevents bulbs from ever shattering. The separate power outlet built into the base lets users plug in a power tool or daisy chain several units together to light a larger area.

[\(847\) 577-3720](tel:(847)577-3720)

www.petersenbrands.com

Put a Muzzle on it

Shave Away Europe now offers Complete Dustless Systems for many of the everyday jobs performed by the decorative installer. Systems are available



for grinding with both 4 1/2-inch and 7-inch diamond wheels as well as scoring, cutting and creating faux grout lines.

Each system contains everything the installer needs to cut or grind dust-free. One of the most popular systems is for cutting 1/4-inch faux grout lines. Each system includes a vacuum especially designed to pick up concrete dust, 10 replacement filters, a 7-inch worm drive Model 77 Skil saw, the Saw Muzzle, a Blade Roller and the correct blade for the job. All the components are compatible with each other and when used together, can collect up to 95 percent of the dust.

Other systems can be seen on the Dust Muzzle Web site.

[\(877\) 223-2154](tel:(877)223-2154)

www.dustmuzzle.com

Waterproofer from Seal-Krete



Seal-Krete's Commercial Grade Waterproofer is a high-solid, siliconized, acrylic blend designed to protect and strengthen bare, porous concrete and masonry, such as split-face or fluted concrete block. The waterproofer is 25 percent solids, and provides a tough, breathable film that will not yellow. In

addition, it meets ASTM SS-W-110-C for Water Repellency on Masonry and ASTM 5590-00 Mildew Resistance.

"Our Commercial Grade Waterproofer eliminates water intrusion, staining, and freeze/thaw damage to concrete. I formulated this product with a blend of silicone and acrylic polymers to yield a very hydrophobic film that beads water. Your building will literally look dry after a hard rain," says Tim Franklin, vice president of research and development for Seal-Krete. "Our emulsion has a very small particle size which yields exceptional penetration depth, and with low VOCs and no hazardous materials, it's really easy on the environment. Because it's siliconized, it's exceptionally strong. It doesn't just seal the surface, it hardens the surface by increasing the compressive strength of bare masonry. Commercial grade waterproofer is also great as a paint additive to improve water resistance and spread rate. We'll put the durability of Seal-Krete Commercial Grade Waterproofer head to head against anything on the market today."

www.seal-krete.com

New products from Blastrac


Blastrac introduces three new products. The Blastrac 1-8DPS30 is a self-propelled, 8-inch shot blasting system, used to prepare concrete surfaces prior to the application of paint, coatings or overlays. For jobs up to 8,000 square feet, the shot-blast system strips, cleans and profiles in one step. The unit's drive motor for self-propelled forward-and-reverse operation improves productivity



and promotes a consistent surface profile. It can prepare up to 430 square feet per hour and can be used in tight spaces including areas around equipment, obstructions or on balconies. The system has a 220V single-phase power option.

Blastrac also introduces a new vacuum, the Blastrac 3-28DC Dust Collector. It features three powerful motors to handle surface preparation jobs and contain concrete dust generated by scarifiers, concrete grinders, small shot blasters and concrete saws used for crack chasing or joint cleanout. The vacuum features a rugged, resin-reinforced, pressure-molded plastic chassis and body that won't rust or dent. The three motors and filter assembly are protected from abusive job site conditions for longer life. Due to a specially designed filter, concrete dust can easily be dislodged from the filter by way of a manual shaker incorporated into the design. Dust pan capacity is 50 pounds and dust disposal is easy — just step on the dust bin release lever. A silencer reduces motor noise to 70 dBA.

Third is the new Blastrac BS-50 stripper. It removes coatings, roofing materials, and a wide range of flooring materials. The lightweight machine features a high-stress, 7/8-inch shaft. The stripper removes coatings, adhesives and mastics, roofing materials, ceramic tile, wood, VCT, carpet and sheet vinyl. The BS-50 is easy to use. The handle detaches for transport, allowing the machine to fit in smaller vehicles. The stripper is lightweight and its rear wheels are adjustable. The BS-50 is suitable for small- to medium-sized jobs. Whisper-quiet operation allows it to be used on virtually any job site, including sensitive environments. 

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Association News

American Concrete Institute

Rocky Mountain high

ACI's fall convention will take place in Denver from November 5-9.

The convention, with the theme "COLORado Concrete," will highlight the versatility and value of decorative and architectural concrete as well as the importance of concrete as a green and sustainable construction material. More than 200 meetings are planned, 32 technical sessions are being offered, and more than 30 exhibitors and 1,400 attendees are expected to fill the exhibit hall.

The convention will include a reception honoring James Pierce, an ACI Fellow and past president; a symposium highlighting applications of fiber-reinforced concrete; a session on green concrete in construction; and a mixer exploring the tastes, textures, and seasons of Colorado. Additionally, ACI's nationally recognized student competition will challenge teams of students to construct fiber-reinforced concrete bowling balls that achieve optimal performance under specified failure. The ACI Rocky Mountain Chapter hosts the convention.

☎ (248) 848-3700

🌐 www.concrete.org

New pubs available

The American Concrete Institute announces the availability of two new publications of interest to decorative concrete contractors:

234R-06: Guide for the Use of Silica Fume in Concrete — This report describes the physical and chemical properties of silica fume; how silica fume interacts with portland cement; the effects of silica fume on the properties of fresh and hardened concrete; recent typical applications of silica-fume concrete; how silica-fume concrete is proportioned, specified, and handled in the field; and areas where additional research

is needed.

25.13R-06: Concrete Overlays for Pavement Rehabilitation — This report provides information on the use of concrete overlays for rehabilitation of both concrete and asphalt pavements. Selection, design, and construction of both bonded and unbonded overlays are discussed. The overlay categories reviewed include: bonded concrete overlays, unbonded concrete overlays, whitetopping overlays, and concrete overlays bonded to asphalt (ultra-thin and thin whitetopping). Information is also provided on selecting overlay alternatives. Significant portions of this document are based on a synthesis report prepared for the Federal Highway Administration by Applied Pavement Technology.

☎ (248) 848-3800

🌐 www.concrete.org

Concrete Countertop Society

New association for countertop pros

The Concrete Countertop Institute announces the formation of the new Concrete Countertop Society, a group of concrete countertop professionals who want to be successful at concrete countertops and help the industry grow. The Concrete Countertop Society's mission is to help members keep up with the latest technologies and resources for concrete countertops and set the standard for quality and professionalism in the industry.

To help members learn about concrete countertop technologies, membership in the society includes unlimited access to an information-intensive Web site called Concrete Connections. The Web site provides information about all aspects of precast and cast-in-place concrete countertop fabrication.

The site also features a members-only discussion forum closely moderated by Jeffrey Girard, P.E., president of The Concrete Countertop Institute and pioneer of engineered concrete countertops. The forum is members-only and moderated to avoid misinformation.

🌐 www.concretetopcountertops.org

Concrete Countertop Industry Conference

The Concrete Countertop Institute has also announced the first annual Concrete Countertop Industry Conference, to be held November 6-7 in Raleigh, N.C.

The conference is geared towards contractors who are interested in learning about all of the resources currently available for making concrete countertops. Exhibitors will include manufacturers of materials and tools, including bagged concrete countertop mixes, admixtures, pigments, tools such as grinders, equipment such as mixers, and more.

Admission to the conference includes nine informational seminars by industry experts, on key topics ranging from how to get started in concrete countertops to troubleshooting to a panel discussion of precast versus cast-in-place. Steve Rosenblatt, founder and president of Sonoma Cast Stone and inventor of NuCrete stainless concrete countertops, will host a semi-

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CSDA convenes in Maui

The Concrete Sawing & Drilling Association (CSDA) will hold its 35th annual convention at The Westin Maui Resort & Spa on Ka'anapali Beach in Maui, Hawaii from February 22-27.

The two previous conventions in Hawaii have attracted record attendance, as this location seems to be the preferred spot for CSDA members.

The convention will feature in-depth presentations, roundtables and workshops that will address many topics relevant to operating small businesses as well as safety concerns and technical problems for concrete sawing and drilling professionals from around the globe. Attendees will be provided with networking opportunities at the sessions as well as at social events such as the President's Reception, the CSDA Golf Tournament and the final evening gala.

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RMC Research Foundation

New emissions standards for concrete batching

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted new Emissions Factor, AP-42, data for "concrete batching," located in Chapter 11.12. The changes are a direct result of new data gathered through an RMC Research Foundation study that demonstrated that air emissions from ready mixed concrete manufacturing were significantly lower than the data previously used by the EPA.

Professional staff at the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) used this new data to successfully advocate for these changes; the EPA's data had not been updated since 1995.

The mission of the RMC Research Foundation is to support research and educational programs that will advance and improve the concrete industry. The revised standard for "concrete batching," as well as other information about the AP-42 study, is available for download from the RMC Research Foundation's Web site.

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