## **Staining Exteriors**

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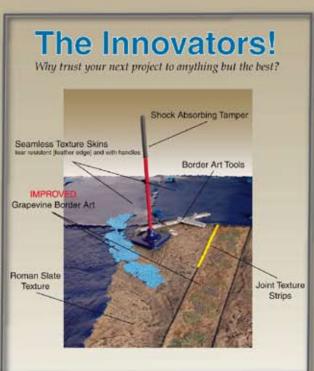
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| Mon        | 12/10 | Brentwood | 7:08 AM 12:41 PM    | 2:05 PM<br>3:22 PM  | Prep   | 4:57<br>2:41 | 7:38 hours |
| Tue        | 12/11 | Brantwood | 7 2 AM              | 1207 PM<br>3.23 PM  | Formwork<br>Eartmoork                                      | 4:E          | 7:35 hours |
| Wed        | 12/12 | Brentwood | 7:12 AM<br>12:46 PM | 12 02 PM<br>3 40 PM | Formwork<br>Formwork                                       | 4:50<br>3:03 | 7:53 hours |
| Thu        | 12/13 | Crestview | 7:17 AM<br>12:50 PM | 12:19 PM<br>3:46 PM | Prep<br>Prep   | 5:02<br>2:56 | 7:58 hours |
| Fri        | 12/14 | Crestview | 7:13 AM<br>12:44 PM | 12:07 PM<br>3:39 PM | Formwork<br>Formwork                                       | 4:54<br>2:55 | 7:49 hours |
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### Publisher's Letter



#### Dear Readers,

Have you ever considered calling us about a recent project you completed, thinking it would look sweet in the pages of Concrete Decor? But you didn't! Maybe you don't take the time to grab photographs of your jobs before, during or afterward. Or maybe you beam with pride over each project you complete, but you are simply too modest to share, except with those at the dinner table

At Concrete Decor, we too are a bit on the modest side. We don't look up from our desk too often to relish our accomplishments. Maybe that's a good thing!

What we generally are staring at on our desks is a computer monitor and the makings of a new edition of the magazine. Too often, however, we're looking at photos that don't necessarily tell the whole story, or they don't expose important details that visually communicate the challenges or benefits of doing things correctly.

This is where your attention to detail is not only important to the project you're doing, but to us as well. Allowing Concrete Decor, in essence, to be there with you on the job site and see your challenges and accomplishments as you do is a tremendous help to us in making each issue a success. Believe it or not, you have this ability. Despite your modesty, fear of competition, or feeling that there's not enough time in the day to stop and take a couple of photos, your perspective is our best tool for communicating quality in each new issue we produce. That's a topic that can never be stressed enough.

Decorative concrete is an exciting and evolving new facet of the concrete industry. For all intents and purposes, it's an integral part of the industry's future. The perspective that you provide us, as well as our readers, is one that influences everyone who works with concrete. Concrete Decor's emphasis on concrete's appearance does more than cause a number of "oohs" and "ahs." It changes people's expectations about concrete.

As you start to turn the pages of this new issue you'll note that we've added some references to ConcreteDecor.net online archives. The Concrete Decor archives are a valuable place to gain added perspective on numerous decorative concrete subjects. We'd like to add your valuable perspective to an upcoming issue of Concrete Decor as well as to these valuable online archives.

Call us today. We'd like to hear from you.

ent Mikkelsen, Publisher

#### Get access to the *Concrete Decor* archives

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This password changes monthly. To continue receiving both the print magazine and access to our archives, start your subscription today. Concrete Decor is the industry's foremost magazine on decorative concrete.

Concrete Decor now features the industry's ultimate online 'search' tool for finding just about anything related to decorative concrete. Start by logging on to www.concretedecor.net. At the top of the page simply enter a keyword such as "stencil," "integral color," "admixture" or "rock features." In less than a second we'll search more than five years of articles and information from the pages of Concrete Decor and provide you with an extensive list of results.



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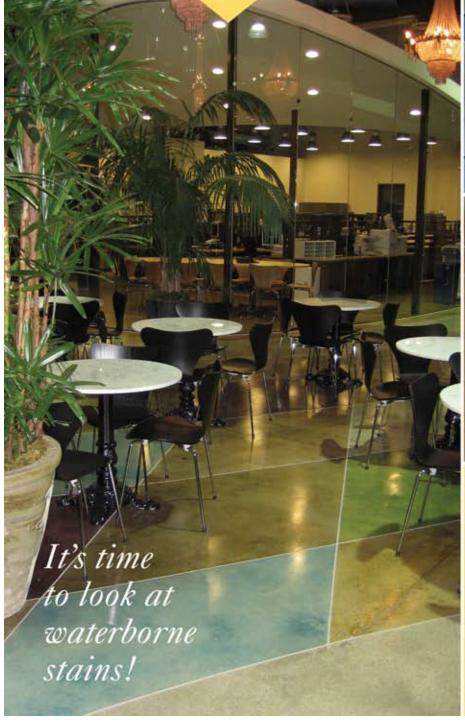
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Whether in the ground or in the air, moisture conditions vary by region. But the result is the same: another worry for contractors. *by Rob Spiegel* 

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A galaxy in a bar, a rainbow in a vanity: The sky's the limit when fiber-optic technology is embedded in concrete countertops. *by Chris Camara* 

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Decorative shotcrete is catching on, and as with any decorative concrete technique, there's a learning curve. Here, we cover mix design, prep work and more.

by Jack Innis

On the Cover: J&M Lifestyles LLC designed this bar top for an outdoor pool area in Old Westbury, N.Y. Embedded fiber-optic strands create a translucent effect in the concrete. For more, see page 32.

Photo courtesy of J&M Lifestyles.



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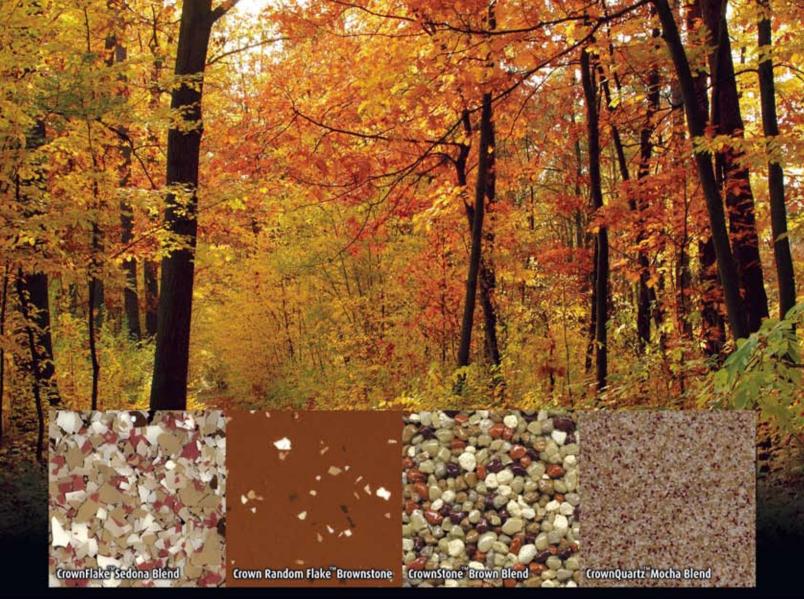
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# Industry News

#### Colorado Hardscapes grows

Colorado Hardscapes Inc. has acquired di Giacomo Inc., the California-based company formerly owned by rockscape creator Philip di Giacomo.

di Giacomo sought out thirdgeneration, family-owned Colorado Hardscapes for the acquisition. Colorado Hardscapes' 60-year history began with gray concrete and evolved into serving decorative niches that include architectural-grade concrete, artificial rock and water features.

Philip di Giacomo remains the driving and creative force for all of Colorado Hardscapes' rock work and will act as a mentor and director for Colorado Hardscapes' staff, overseeing projects from model to final inspection. The Rock & Water Feature Division of Colorado Hardscapes will add a product line with the di Giacomo brand name.

**(**) (303) 750-8200

www.coloradohardscapes.com



Philip di Giacomo and Vince Van Heukelem of Colorado Hardscapes, in front of the Pepsi Center in Denver. Colorado Hardscapes recently acquired di Giacomo Inc.



#### **New ASTM standard covers** freezing and thawing test

A new ASTM standard — C 1646/C 1646M, Practice for Making and Curing Test Specimens for Evaluating Frost Resistance of Coarse Aggregate in Air-Entrained Concrete by Rapid Freezing and Thawing — spells out requirements for specimen preparation for C 666 testing. The standard falls under the jurisdiction of Subcommittee C09.67 on Resistance to the Environment, part of ASTM International Committee C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates.

The ASTM committee first approved the C 666/C 666M Test Method for Resistance of Concrete to Rapid Freezing and Thawing in 1971. However, results of testing done in accordance with C 666 could often vary from laboratory to laboratory because there were no standardized requirements for specimen preparation. C 1646 will promote consistency in specimen preparation.

All interested parties are invited to participate in standards development.

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👣 www.astm.org

#### **Test-method symposium** scheduled

ASTM International will hold a Symposium on Test Methods for Chemical and Mineralogical Analysis of Hydraulic Cements and Other Concrete-Making Materials on Dec. 4, 2007, in Tampa, Fla.

Sponsored by ASTM International Committees C01 on Cement and C09 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates, the symposium will be held in conjunction with the Dec. 3–7 standards development meetings of the committees. This symposium will consist of about 10 presented technical papers and will serve to inform the cement and concrete community of advances in methods for the mineralogical and chemical analysis of hydraulic cements and associated concrete-making materials.

www.astm.org

#### **ACO Polymer plant opens**

ACO Polymer Products Inc. has opened its most modern plant, a 40,000-square-foot manufacturing, warehouse and office complex in Casa Grande, Ariz., that serves as its regional base in the western United States.

The new facility in Casa Grande is the third manufacturing establishment for ACO in the U.S., joining locations in Chardon, Ohio, and Riverdale, Iowa. Primarily, the Casa Grande operation will manufacture ACO's polymer concrete products, servicing the western half of the United States and Mexico. The facility provides production, shipping, customer service and business development services, as well as housing the company's entire marketing division. It is the most advanced of all ACO production facilities worldwide. The plant will have the capacity to employ up to 50 people, producing an average of 1 million pounds of material each month on a 20-acre site.

The ACO Group is headquartered in Rendsburg, Germany.

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#### Theater and homes win awards for Reward

Two projects built using Reward Wall Systems won top awards at the ICFA (Insulating Concrete Form Association) 2007 annual conference.

The Megaplex 20 Theater at the District in South Jordan, Utah, received the ICFA Excellence Award for Large

Commercial Project and was selected from all commercial projects as the Grand Commercial Project for 2007. The E2 City Homes four-plex in Minneapolis was the recipient of the ICFA Award for Sustainability.

The largest ICF building in the United States, the Megaplex 20 Theater is a 206,000-square-foot structure owned by Larry H. Miller Theater Inc.



It was designed by FFKR Architects and built by Sahara Construction and IMS Masonry. The theater used a record number of ICFs for 350,000 square feet of walls. The tall wall surfaces — hundreds of feet long and more than 50 feet tall in places — were built completely straight. Reward Wall Systems helped enable the project to be completed within a 13-month time frame.

E2 City Homes was completed in the spring of 2007. The project

was recognized by ICFA for its LEED certification and energy-efficient features.

www.rewardwalls.com

#### Crown Polymer co-founder joins American team

Dr. Vinicio Tresin, one of the cofounders of Crown Polymers LLC, recently relocated from Padova, Italy, to join the Crown management team in Huntley, Ill.

Dr. Tresin is a 1983 graduate of the



Dr. Vinicio Tresin

University of Padova, where he earned a doctorate degree in Civil Engineering. He has extensive experience in the development of specialized polymer floor overlays, concrete protection and restoration systems. He is also a licensed civil engineer, a member of Italy's prestigious Engineers Professional Association, a member of the European TRIZ Association.

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#### California distributor named for Architectural Enhancements

Architectural Enhancements
Inc. has a new stocking distributor in
California: Mike and Shelly Wenemeyer
in Bakersfield.

The Wenemeyers operate a showroom and warehouse and plan to offer training as well as technical advice. Large orders can be drop-shipped from the manufacturer to save on shipping and handling charges.

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## Online equipment sales company hires associate

ConcreteIron.com has welcomed Bryan Stamper as a new sales associate, specializing in concrete pumps and screeds. Stamper's more than 20 years of experience in the concrete industry is a good fit for the Web site, whose mission is to connect buyers and sellers worldwide.

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> **Dan Norma** Infinity Concrete Staining and Engraving Sun Lakes, AZ

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# Carlton's Corner



A driveway acid-stained using two stain colors. Notice how splotchy spots show through, even after two stain coats.

## **Concrete Staining: Taking It Outdoors**

#### How the most common options respond when used on exterior surfaces

by Doug Carlton

t really doesn't surprise me. The move to take decorative concrete outdoors is a natural progression of people spending more time, well, outdoors. Our "hydration society" is into exercise, meditation, prayer and just outright healthy outdoor living that draws us to private outside sanctuaries.

Of all the different types of decorative concrete, exterior staining is the most affordable. It also requires the least manpower. But this is an article on how your business can be sure to pick the right exterior staining product to create the outdoor paradise your clients value the most. As you may have noticed, there are many new options available, and most deserve their place in this dynamic market.

There has certainly been some confusion, with myself included, on what product works best in which application. This is a great time to simplify the staining/coloring process,

not only for you but for your clients as well. Think about this — if the staining process is confusing for us, the installers, can you imagine what it is like for the end user? The only thing the end user knows is that she wants a nicelooking project colored to her taste. This is best achieved when left in the hands of professionals. That is you, by the way.

Let's take a look at what's available for exterior staining and the pros and cons of each. After all is said, you will need to determine what is best for you and your business.

#### **Acid Staining**

Few will argue the fact that it all started with acid stains. Acid stains are a reactive coloring process that penetrates into the porous concrete surface. This is probably the most permanent of all coloring options but is usually limited to eight colors. Now, these colors can be

blended, diluted, streaked and tweaked to create many coloring options. The acid stains will chemically react differently to each piece of concrete by evidence of final color. In other words. you can't guarantee the exact color. If you are the type that loves a challenge, then acid staining is for you.

#### Pros:

- · Very durable connection with, and penetration into, the concrete canvas.
- Inexpensive to purchase.
- · Same stain can be used indoors and
- Gives a translucent appearance to the concrete surface, unlike painted or topical stains.
- Extremely timeless-looking and old-world

#### Cons:

 Requires ongoing maintenance through resealing.

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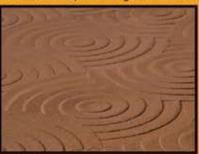
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• Limited colors, with some turning black from exposure to moisture.

- Unpredictable when it comes to exact color.
- Must be neutralized before sealing.
- Stain is a toxic material that requires care when handling.
- · Looks different in exterior and interior projects.
- Wet edge must be kept during installation, and some thicker stains may show brush marks.

#### Water-Based **Acrylic Stain**

These stains are nonreactive and will only penetrate into the surface when pores of the concrete are open. Strong prep work cleaning the concrete is a must. This stain type will offer many more colors to choose from and can be used inside or out. Water-based stains are growing in popularity but are not as durable in exterior applications as old-fashioned acid stain. I guess you can say this is the new and improved version of old-fashioned acid stain. Pick a good sealer to lock in stain and be sure to remind your clients of the importance of resealing.

#### Pros:

- · Very user-friendly. Nontoxic.
- · Many more color options than acid
- Will not blacken like acid stain.
- Seems to be easier to build up or add color to color than with some other stain forms.
- Practically endless color effects.
- · Less residue to clean up between staining and sealing.

#### Cons:

- Not as durable in exterior applications as acid stain.
- Will show the same variegated or translucent coloring as acid stain, although not as deep.
- Tends to be more expensive.
- Can look a little painted.
- Sealer maintenance is a must.

#### Tinted Sealer

I'm throwing tinted sealer in

under a stain article, but it is actually not a stain system at all. The reason to mention it as an option is because it deserves mentioning and has a solid place in this market. Both water-based and solvent-based sealers can be tinted but the solvent-based are best. The tint additive usually comes concentrated, is easily mixed with sealer and will look best when sprayed on. Many color options can be achieved, from translucent to solid. This is a nonreactive coloring system.

Tinted sealer is a great color system to use on jobs that have natural gray flatwork that stands out when new decorative concrete is installed close by. Tinting the sealer to a neutral color helps blend the hardscapes together. This coloring process is fairly simple because you are combining the coloring and sealing into one step. This is the least expensive form of exterior coloring short of sidewalk chalk

#### Pros:

- · Very inexpensive to apply.
- Many colors to choose from, and the stain can be built up to a solid color.
- Easy to apply.
- Helps to create a reseal market.

#### Cons:

- Completely topical, with no reaction to concrete.
- Requires sealer maintenance for the life of the project.
- Some areas may want to bubble between coats when in direct sunlight.
- Surface needs to be very clean and dry.
- Do not overapply!

#### **Polymer-Modified** Water-Based Stain

I guess you can say this is the new guy on the block. My company is doing real-time testing on this product as I write this article, but right now I definitely believe this type of stain will be around for a while. This is a nonhazardous penetrating-type stain available in many colors. It can be applied solid or translucent and doesn't always need a sealer to protect it. It contains no acid, no acrylic and no VOCs. I can't wait to see the future on

1-800-777-7063



this one. I'm not breaking down the pros and cons on this type simply because it is so new to me.

#### What they have in common

Here is what all of the above have in common: Regardless of your stain or coloring choice, none will cover cracks or chips. Some existing stains may still be visible, although in a different final color. Prestained concrete must be unsealed, and I recommend testing the surface with a small amount of water to make sure the concrete is porous. Be sure to pressure-wash the surface so that pores are open and stain-ready. It is usually best to let the surface dry overnight before staining. The sealer used to lock in the color or stain will not like water, so be sure to control sprinklers and potted plants.

Concrete should also have been left to cure for a minimum of 30 days before staining.

A final note about staining exterior work: I rarely used acid stains, solely because of their unpredictability. I also



Color sealed with two coats. This method combines the color and sealer, eliminating a step or two. Notice how rain water beads up on the surface.

sense most states will institute special disposal requirements in the near future

In any case, there is no doubt the exterior stain and color market is growing and will continue to grow for some time. Good luck and let me know how it goes.

Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at carltondoug@sbcglobal.net.



# Business Strategies



Matthew Newman shows how to fabricate concrete sinks in a precast form during a Vision Concrete Institute workshop.

## **Expanding Your Contracting Business: When and How?**

by Matthew Newman

ecorative contracting companies, no matter the size or specialty, have to deal with many of the same challenges. It's important to address some of these before trying to expand your business, so you're sure the foundation you're about to build on is

First of all, before you consider expanding, make sure you're charging enough for your services. Although the best way to succeed as a contractor is to master the craft, your front-end work with your client should reflect the same precision you bring to the job site. Take the time to job-cost accurately. Invest in estimating software. Don't be afraid to shop your competitors. (And if you

think they haven't shopped you, think again.) It may take some effort, but knowing exactly what any given project should cost will ensure that you end up in the black on every job.

Secondly, know the materials you're using. There are more decorative concrete products arriving on the market every day, and choosing from among them can be overwhelming. That said, finding the products that work best for you just takes a little bit of research. Test the products yourself — don't just rely on the recommendations of others.

Also, before expanding, you should be confident not just about the quality of your workmanship, but also the quality of your materials. Ask manufacturers to direct you to projects that have been

completed locally. Projects that have aged a minimum of four or five years will show you how the materials have held up.

Finally, know your own weak spots. Just as it is important to know your strengths, it's equally important to know the areas where your company needs improvement. This last point is key when it comes to deciding when to grow your business.

#### Knowing when the time is right

There are two places you need to look to determine whether the time is right for expansion. The first is the situation within your company. Are you completing your jobs on time? How about on budget? Do you rarely make return or repair trips to past projects? If you can answer yes to all these questions, then the chances are good that you're ready to move forward.

But conditions within your company are only half the equation — you might be ready to expand, but market demand might not be there to support you. A favorable business climate is just as crucial to your timing as the internal state of your company.

It's also important to remember that you don't have to make this assessment alone. Call someone in from outside your company who can help you determine if the time is right.

#### What comes next

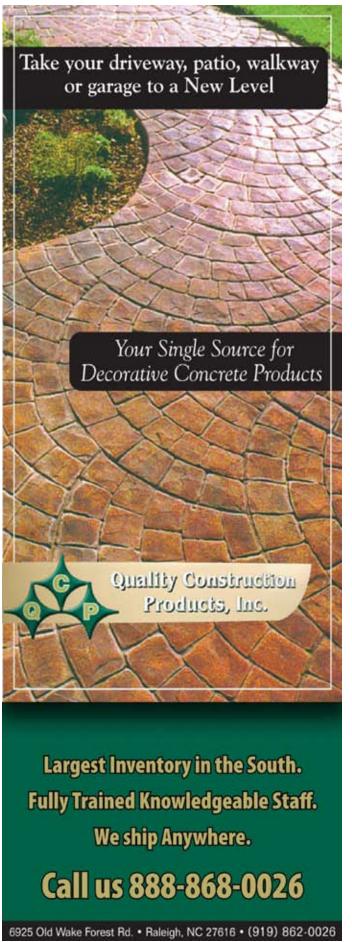
Once you're on the springboard, the first step is a lot like the one before it — seek outside advice. Hire a consultant, someone who's been where you want to go, and work with them to develop a game plan. You will also need to prepare yourself for what may be difficult statements and ideas from the consultant. Remember, they are looking in from the outside and can give sometimes brutally honest perspectives that may not be easy for you to swallow.

Before any kind of plan can be implemented, however, you have to make business growth your top priority. Often that means pulling yourself off the job-site crew and devoting yourself full time to the expansion of your company. As long as you're performing more than 40 percent of the labor in your company, growth will be hindered because of the lack of time focused on the business plan.

Although every contractor's business plan will be different — depending, of course, on your goals, strengths, specialties and so on — some aspects of business expansion are the same for everyone.

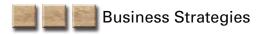
The most common of these is the hiring process. More manpower is obviously the goal here, but you need more than just someone capable of doing the job. You need employees who will help you take your company in the direction you want to go. To that end, it's better to hire someone with the right personality, even if they're short on experience. You can train anyone to do a task; you can't train attitude.

To put your expanded crews to work, you'll also need to have an expanded clientele. There are a number of ways to accomplish this, some more involved than others, but the basic guideline is to expand your contacts within the community. Join and get involved in local trade organizations. Get to know area designers and architects, and bring samples









of your work that can be left with them at their place of business. The more contacts you have in the community, the more opportunities you'll get for projects.

In addition to local exposure, the Internet is becoming more and more crucial to the success of any business. Make sure your Web site is working for you. There are a lot of resources out there for improving not only the look and functionality of your Web site, but also how easy it is for search engines to find. Take advantage of them.

Although expanding your work force and your clientele are important steps, your company's success is still contingent on the quality of service you provide for your customers. Training is an excellent chance to learn more efficient ways of completing your projects or to practice other techniques that will open new avenues of service for your business.

Don't go overboard, though. As you expand your business it's best to focus on just a few techniques, so as to avoid being labeled "jack of all trades, master of none." Think of the market you want to target and train in services that complement one another within that market. For example, a residential contractor might train in acid-stained floors and concrete countertops, both services that might be involved in a single renovation project. One project can lead to another.

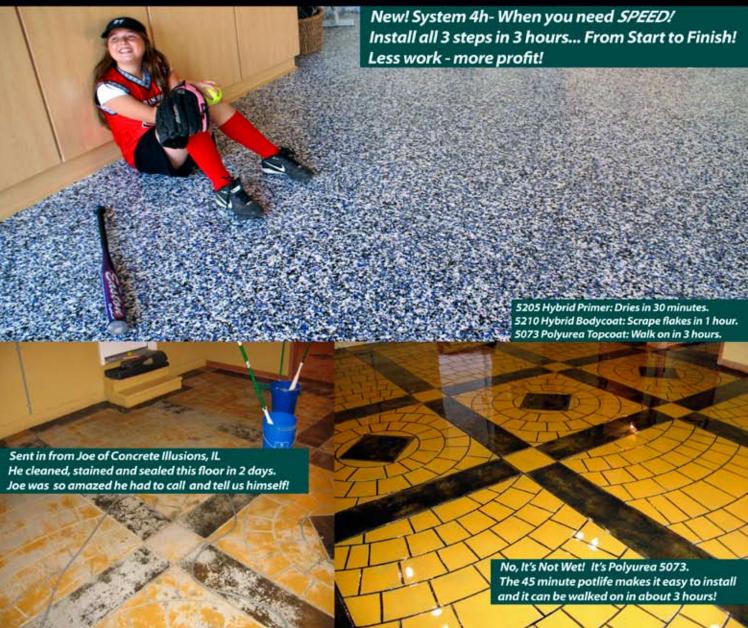
Expanding your decorative concrete business is no simple task, but the right research, planning and organization can help you take your company to the next level.

Matthew Newman is director of Vision Concrete Institute and a successful decorative concrete contractor.



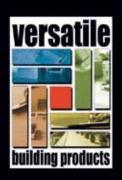
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# Project Profile



Photos courtesy of Crenz



by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

Poche-Bobois, a high-end furniture retailer headquartered in Paris, France, first set up shop in Montreal about seven years ago in a provincial building that also houses Lotto Quebec. Previously, the space — floored with a marmoleum-type product — had been occupied by four linked stores. The sprawling area was simply carpeted over for its new tenant.

Over the years, wear and tear got the best of the carpet, and last spring the folks at Roche-Bobois decided it was time for a new look. They contacted Les Kowalski, president of Crenz, a Canadian-based company that specializes in creating polished concrete floors for national retail chain stores, public spaces and universities. Crenz also had recently done work on a Roche-Bobois store in Calgary.

Unlike most concrete companies, Crenz doesn't typically deal with general contractors and other specifiers to land its jobs, notes Kowalski. Instead, time and time again, "We get specified by the corporate client."

Kowalski, who holds a degree in economics from the University of Calgary, prides himself as a sophisticated contractor who is as much at ease in an Armani suit as he is





A worker grinds the store floor with low-grit metal diamonds to remove old self-leveling concrete. Water was used to soften the wood flooring prior to its removal by the demolition crew.

jeans and T-shirt. "We focus on being on the cutting edge by offering a dynamic system that combines installation and best-management practices, as well as best-in-class technologies at any given point," he says.

Before Crenz could reclaim the existing floor, the company had to remove the old carpet, marmoleum and an incredible amount of adhesives to expose a massive area of self-leveling concrete and about 300 square feet of wood flooring. The crew had to use a jackhammer to remove the thick areas of self-leveling and then use planetary equipment to grind it down. They had to score the wooden floor with a saw, pour water on it to soften up the wood, then remove that, too.

"Removal was quite an extensive process," Kowalski says. "And then there were very large holes that had to be filled in. It got to a point where we just leveled everything. We removed in the neighborhood of 10,000 pounds of concrete dust and garbage."

In restoration projects such as this one, he continues, the biggest obstacle is that the condition of the slab is unknown before you start. On this job, the unknown turned out to be an excessive amount of self-leveling concrete and polymers that had to be removed.

And this was no easy task. To complicate things, vertical steel rods were embedded in the surface. "If you captured one of those rods, it could rip



The finished showroom floor from the mezzanine level, before reoccupancy.

the heads off your [planetary] machine," Kowalski says. So the crew had to identify where they were in advance.

Consequently, scores of self-leveling

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The final floor finish at the Roche-Bobois store in Montreal. It features a semigloss sheen on a restored and colored concrete slab.

concrete had to be removed with a demolition hammer, which meant a lot of labor and headaches before the big machines were even rolled out.

#### In with the new

Once the slab was ground, the crew cleaned the surface and colored it with a charcoal gray color. Next they applied Crenz Protect, a water-based chemical hardener that is the foundation of all Crenz polished concrete floors. It penetrates the pores of the concrete and its active silicates react with the calcium to form a bond. This bond closes the micro-pores in the concrete slab, substantially densifying the concrete



and increasing the slab's performance.

Following the application of the hardener, the crew polished the surface to 1,500 grit for a semigloss finish. "Roche-Bobois didn't want too-highlypolished concrete because they didn't want to detract from the furniture," Kowalski says.

To increase chemical, oil and slip resistance, Crenz Finish Coat, a penetrating sealer system, was used to seal the surface. "This final pass really protects the surface from salt, which is one of the major problems in Montreal," he says. Finally, the surface was cleaned and polished with a black burnishing pad, and the 8,000-square-foot floor was ready to go.

According to Crenz literature, its products work together to produce an abrasion-resistant, low-maintenance concrete floor with a hard wear surface that doesn't require topical sealers or other coatings that can peel off. The VOC-free products with built-in antibacterial agents are nonhazardous, odorless, chemical-resistant and LEED- platinum compliant. No waxing or resurfacing is required.

"We are really focusing on bringing the aesthetics that you find in executive homes into commercial settings," Kowalski says. And he's making it his company's mission to consistently deliver the same high-quality product to each and every one of its clients.

#### Overcoming certain obstacles

Besides perfecting the aesthetics of polishing concrete floors, Crenz is also working hard to maintain a polished image, with remarkable results. "We've positioned ourselves to be bilingual," Kowalski says of the company he and his partners founded in 2002, "and we are fluent in English and French." This has proved to be a most helpful trait in French-speaking Montreal.

Since the Roche-Bobois store is part of a provincial Quebec Government building, Crenz had to meet the company's requests while also abiding by government-imposed restrictions and environmental standards. "They (the

government) have their own policies and they told us when we could run our machines and what products we could and could not use," he says. "The project was quite sensitive." They couldn't use solvents of any kind, and the noise level and dust had to be kept to a minimum.

During the removal process when the planetary machines were in action — many government workers were uneasy because they didn't know what was going on. "We had a lot of security guards coming through and asking questions. If we hadn't been fluent in French, we would have run into a lot of problems. It would have been much more of a challenge if we couldn't effectively communicate."

#### **Communication** is key

There are many potential clients who love the aesthetic look of polished concrete and are aware of its green benefits. They want to demonstrate an environmental savviness, but they have to work with people they don't interface with easily. This is an area many

contractors would be wise to work on, Kowalski says.

Kowalski credits his company's success to ongoing research, reliable products, good project management, a professional approach and an overall passion for the work. "What it really comes down to is being able to exclusively cater to and communicate with the management teams in middlemarket companies, like Roche-Bobois,"

he says. "You should provide a wellintegrated solution that combines your own products and installers. This type of perspective enables a level of

confidence and performance in the final product."

www.crenz.com





# Art and Design Concrete Clovis, Calif.



\$10810018018

by David Searls

If you own a California-based decorative concrete business and think the only danger to your livelihood is the slumping home construction industry, think again. Sam Alvarez and his father-in-law, Larry Lucas, discovered two summers ago that a drunk driver could just as effectively put a crimp in business.

On the evening of June 26, 2006, an impaired driver plowed into the passenger side of the Chevy four-wheel drive containing Lucas, Alvarez and both men's wives. "They used the jaws of life to get the truck open and get me out," Lucas recalls.

It was Lucas' birthday, and his gift that year was a set of broken ribs and watching his injured wife spend three weeks in the hospital.

Alvarez and his father-in-law of 10 years had started Art and Design Concrete in 2003 to pour and stamp concrete. They did mostly residential work. But the mortgage meltdown had slowed the company that fateful summer, and having a bone-fractured partner out of commission for eight weeks didn't help.

"The crazy part is, the accident put us where we had to be," says Alvarez. "It made us rethink our situation. We could spend \$20,000 for a grinder or a Bobcat."

The truck would allow them to expand their concrete pouring





business, while the grinding equipment would let them work inside — where summertime temperatures didn't occasionally hit 110.

"You take a beating when you're stamping," says Alvarez, who still wakes up in pain from the long-term effects of whiplash and a hip knocked out of alignment during the accident.

The two concentrated their slightly depleted energies on floor polishing. And that led to more commercial work.

Art and Design Concrete began getting calls for grinding, polishing and acid-staining the floors of office buildings, movie theaters, furniture stores, restaurants and the like in the Fresno area.

The company is sometimes asked by commercial customers to stamp logos into the work. It's a surprisingly low-tech process. "We'll take a business card, scan it and blow it up to size, print it on paper and cut it out," says Alvarez.

With their die in hand, the partners trace the pattern and use a four-inch metal grinder to carve it into the concrete floor. That's the painstaking process they used to embed the Regal Cinemas crown





logo at a Fresno movie theater complex.

Other times, they use Modello custom pattern stencils for a strikingly elegant effect.

Their use of VOC-compliant finishes has led to project work in green construction, such as the gig to polish the concrete floor of an office building the partners assumed on behalf of architect Paul Miller. It was one of the Fresno area's first environment-friendly, LEED-certified buildings.

"They did an excellent job," Miller says. "The concrete was harder than they thought, and they had to spend an extra week working on it, but they made no

complaints."

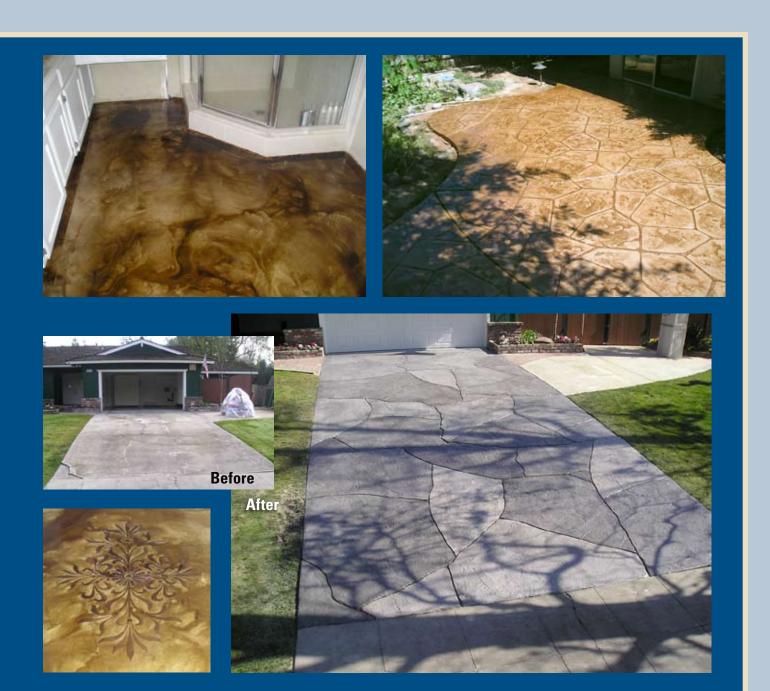
You can think of the two as artists. After they grind off the top 1/8-inch or 1/4-inch of a surface and add a colored concrete coating overlay and coat of stain, you'd swear you were standing on marble. Only it's hardier — and, of course, goes for only a fraction of the cost.

"The greatest thing about polished concrete is its ease of maintenance," says Alvarez. "Combined with concrete densifiers, a polished concrete floor can last a lifetime. With an occasional re-buff, it will shine like new."

Not that polishing concrete is easy.

Alvarez and Lucas start by wet-grinding the existing concrete with heavy-grit metalbonded diamonds. When all finish coats have been removed, they polish the concrete with resin pads in gradations from 100 grit to 3,000 grit. They can finish by applying a 1/8-inch to 1/4-inch colored concrete coating, and then overcoat that with an acid stain — which seems to be the trend now — or leave it natural.

The work Alvarez and Lucas have been doing in concrete coating and overlaying for day spas and boutiques has, in turn, caught the attention of home-owning female customers.



"We've gotten a lot of references that have led to residential projects," says Alvarez.

Art and Design Concrete came to the attention of Kara Hopper and her husband through a flyer. Alvarez came up with the finishing touches to the young couple's newly constructed home. It's "a real swirly design" stenciled into the entry foyer, says Hopper. "It's very unique, the first thing visitors notice when they walk in the door."

The work is a custom-colored rendition of a pattern suggested by Alvarez from his portfolio.

Art and Design Concrete applied a

coating to virtually every floor in the Hopper home, as well as to the backyard.

One of the partners' more challenging contracts involved beautifying 3,000 square feet of highly visible real estate in front of the Regal Cinemas complex they worked on in Fresno. The work couldn't be started until the end of each evening's final show. It made for two weeks worth of long nights as they coated, stamped, applied highlight colors and sealed before adding antique agents and the final coat of sealer.

Another big job pickup was a restaurant in a popular area pizza chain, with 22 more locations to come.

Now that most of their work is commercial, Lucas and Alvarez aren't scared that weak demand for home construction might hurt them. In any case, it's unlikely that anything could make a bigger impact on their business than the inebriated driver who ruined a birthday celebration and reinvented Art and Design Concrete.

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Water that condensed on a stained concrete floor by a cold doorway caused the sealer to white out in the spots where the water pooled.

Photos and captions courtesy of Chris Sullivan

From the mountains to the prairies to the oceans, every region of the United States has unique moisture issues.

by Rob Spiegel

In the Northeast, freezing can be a major problem for decorative concrete. In the South, rain and humidity are the twin devils. In the Southwest, it's dry air. On the West Coast, there is a moisture problem near the ocean and an entirely different kind of moisture problem in the desert 50 miles inland. Both exterior and interior projects are affected by climate.

For decorative concrete contractors, moisture is a challenge that varies by region. "The big factor in decorative concrete is curing, and the environment is big," says Chris Sullivan, national sales manager at QC Construction Products. "Concrete cures a lot faster in Arizona, but it doesn't necessarily cure better. In Atlanta, Ga., there is a lot more moisture in the air and more potential for problems."

Even within one region, there can be a variety of climate challenges. "The Northeast has four dramatic seasonal changes, which is more of a challenge than California, which is pretty much the same year-round," says Sullivan.

Climate considerations go beyond the obvious weather challenges such as rain or freezing temperatures. The moisture in the ground itself becomes a regional challenge, whether it's the porous sand of the Southwest or the hard clay in the South. "You have challenges like water tables that will affect the amount of moisture on the ground," says Clifford Platt, vice president of

Vexcon Chemicals Inc. "You have to deal with moisture above the surface and below the surface"

Platt also works with customers to select products according to regional humidity differences.

In the dryer climates of the West, most of the problems with moisture come from sprinklers. Though it may seem like an easy problem to solve — don't let sprinkler spray extend over decorative concrete — it can be a major problem, since landscaping in dry climates practically requires sprinklers. "When a customer is doing an improvement involving decorative concrete, nine times out of 10 they're also doing landscaping," says decorativeconcrete contractor Doug Carlton, who is involved with contractor training at Alternative Finishes in Visalia, Calif. "We help them work through sprinkler problems to make sure they see the adverse reactions when water is constantly being sprayed on the

Carlton notes that overspray causes a breakdown in the sealer and also leaves mineral deposits on the concrete. Carlton combats overspray through education. "We have success about half the time," says Carlton. "Our customers say, 'Yes, we realize the problem,' but then we visit their jobs from year to year and see the adverse reactions of moisture on the concrete."

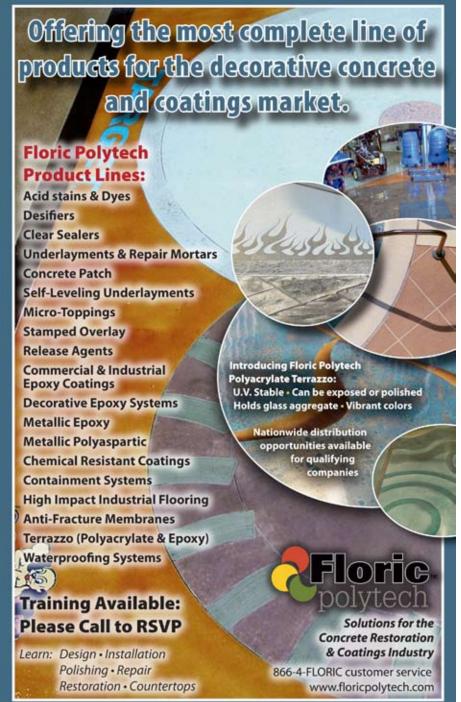
In northern areas of the country, freezing is a major challenge. "In colder climates, freeze-thaw is one of the worst problems," says Marshall Hoskins, senior technical representative at Specialty Concrete Products Co. "If the water in the mix freezes, the moisture will expand and exert force within the pores of the concrete. That can cause cracks and even delaminate the concrete surface." He notes that one solution is to use less moisture in the concrete itself. "We can work against moisture by using water reducers that allow us to pour with less water," he says. "Another solution is to cover the ground on the day before pouring so you're not pouring on frozen ground."

Hoskins says the moisture problem has to be considered job by job. "It's not just regional, it's also time of year and type of application," says Hoskins.

Since each region has its own set of challenges, Specialty Concrete works with distributors that know the unique challenges of each region. "We have distributors who know their region and have done this work for years," says Hoskins.

While there are different types of moisture problems for each region and each season, the solutions are often the same. "If the job is turning white, the problem is the same, the solution is the same," says Platt of Vexcon. "The cause may be different — maybe they didn't let the concrete dry out or maybe there is too much water in the ground — but the problem and solution are the same."

Humidity differences by region are not just an outdoor problem. High humidity also poses challenges with interior projects. "With interior work, moisture can be in vapor. You can't see it, but it can be strong," says Sullivan of QC Construction Products. "While





Whitening of sealer is often the result of having applied it to an insufficiently cured surface.



interior moisture is less affected by region, it's still there."

He notes that industries such as tile, vinyl and wood flooring have dealt with internal moisture for years, but the challenge is relatively new for the decorative concrete industry. "We're just getting around to dealing with internal vapor or gases," says Sullivan. "We're just now seeing stained floors that have been around for five years."

Each region has its own technical challenges, Sullivan says, and the best way to learn solutions to those problems is to get on-the-job experience in each region. "Unfortunately, most of what we learn is through the school of hard knocks. We have people in every region, and the problems are solved by differences in application procedures."

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A food-service bar top for an outdoor pool area in Old Westbury, N.Y. Embedded fiber-optic strands create a translucent effect in the concrete.

Photo courtesy of J&M Lifestyles



A close-up look at a custom end table. Two textures are used in the finished piece, and rocks have been embedded in its surface.

by Chris Camara

ecorative concrete contractors can add an exciting new technique to their repertoire that always elicits a "wow" reaction from clients: embedding fiber optics in concrete countertops.

Imagine peering into a telescope at the clear night sky. With fiber optics, that scene can be replicated on a gleaming, polished bar top. The tiny points of light can form star patterns, a company logo, or even an outline of Mickey Mouse.

"It's certainly dazzling for customers, even if they don't end up choosing it," says Lane Mangum of the Raleigh, N.C.based Concrete Countertop Institute. In the CCI showroom, for example, a huge array of color samples is displayed on what she calls the "rainbow wall." While clients are impressed by what's available, they'll end up with gray or another low-key color.

The same is true for fiber optics. While the effect may not be for everyone, contractors who master the technique can give themselves a competitive advantage. It demonstrates, skill, patience, innovation, creativity and an attitude that they're not afraid to try something new.



There are embedded fiber optics not only in the surface of this sink, but also in the back-splash and wine bucket.

And it definitely attracts attention. Elizabeth Maurer, who owns Liquid Stone Concrete Designs with her husband, Gerry, brought a countertop embedded with fiber optics to a bath and kitchen trade show in Valley Forge, Penn., recently. Twenty people at a time crowded into the booth, crouching under the countertop looking for drill holes, and asking how the bulbs are changed.

Maurer brought a child's toy — a wand with a spray of glowing fiber-optic tips — to explain that the points of light are the tops of those fibers, which are as thin as fishing line. Instead of drill holes, all that's seen from the underside of the counter is one black cable. The light source is placed elsewhere. There's no electricity running through the countertop, and no fancy maintenance program is needed. "It's a lot less complicated than they think it is," Maurer says.

The key to figuring it all out was a class offered at CCI last summer by Robert Sapp of Coastal Concrete Counters, she says.

Sapp is the artisan who created the Mickey Mouse design, on a bathroom vanity for a fan of the Disney cartoon character. He first encountered fiber optics underfoot during a trip to Epcot at Walt Disney World, where sections of sidewalk are embedded with elaborate fiber optic designs. "I stood there mesmerized," he says. "I thought, 'I've GOT to figure out how to do this. This is amazing."

An engineer by trade, Sapp experimented with the technique and eventually developed Illumistone lighted concrete surfaces, and he now shares his knowledge at CCI a few times a year. In a one-day session, he covers the fundamentals: the specific adjustments that must be made to the concrete mix so that it flows around the fibers without damaging them during the pouring and casting process. Sapp discusses proper ventilation and design considerations, as well as how to terminate a fiber-optic cable bundle and connect it to an illuminator unit safely. After the students build a 3-by-3 piece, he pulls out the project done by the previous class so he can demonstrate the demolding and finishing process that ensures the fibers don't get broken or abraded.

The technique is actually more tedious than it is

technical, says Jeff Kudrick, product manager of J&M Lifestyles LLC. It's labor-intensive and involves handling up to 1,000 individual strands. "If you're an impatient person, don't even attempt it," he says.

A contractor who is well versed in lighting techniques and presenting new ideas to a client has a better chance of being successful selling concrete countertops with fiber optics, Kudrick says. "You really have to have a knack for imagining how it will look before you're done."

J&M Lifestyles, a Randolph, N.J., company that has its own proprietary system for incorporating fiber optics into surfaces, has logged 15 years of experience lighting water and waterfalls for the pool industry. Now it is involved in commercial designs where eye-catching lighting effects are used throughout the entire space. A modern, low-lit bathroom in a restaurant looks great with the addition of a countertop in which pinpoint lights shine through the glossy top. "Lighting makes even the most mundane surface that much more exciting," Kudrick says.

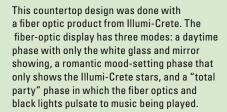
J&M sees most of its demand coming from bar and restaurant owners looking for sparkle on a table or bar top, but Sapp finds that he sells more bath vanities to residential customers than anything else. At \$125 to \$175 a square foot, the costs add up pretty quickly on bigger pieces, he says.

Maurer says outdoor kitchens are hot now, and concrete countertops with fiber-optic designs would be a great addition. Since a separate illuminator provides the light, it's safe for outdoor use. Kitchen and bath designers are starting to become interested in the technique, and requests for









All photos this page courtesy of and copyright Cutting Edge Decorative Concrete.









residential applications — in home bars, powder rooms or children's bathrooms — are starting to increase.

Casi Morris, marketing and communications director of Cheng Concrete Exchange, which has about 275 members, says fiber optics is just one aspect of the growing popularity in concrete countertops. Clients are looking for creative ways to enhance concrete walls, islands and fireplaces with fiber optics. Concrete Exchange members who have studied under Fu-Tung Cheng are looking for new ways to use decorative concrete, as their clients are requesting innovative applications.

"Clients who want to distinguish themselves from the norm and those with a sense of cutting-edge or modern taste tend to request this concept," Morris says. Selling fiber optics to someone unfamiliar with it could be a challenge, though. Throwing out the term "fiber optics" in the midst of a general discussion about concrete countertops can confuse matters. "But it definitely adds a sense of flair for a customer wanting to raise the bar in terms of modern design."

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countertop







This monolithic structure stands between lanes and the general swimming area of a spa pool at Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino, Henderson, Nev.



Construction of the spa pool divider at Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino.

by Jack Innis

ver the years, skilled concrete artisans using a broad palette of colors, textures and patterns have produced a dizzying array of flatwork designs. Wood floors, brick pavers, and tiles made of stone, terra cotta and marble have all been successfully simulated.

It is no wonder then, that the next logical step would be upward — to bring concrete artistry to walls, arches, threedimensional structures, ceilings and other vertical structures. While the average homeowner or business owner may have trouble envisioning massive tree trunks, gigantic boulders and stone walls created out of concrete, pigment and dye, a growing segment of decorative concrete masters have expanded their palettes onto vertical surfaces.

One method to bring concrete to vertical surfaces — as opposed to gluing premanufactured decorative items to existing substrates — is to spray concrete onto the surface with specialized concrete pumps.

While most within the concrete trade are familiar with gunite or shotcrete pumps for applications such as swimming pools, roadways and mineshaft reinforcements, some are not aware that the pump has roots in decorative concrete.

In the early 1900s, taxidermy artist Carl Akeley devised a special gun that used compressed air to spray water and plaster onto a frame. According to historians at Allentown Equipment, a Pennsylvania manufacturing and supply company, this resulted in a strong, thin coating that would not slump off the frame, yet gave Akeley ample time to work his models before the material set up. Akeley called his apparatus the "cement gun," which later gave way to the term "gunite." Changes in the delivery system spawned a new name.

Shotcrete, as defined by the American Shotcrete Association, is now



The team at Tajmawall applies shotcrete and pressure molds to the exterior of a house.







an all-inclusive term that describes the spraying of concrete or mortar through either a dry-mix or wet-mix process. Gunite refers only to the dry-mix process, according to ASA's definition.

### Mixing for the pump

Those already involved in decorative concrete who may be thinking about venturing into shotcrete as a way of working vertically should be aware of differences in product mixtures. Wayne Sellon, owner of Tajmawall, a decorative concrete firm specializing in vertical walls, explains that his firm goes lighter. "There's a big difference between shooting heavy materials - roadways, mine shafts and such - and the stuff we're using," he says.

Shotcrete can be a heavy mix, 3/8-inch minus aggregate. The difference between a heavy mix and a lightweight wall mix is that the ones with lightweight aggregate don't bounce when they hit the wall, Sellon states.

"I came from the plastering trade and shot all kinds of materials with all kinds of pumps," says Sellon. "It's not overspray, but the bounce of the heavier, harder aggregates that creates a mess. A soft aggregate hits like a spitball and sticks."

When Sellon selects shotcrete mix — he even has his own formulation — he looks for several qualities, including length of cure (12 hours is great to allow time to stamp or carve the material into three-dimensional shapes), how it "stacks" (sticks to the wall without sagging), and whether it cures hard enough for the specified application.

### Not hard to learn

While selection of proper material is crucial, proper prep and application can make or break the job. "The substrate must be prepared properly," states a shotcrete FAQ page on the ASA Web site. "Proper placement is also important in achieving good results. Shotcrete success depends largely on the skill and actions of the nozzleman. Most defects can be attributed to poor shotcrete placement."

"The stuff's not hard to learn, but easy to goof up," says Johnny Hodge, an independent manufacturer who was formerly technical director for Southern Color, North America.

The dry material typically arrives at the job site in 50pound or 60-pound bags. It can be pre-blended with coloring agents — most often natural or synthetic iron oxides — to



ASTM C 979 standards, says Hodge. If blending on site, concrete decorators normally choose white shotcrete base for lighter colors and gray base for darker tones.

It's important not to add too much color. According to the FAQ section of the Portland Cement Association Web site, contractors are typically encouraged to follow ASTM C 979 recommendations and use only the minimum amount of pigment required to achieve the desired color, which should never be more than 10 percent by mass of cement.

But this simple mathematical rule may give neophytes trouble, says Hodge. "Color packets typically come in onepound to two-pound packs. While at a glance it may appear that you can add several color packs to a 50-pound or 60-pound bag of shotcrete mix and stay under the 10 percent mark, it's important to remember that a 50-pound or 60pound bag of shotcrete mix typically

contains 25 percent to 35 percent concrete. ... Base your additives on the amount of concrete, not bag weight."

In terms of mixing water, Hodge's advice is to simply follow manufacturers' instructions. "Excessive water is by far the biggest problem encountered," he says. "Too much water can lead to excessive shrinkage, which may lead to cracks."

### Tweaking rarely needed

With modern mixes, concrete artists don't often need to do much tweaking, says Sellon, who has perfected techniques that allow him to spray more than 2 inches thick and who also teaches concrete artistry in Temecula, Calif. "Don't forget to add a little extra water to make up for dry color compounds you add in," he says. "If you're spraying in very cold country, you might add calcium chloride to the mix to keep the material warm inside - if concrete freezes while it's curing, it may turn to sand. You can also

use additives such as retardants to slow down the rate of cure."

Sellon agrees with Hodge that applying shotcrete is not hard to learn, but easy to goof up, especially at first. Hodge advises rookies to slow down use multiple thin coats when building up thicknesses beyond 3/4-inch — and pay attention to manufacturer's cure times.

"The big thing about shooting any type of material is the time it sits in the hose," Sellon says. "If it remains in the hose for 20 or 25 minutes, depending upon the weather conditions, you need to run that mud back into the mixture, because if you don't you're going to end up eating your hose up.

"Just watch the basics," he says. 🥗



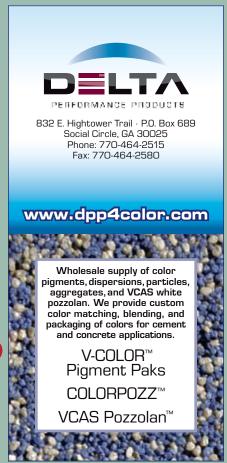
Want to learn more? Search online at www.concretedecor.net

FIND IT FAST!

shotcrete



### Concrete Additives





Concrete Decor's new Concrete Additives section makes the contractor's job of shopping for specialty items and hard-tofind materials easier, while at the same time providing product manufacturers with valuable exposure in the industry's foremost magazine on decorative concrete. For manufacturers who demand an effective and affordable way to promote products to the decorative concrete market, advertising in Concrete Decor's new Concrete Additives is the answer.



### **Hand-held Mixers**

### **Belle Group Promix Hand-held Mixer**

European tool manufacturer Belle Group introduced its hand-held mixer line, the Promix,

last year. Geared toward high-viscosity materials such as plaster, cement, mortar, tile adhesives and stucco, the Promix line provides high-power, high-torque mixing solutions for batches of up to 30 gallons.

The Promix 1200E runs on a two-speed 110volt motor with capacity of 50/60 Hz. It delivers 75 rpm to 260 rpm in low gear and 200 rpm to 280 rpm in high gear. The heavy-duty motor and longlife gearbox are designed for durability. The 1200E also incorporates a trigger lock as well as a softstart feature to ensure a consistent mix. In addition to the standard 5.5-inch paddle, the 1200E will accommodate a variety of different paddle types.

**(**) (540) 345-5090

www.bellegroup.com

### **CS Unitec Eibenstock Hand-held Mixers**

CS Unitec, in conjunction with Eibenstock tools, offers several lines of hand-held mixers along with a wide assortment of mixing accoutrements. The EHR line includes four single-shaft mixers suitable for batches of between 8 gallons and 35 gallons. The EZR 21-S mixer provides a dual-shaft option that uses the same 110-volt high-torque

motors as the single-shaft line.

In addition to the standard AC models, CS Unitec also carries mixers with alternative power supplies. Its three heavy-

> duty pneumatic mixers are designed for potentially hazardous mixing environments and can handle batches of between

110 and 200 pounds. On the other side of the spectrum is the company's new batteryoperated cordless mixer. Powered by a 28-volt battery, the AHR 24.1 is suitable for up to 7 gallons of any low- to medium-viscosity material, and weighs in at only 6.5 pounds.

All CS Unitec mixers include the slow-start feature, which eliminates splash-back, and variable-speed motors to ensure an even mix. A dozen different paddles and two different portable mixing stands round out CS Unitec's wide selection of handheld mixing solutions.

© (800) 700-5919

www.csunitec.com

### Perles of Switzerland **Professional Grade Mixers**

Although tool manufacturer Perles of Switzerland has only been doing business in the States for a few years, they've wasted no time in getting involved with the decorative concrete market. Their line of professional-grade tools offers a wide variety of handheld mixers suitable for everything from 5gallon liquid batches to 25 gallons of concrete.

The professional-grade models (ME 110 through ME 240) include one-speed and two-speed mixers with single or dual mixing shafts. They are accompanied by a dizzying array of paddle attachments. Perles also produces a hammer drill with a mixing attachment (model MD 50) designed for liquid batches of 1 gallon to 2 gallons.

All of the professional grade mixers have a 120-volt, 50/60 Hz capacity and range from 7 amps to 12 amps.

**(** (877) 897-6220

👣 www.perlesusa.com

### Stow Collomix

With the new Collomix line from Stow, contractors can mix a wide selection of materials from grout, concrete and mortar to paint, epoxy, and dyes, all under 90 seconds.

The full Collomix line features six hand-held mixers and four versatile mixings stations that are ruggedly designed, yet with ergonomics kept in mind to help the operator maintain upright posture. All mixers have a 220/120-volt, 50/60 Hz capacity and single and dual speeds, and each is offered in single and dual shaft configurations.

© (800) 421-1244

👣 www.multiquip.com



### Polished Perspectives

### A primer on polishing



Contractors learn the proper techniques for polishing and dyeing at a training seminar held by GeroQuip in Quebec City, Quebec.

by Peter Wagner, CSI

wo common elements of our industry are that 1) we think we know it all and 2) we don't learn from our mistakes and shortcuts. Why is it that our industry, polished concrete with or without color, seems to have such an extended learning curve?

For the sake of argument, let's say that the polished concrete industry, as we know it today, started 10 years ago. Now when you think of a decade, you could naturally assume that the learning curve should be over, but it is not. In fact, with the quantum growth of the industry in the past 18 to 36 months, and the influx of applicators from many other disciplines, it has gotten worse. Whereas polished concrete used to be the exception, or primarily in "big boxes," it is now accepted as a standard flooring option, especially in the commercial, education, hospitality and retail sectors.

If provided the opportunity, when should you insert yourself in the project? Is it at the planning stage? Should you be concerned with additives, curing methods and flatness specs? If you are preparing to provide your customer with a densified, polished floor, with or without color, the answer must be a resounding "Yes!"

Polished concrete, with or without color, always depends on the ability of the chemicals to penetrate the concrete, either to interact with the calcium hydroxide created during hydration or to surround the concrete with color. Prior to these types of chemical applications, the concern when

applying a floor coating or covering was whether or not the adhesives or coatings would stick, or whether moisture would be a problem. In our industry that is not the case.

Whom do we have to educate about it?

- Yourself, the applicator. If the applicator, the one who requires specifications to be written correctly, does not understand his own needs, then he shouldn't be in the industry. Lack of knowledge and willingness to become educated too often translates into frustration and costly
- The architect or specifier. The architect is not only concerned with the basic performance of a product, but he or she also must know how it interacts with every other aspect of the design/build function of the project. And today he or she is more often than not focusing on LEED, green and sustainability requirements.
- The general contractor, ready-mix provider, flatwork contractor and other subcontractors. Why should they care? Well, mix designs, additives, curing methods and flatness requirements all can affect the costing, supervision and methods utilized on any given project, and the successful results on the job as well. Keep in mind, you as the applicator will have your ability to deliver results and profits directly affected by the partnerships you create with these companies.

What are some of the areas you must focus on when working with polished concrete, and why? How can specifications affect your performance in a negative manner? Remembering that we talked about working with "penetrating" products, not topical ones, we must be concerned with the following steps, in the following order:

- What additives are being utilized on the project? What is being used to aid curing? What about release agents for tilt-ups?
- How is the floor being finished? As for flatness requirements, what are the expectations and why?
- What is the color of your concrete mix, and why should that matter to you?
- Aggregate or cream what does the customer expect to see at the end?

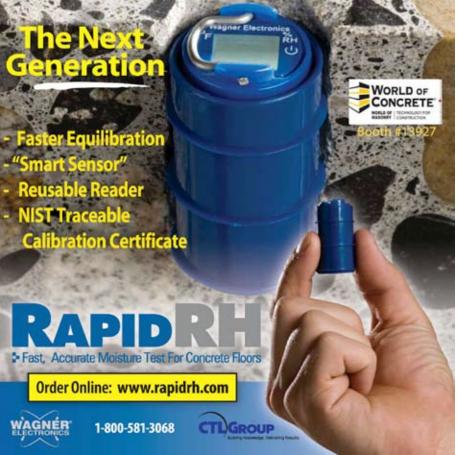
Everything being discussed here will also affect the restoration of existing slabs. Then, it is even more important than with new concrete to ask the questions, and most definitely, perform tests before committing your firm and your costing.

### The problem with additives

How can additives stop you from completing your work? It is very simple: They can act as bond barriers or breakers that will stop your chemical from penetrating and reacting or adhering. Two main additives or barriers are UV-dissipative cures and tilt-wall release agents. When UV-dissipative cures were created, they were done so with the need to dissipate enough to allow the application and adhesion of a topical product, not a penetrating one. UV-dissipative cures are expected to "go away" based on exposure to UV rays and wear traffic during construction. Generally the time frame provided is 7 to 9 weeks, but, unfortunately, they are rarely applied where they actually will be exposed to UV rays at all.

Tilt-wall release agents, while not expected to dissipate, can be removed using certain cleaners and strippers. Again though, the problem is how much product remains below the surface, and whether it will create an impenetrable barrier to your products.





### **Coloring polished concrete**

There are four ways to add color to slabs that are intended for polishing.

### **Integral Color**

Color pigments that are added to the design mix prior to pouring.

### **Dry Shake Hardener**

A cement-rich, dry, topical hardener that is applied evenly to a freshly troweled new slab. The water from the slab reacts with the hardener to create a hard, dense surface.

### **Acid Stain**

A translucent stain with a range of eight earthen colors whose metallic salt component reacts with the calcium hydroxide that is created during hydration. The colors are naturally variegated and mottled due to

### **Dyes**

Dyes, as opposed to pigments, are minute colorants that produce a transparent coloring of the concrete as they penetrate the concrete and attach themselves to the crystalline structure in the concrete. Pigments, in contrast, are larger substances that produce an opaque, topical coating similar to paint.



color will affect the appearance of the final color. Colors will appear more vibrant on light or white concrete and more muted on darker colored slabs.



When coloring with dyes or acid stains, only a pre-test will allow you to settle on whether one application or two applications are necessary to achieve your desired color.



Confirm whether your customer expects cream or aggregate, and then establish if the mix design and your equipment are up to the task.

Be prepared to go as low as 40 grit in metal diamonds to fully remove either product, which then affects your costing and the floor appearance.

If your customer is expecting a cream finish, than neither of these products can be used.

### Pick a look

Floor flatness is inherently important when it comes to what appearance the customer expects, how your equipment can provide that appearance, how the floor will be used, and whether the floor is going to be colored. Does your customer want cream or fines or aggregate showing? Do they want consistency of cream or fines or aggregate? Or are they agreeable to a mixture of appearances?

Equipment capabilities vary greatly in width, weight, power requirements and head-float capability.

You have three options for providing a consistent look:

The customer does not require a truly flat floor, only a polished floor, but they want a consistent cream appearance. In this case you need to have equipment with heads that float to allow for following the contours of the floor, and you'll primarily use resin diamonds.

Your customer does not care if the floor is all cream, fines or aggregate — they just want consistency. This will be achieved with large, heavy plate machines that can easily grind through a high spot but cannot float with the floor's waviness, utilizing metal matrix diamonds to literally grind the floor until uniform flatness is achieved, then following with resin matrixes. A floor like this might be specified for either appearance or function, such as a highcube warehouse.

The last method is through proper specifications based on the F(f) and F(l) of the floor. These terms relate to Face Companies designations for flatness and levelness of a slab, which are achieved at the time of finishing. By providing the applicator with a flat floor to begin with, the type and number of diamond steps required are reduced, along with the ability to achieve a flat floor with a consistent cream appearance.

The color of the concrete mix will affect the final appearance in two ways. When just densifying, the color of the mix is roughly what the end product will show for color. This can vary by regions or by cement designation, whether grey or white. Also, when coloring concrete with either dyes or acid stains, everyone must be aware these are translucent coloring products whose final color appearance will be affected by the mix color. The darker

the mix design, the more the colors are muted and absorbed, while the lighter the slab, the more enhanced and brilliant the colors will be. Remember that concrete, when finished, will have natural variations, and any variations that exist prior to dyeing or acid staining will show in the final product.

Aggregate or cream — what does the customer expect? Education though job walk-throughs and project photographs is an important visual

### **Attention Decorative Concrete Contractors**

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On this project by Seattle-based company Concrete Restoration, the end user desired a cream finish. In order to keep the cream, the floor was finished to to a low flatness level (F(f)), leaving behind a wavy pattern in the existing floor.

assist in the education curve. Make sure that what your customer wants is what you and your equipment can deliver.

### Stain shields: Yes or no?

Why is the application of a stain shield recommended by acid stain and dye manufacturers? Too often everyone from the specifier through to the applicator is not fully aware of the inner

workings of a chemical densifier, whether it is sodium, potassium or lithium-based. A chemical densifier delivers increased abrasion resistance, which protects the wear surface, especially for colors, and increased repellency to certain, but not all, liquids. What is not taught and talked about often enough is that although the increased abrasion resistance delivers almost immediate results, the repellency can take up to 6 to 8 months to fully deliver. Repellency is only achieved as the concrete continues to create an inner structure that is denser and tighter. Remember that the concrete slab is porous.

Actually, it is more porous after you have ground than at the end of your hard steel-trowel finishing that consolidates the surface.

So for your customer's sake, along with yours, a stain repellant is important to protect your work against oil and water-based spills. Keep in mind that a repellent is only meant to extend the window of opportunity to clean a

potential stain. To fully protect the floor would require a 100-percent topical sealer and this defeats the maintenance benefits of a polished floor. Also, the floor is still concrete and can be etched by strong acids.

If you can't deliver — don't accept the project! How do you know if you can deliver?

Always perform a test. Do the test on the actual job site before beginning the project.

Perform every single step of the test. Don't allow the general contractor to force you to rush and start before you're ready or before the concrete slab is ready. The generally recognized hydration time is 28 days. Know what can be affected by going too early. Lower strength, softer concrete and excessive water can all affect your final results.

Have a written "sign-off" by the owner or their authorized contact as written in the contract.

You have rights as the subcontractor, and the general contractor and owners have rights — these will be better met through education and respect for each other's requirements on the job. The better, and sooner, a general contractor, or for that matter, another subcontractor, knows your needs, the better the job will flow, the faster you'll get a sign-off and the quicker you'll get paid.





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Western States: Hard Rock Tool, Tel: 800-927- 2490, www.hardrocktool.com. Central States and Florida, 17400 West 119th St Olathe, Kansas 66061, Tel: 800 288 5040.

### Product Profile



### **Quikrete Countertop Mix**

With concrete countertops becoming more popular by the day, mastering the art has become a priority for many contractors. But finding the perfect mix of concrete and additives to mold into the tight corners and custom shapes of many countertop projects is a complicated, not to mention expensive, process.

Simplifying that process is precisely what the folks at concrete manufacturer Quikrete had in mind when they created their own brand of Countertop Mix, new to the market this past June.

"Previously, we had a lot of people using our Quikrete 5000 high-strength concrete [for countertop projects]," says Quikrete vice president of sales Frank Owens. "But they'd have to mix it themselves." With the new Countertop Mix, Owens says, "the only thing they need to worry about is the water they add." That simplicity, he says, is what

makes this product so appealing.

Simplicity is also what makes this countertop mix different from others on the market, he says. Quikrete sells a dry mix of concrete and admixtures instead of simply selling contractors the additives and requiring them to come up with the concrete themselves. And the concrete manufacturer uses its own concrete instead of buying from third parties. Not only is the end result easy to use, Owens says, it's economical, because it takes advantage of Quikrete's economies of scale.

The Countertop Mix is highstrength concrete blended with superplasticizers that ensure good flowability while maintaining a low water-to-concrete ratio (7 pints to 8 pints per 80-pound bag). After 28 days, it will achieve a compressive strength of 5,000 psi but, unlike other highstrength concretes, requires very little mechanical vibration.

Suitable for precast and cast-inplace projects, the Countertop Mix was designed to be versatile. The mix itself is available in two colors — white and grey — and can be combined with either Quikrete's Liquid Cement Colors or their Stucco & Mortar Colors to attain more than 20 different shades.

But that's only the tip of the countertop design iceberg. The Countertop Mix can also be used with a variety of decorative aggregates in precast projects.

"Many contractors will seed our product with colored aggregates and then grind down the surface to expose the aggregate," Owens says. Depending on the aggregate — which can be anything from river stones to metal shavings — this technique can produce a huge range of countertop styles, colors and textures.

Quikrete also has new Etching Stains available that can be used with the Countertop Mix to create a multitoned finish in Olive, Tan or Coffee. The acid-based stains are simply brushed onto the surface and then wiped off, leaving what Owens calls "a beautiful, mottled marble look."

In addition to design versatility, the new Countertop Mix can also simplify the price-quoting process. Rather than having to estimate the cost and amount of each individual component required for mix-it-yourself countertop concrete, it would be a simple matter of calculating the number of bags of Countertop Mix required for the job.

Working with the pre-blended Countertop Mix also eliminates concerns about consistency between one batch of concrete and the next.

Owens says that since the release



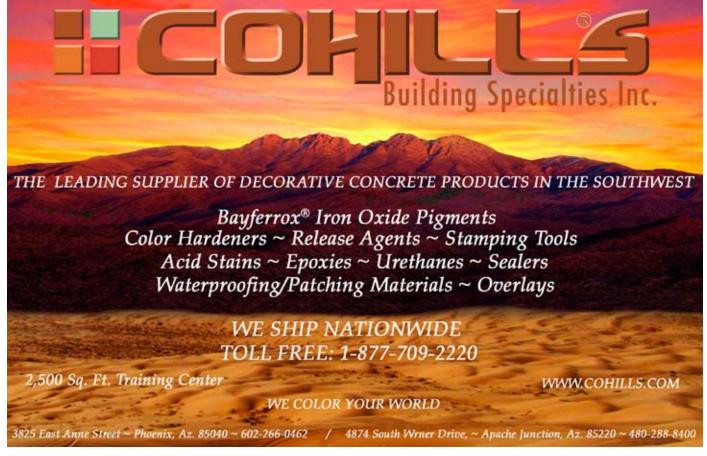
of the Countertop Mix, Quikrete has received a surge of positive feedback for it on the company's Web site. Its popularity, he says, really comes down to the product's ease of application.

As demand for concrete countertops continues to grow, products like

Quikrete's Countertop Mix will not only serve experienced countertop specialists, but will also make the craft more accessible.

**(**0 (404) 634-9100

www.quikrete.com



### Product News

### Fritz-Pak releases Contractor Pak

Fritz-Pak has launched The Contractor Pak, which offers concrete contractors the same advantages that its Rescue Pak offers the ready-mix market. Contractor Pak provides admixtures that help contractors fix common problems from the back of the truck.

The Contractor Pak contains six



color hardeners easier by fighting common dry surface problems such as plastic shrinkage cracks, dusting, cracking and crazing. Mini Delayed Set is used to retard the set of concrete for shorter delays and for washwater stabilization when no washout is allowed on site. Standard Delayed Set buys time when the ready-mix truck has a long-distance haul or when a delay of several hours occurs on site. Supercizer 5 increases slump by 6 inches and provides 25 percent water reduction. Super Slump Buster permits controlled slump reduction, allowing placements on inclines or curbs while minimizing segregation. Slick-Pak II is well known as a pump primer and pumping aid. Since it suspends particles in the mix, it also helps enable dry harsh mixes to exit the ready-mix truck more easily and completely.

Contractor-Pak admixtures are packaged in patented water-soluble bags. Everything comes in a waterproof, heavy-duty carrying case.

**(**0 (888) 746-4116

www.fritzpak.com

### **Spec-West debuts decorative** concrete sealers

Spec-West's new line of decorative

concrete sealers and maintenance products contain some of the most sophisticated technology in today's market.

Spec-Seal SB High Gloss and Spec-Seal SB Low Sheen Decorative Concrete Sealers are solvent-based, colorintensifying and federally compliant. They contain some of the most advanced acrylic technology available. Spec-Seal WB Satin Sealer is a water-borne acrylic sealer that uses the latest in fine-micron technology. Spec-Coat is a high-gloss floor polish that is also burnishable at high speeds.

**(**0 (916) 361-1300

www.spec-west.com

### Crown gets glowing

New from Crown Polymers, CrownGlow is a proprietary topcoat containing an exclusive phosphor formulation that is energized by ultraviolet light and radiates a familiar soft green glow.

This new product has practically unlimited usage possibilities. Safety markings are an obvious starting point. Other imaginative uses for CrownGlow exist in showrooms, restaurants, nightclubs and residential applications.

© (888) 732-1270

www.crownpolymers.com

### **VOC-compliant cure-and-seals** from W.R. Meadows

CS-309-OTC and CS-309-25 OTC from W.R. Meadows are nonyellowing, acrylic curing and sealing compounds that are specifically formulated for areas of the country that require the use of low-VOC products. Made from proprietary acrylic polymers and VOC-exempt solvents, these products are designed to preserve and protect the environment, as the formulations meet Environmental Protection Agency Architectural Coatings Rule requirements and comply with Ozone Transport Commission standards.

CS-309-OTC and CS-309-25 OTC have a significantly higher flash point



than comparable products on the market. While the fast-drying products require only a single application, multiple applications result in a higher sheen on the surface. They can be used on driveways, patios, industrial floors, loading docks, swimming pool areas and exposed aggregate, as well as any exterior decorative surface where enhanced appearance, protection and sealing are desired. The products offer improved resistance to rain, sun, freezing temperatures, stains, most acids and industrial chemicals, oil, grease, de-icing salts, cleaning agents (except aromatic solvents) and caustics, as well as airborne soot, dust and other pollutants.

**(**0 (847) 214-2100

www.wrmeadows.com

### **BASF** admixtures reduce water for precast producers

The Admixture Systems business of BASF has introduced the Glenium 7000 series high-range water-reducing admixtures, which offer performance benefits for precast and prestressed concrete producers.

The backbone of the new Glenium 7000 products is a series of nextgeneration polycarboxylate polymers that offer producers the ability to maintain slump, workability and setting time while providing high early strength. This results in more consistent and durable concrete production and more cost-effectiveness for the producer.

Precast concrete producers are reporting increased productivity due to accelerated concrete placement, faster form turnover and improved surface appearance, said Joe Daczko, product manager at BASF, in a news release. "These new Glenium products are revolutionizing the high-range water-reducing admixture market by creating a versatile concrete mixture that optimizes performance, producing the most cost-effective and durable concrete for our customers."

www.basf.com

### For Flowfresh floors

Valspar Flooring is promoting Flowfresh SR, its new chemical-resistant cementitious urethane floor resurfacer, as part of the company's broad line of sanitary flooring solutions.

Developed by Flowcrete PLC and marketed in North and Central America by Valspar Flooring, Flowfresh SR is ideal for resurfacing concrete floors in wet processing areas and is especially effective in federally inspected food, beverage or pharmaceutical plants. Polygiene, a high-performance, natural antimicrobial, is integrated into all Flowfresh products to inhibit the growth of bacterial odors and guard against degradation from microorganisms.

© (800) 637-7793 x5050

www.valsparflooring.com

### A polisher's best friend

CDCLarue Industries Inc. has introduced Diamond Rings for polishing small rooms or finishing edges.

Diamond Rings can be fitted to the Hum-B Variable speed upright grinder or on any standard 7-inch angle grinder and are available in 12 different grits. Four of these grits are designed to prep the floor and remove gauges and scratch marks left behind by cup wheels in initial prep work. The remaining eight grits are for polishing floors to a high gloss. Diamond Rings are easy to change — just place the ring onto the cup wheel outfitted with a high-strength Velcro pad. Once finished using a ring, it can easily be removed and replaced with the next grit. When used properly, a Diamond Ring can polish up to 9,000 square feet of surface area.

© (866) 954-9700

www.cdclarue.com

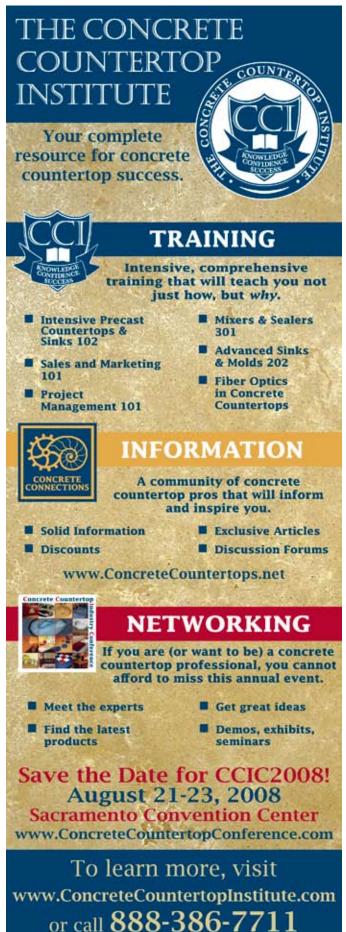
### **New Pulse-Bac vacuums**

Dust vacuums in a new series of Pulse-Bac vacuums from CDCLarue Industries Inc. have a fully automatic nonclogging filtration system that internally flushes filters clear using only vacuum and ambient air, without shakers, blowers or buttons to push.

PTFE-coated SBP twist-on filters eliminate dust particles as small as 0.1 micron. A new steel dolly has five 3-inch nonmarking, conductive caster wheels that provide better stability. Two new handles assist in dumping and moving the tank, and new microprocessors in the PC board increase the proficiency of the patented Pulse-Bac filtration system, guaranteeing filters do not clog during operation.

© (866) 954-9700

www.cdclarue.com





### Mapei develops dust-free technology

Mapei Global Research & Development has engineered an innovative new technology that significantly reduces dust generation from Mapei products used on tile and stone installation job sites.

Performance testing has recorded a 90 percent reduction in the amount of dust released during production, pouring, mixing and use of products containing Mapei's Dust-Free Technology. While the technology will be applied to a wide range of cementbased products as part of Mapei's longrange operations strategy, management selected Ultraflex 2 professionalgrade, polymer-modified mortar as the first product implementing the new technology, because it is the most widely used Mapei tile installation product in the Americas.

**(**0 (800) 426-2734

www.mapei.com

### Hole saw cuts tough materials

Bosch Power Tools and Accessories introduced its new carbide hole saw, the industry's first hole saw specifically designed for the toughest construction materials.

The carbide hole saw can easily cut through wood, ceramic tile (floor and wall), brick and cinder block, cement board, fiber cement board, and plastic. Its diamond-ground carbide teeth are

durable and powerful, for fast removal of materials. The drop-shaped chip clearance slots allow for greater chip and dust removal, resulting in uninterrupted

The carbide line has 19 cups ranging from 1 inch to 4 1/8 inches. For multiple cutting applications, Bosch has two sets available. Each set contains two carbide tipped pilot bits and the quick-change mandrel (1 3/8 inches). The eight-piece set includes five carbide cups ranging from 1 3/16 inches to 2 1/4 inches and the five-piece set has two cups: 3 1/4 inches and 4 1/8 inches.

www.boschtools.com

Clean up with the HOS

The new HOS Orbital Floor Machine is an all-inone low-moisture cleaning machine for carpet and hard floors.

The machine is engineered to liberate and absorb soil by utilizing orbital drive technology, which creates the amount of agitation needed to remove soil from carpet and hard floor surfaces. It works especially well to encapsulate or for green cleaning. The machine is designed to fit a variety of attachments to scrub, polish, strip, sand, wax and clean hardwood floors, vinyl, tile, grout, concrete, asphalt, brick, stone and all types of residential and commercial carpets and rugs.

www.hrubyclean.com

### Portable air heaters from DESA

The new Pro-Tough series of portable forced air heaters from DESA Heating are easier to maneuver and more portable than traditional forced air heaters. The heavy-duty, wheelbarrowinspired design features ergonomic handles and a single 10-inch pneumatic tire, making it easy to transport through even the roughest construction sites.

Pro-Tough is available in 100,000-Btu, 150,000-Btu and 200,000-Btu models, each with 13.5-gallon fuel tank and built-in thermostat. The 100,000-Btu/hour model will heat 2,400 square feet, the 150,000-Btu/hour model will heat 3,500 square feet, and the 200,000-Btu/hour model will heat 4,700 square feet. The new models are designed to eliminate the lower-back stress caused by lifting and moving "portable" heaters around a job site. Fuel options include kerosene, diesel, jet fuel and fuel oil. Pro-Tough is 15 percent quieter than similar heaters.

**(**0 (866) 672-6040

👣 www.desa.com

### Water-retention coating served up in a six-pack

L&M Construction Chemicals now offers E-Con in a highly concentrated (eleven-to-one) quart-size six-pack.

E-Con is a concentrated liquid placed on fresh concrete that prevents premature and rapid loss of moisture from the concrete surface, minimizing the negative effects of rapid drying conditions due to high temperature, low humidity, high winds and direct sunlight. Besides offering early-on water retention, E-Con has been tested and

proven to provide more production, considerably less abrasion on blade surfaces. and minimized surface stickiness and surface wind crusting.

The new size is the perfect formulation for

quick-mixing in standard 3 1/2-gallon hand-held, pump-up pressure concrete finishing sprayers. Just pour in one quart of E-con and fill the balance of the sprayer with clean water. The new concentration is also available in fivegallon pails for 55 gallons or one-gallon jugs for 10 gallons of spray.

E-Con works by laying down a patented, one-molecule-thick lubrication



film barrier to make power trowels work smoother and with less effort. E-Con can also be mixed and sprayed from the spray tank reservoirs of power trowels.

L&M's E-Con is VOC-compliant and endorsed by manufacturers of finishing power trowels for controlling early evaporation and minimizing friction and wear.

**(**0 (800) 839-9887

www.lmcc.com



### Cleaning system uses sand

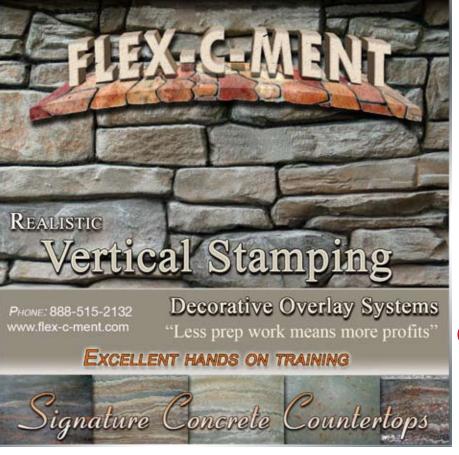
The new Wet Sand Blasting System from Water Cannon is designed to remove unwanted surface contamination such as rust, scale, loose paint, barnacles and debris. The sand and high-pressure water work together using venturi-siphon technology to safely clean metals, concrete and other similar surfaces.

The Water Cannon Wet Sand Blast System quick connects to the end of a commercial pressure washer wand. It draws sand automatically through a 25-foot reinforced lightweight feed hose by using an engineered selfventing pickup tube. The venturi-siphon technology eliminates the need for an air feed system or other heavy and bulky equipment. Systems are available that deliver pressures of up to 6,000 psi and flow rates of up to 8 gallons per minute. While the maximum sand flow is 12 pounds per minute, the operator can use fingertip control to reduce media volume to 2 pounds per minute. It will work with most dry media, such as glass beads, walnut shells, baking soda, black beauty, and a full array of synthetic or natural products in sizes from 16 grit to 60 grit.

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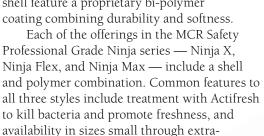






### Ninja gloves and Tribal eyewear

MCR Safety is touting a new line of work gloves: Ninja X N9674 Bi-Polymer Coated Palm and Fingertips. The 15-gauge gloves with a nylon-spandex shell feature a proprietary bi-polymer coating combining durability and soft



large. MCR Safety is a licensed supplier of gloves made with

Dyneema.

In eyewear
news, MCR Safety's
Professional Grade
eyewear has been
expanded to include
two distinctive styles — Tribal
and Tribal V. Both feature
non-slip gel temple sleeves
for a comfortable fit that grips.

Additional features include sleek dual lens design, hybrid temples, and a gel-padded nosepiece. Multiple frame colors and a wide offering of lens color options are available for both styles.

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www.mcrsafetyinfo.com



### On the Web

The C.H. Hanson Co. has unveiled a new Web site that fully demonstrates its new, innovative products. The company is a full-line manufacturer of stencils, metal tags and other marking, measuring and identification accessories.

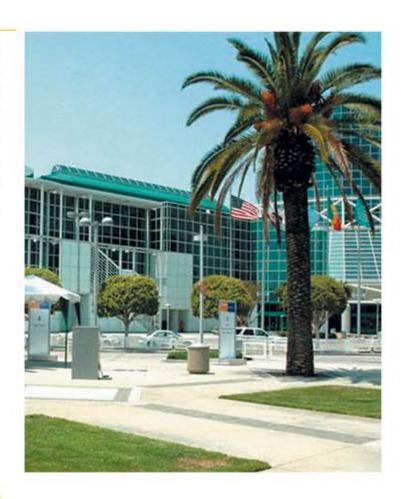
The site now offers an easy-to-navigate catalog of all C.H. Hanson offerings broken down by intuitive categories. Other fieatures include product videos, a call-out section for new products, a company history section, recent media coverage, a way for inventors to submit their ideas directly to C.H. Hanson, and a list of leading distributors that carry C.H. Hanson products

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### **Correction**

The September/October 2007 issue of Concrete Decor included a series of photos from Glen Roman at Newlook. The photos had been submitted for a previous article and were used by mistake. We regret the error and any confusion it may have caused.

### **American Concrete Institute**

### **ACI unveils September slate**

The American Concrete Institute released several new publications in September.

503.7-07: Specification for Crack Repair by Epoxy Injection — This specification gives requirements for repairing cracks in concrete with injections of two-component epoxyresin adhesive.

ITG-4.3R-07: Report on Structural Design and Detailing for High-Strength Concrete in Moderate to High Seismic Applications — This document presents a literature review on seismic design using high-strength concrete. The document is organized in chapters addressing the structural design of columns, beams, beam-column joints, and structural walls made with high-strength concrete, and focuses on aspects most relevant for seismic design.

349-06: Code Requirements for Nuclear Safety-Related Concrete Structures and Commentary — This standard covers the proper design and construction of concrete structures that form part of a nuclear power plant and that have nuclear safety-related functions.

207.2R-07: Report on Thermal and Volume Change Effects on Cracking of Mass Concrete — This report presents a discussion of the effects of heat generation and volume change on the design and behavior of mass concrete elements and structures. Emphasis is placed on the effects of restraint on cracking and the effects of controlled placing temperatures, concrete strength requirements, and material properties on volume change.

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www.concrete.org

### American National Standards Institute Global cooperation pioneer honored

Kathleen Riley (Kitty) Kono, who recently retired as vice president of global cooperation at ASTM International, received the Astin-Polk International Standards Medal from the American National Standards Institute.

ANSI honored Kono, who filled the ASTM International global cooperation position since its creation in 2001, for expanding the role of standards in international trade and regulation and establishing networks among standards development organizations worldwide, particularly in developing nations.

www.astm.org

### Association of Equipment Manufacturers

### New concrete-cutting guidelines stress buried hazards

To encourage safety on the job site, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers has developed Best Practice Guidelines for Addressing Buried Hazards. The guidelines document was prepared by the association's Masonry and Concrete Saw Manufacturers Institute, which is made up of more than a dozen companies.

The SMI buried hazards guidelines stress the importance of proper operator training, planning and foresight. The SMI guidelines urge operators of concrete-cutting, sawing and drilling equipment to be well prepared, use observation skills and common sense, take all available and appropriate steps to verify buried utility locations, ensure that all identified utilities have been completely shut down, use appropriate personal protective equipment, and continue to exercise vigilance throughout the cutting process.

The SMI guidelines are presented in a "tips" format that covers locating and disabling a variety of hazards. The guidelines therefore also discuss implementation of a wellrehearsed response plan. Finally, the guidelines review the use of appropriate personal protective equipment.

SMI sought input from the Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association on the guidelines.

www.aem.org





### **Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association** Lineup for 2008 convention announced

The Concrete Sawing and Drilling Association has announced its lineup of presentation speakers for its 2008 convention at Red Rock Casino, Resort and Spa March 4-8 in Las Vegas.

The theme for the 36th annual gathering of cutting professionals is "Adventure."

Returning keynote speaker Charles Vander Kooi will offer a new session on "Exit Strategies." Steven Witt, director of the Directorate of Construction at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, will make a presentation as part of the OSHA/CSDA Alliance. Additional sessions will include "Advanced Methods for Concrete Corrections, Surface Prep and Polishing," "Maximizing Wire Saw Performance," "Collections and Receivables" and "Online Training." CSDA roundtables will address "Hydraulic or Hi-cycle: What Best Fits your Company's Needs?" and "Securing Your Business Future with Business Succession." The convention will also feature the popular Tech Fair, a one-day tabletop exhibition.

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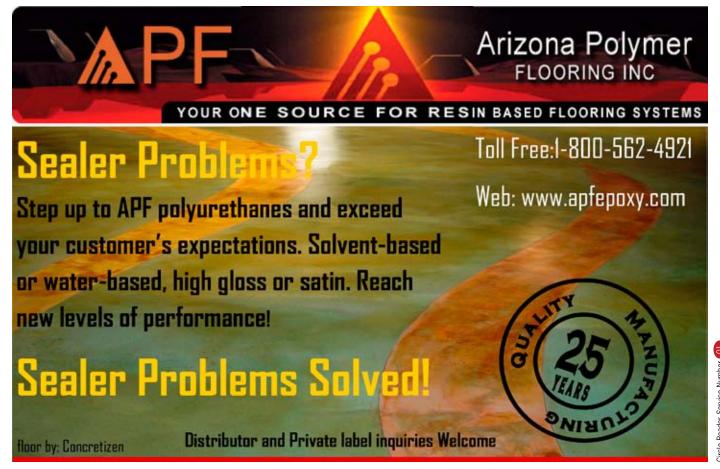
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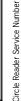
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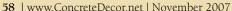
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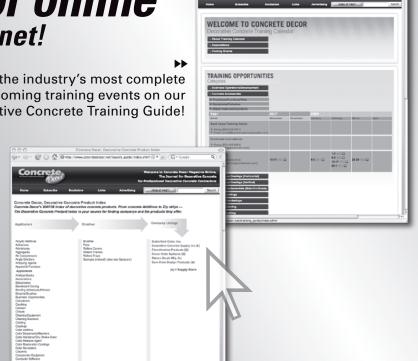
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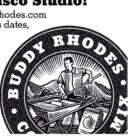




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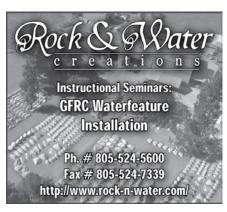






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Although Shelley and Guy Chomistek of Rafter C Precast Concrete are no strangers to custom concrete countertops, this recent bathroom project held some unique creative challenges.

"We were contacted by a local car buff to transform his bathroom into a true 'men's room," says Shelley. "He wanted something very different." And that's exactly what they gave him.

In order to reflect their client's enthusiasm for classic cars, the Chomisteks incorporated a wide variety of auto parts into their design. In addition to the off-the-shelf elements like the shock stool and radial repair kit, hanging front and center is a custom-made mirror fashioned from a Model A whitewall tire. Look closely and you can also see gearshift towel hooks in the reflection.

But the focal point of the room is the 3-inch industrial-style concrete countertop. Using the Cheng Pro-Formula Mix Charcoal blend, the Chomisteks cast it upside down and then set it atop a classic red Mastercraft toolbox. Shelley says they were particularly happy with the three working car gauges set into the backsplash. They're the best feature in the room, she says, because when the lights go out the gauges glow, serving as NASCAR-themed nightlights.

This theme room was a bit of a departure from the kinds of projects the Chomisteks usually see in their Medicine Hat, Alberta, business.

"Typically, clients just get us to do the counter, and then they design the room," Shelley says. With this project, she says, "the client gave us a lot of creative freedom."

And this bathroom, part of the client's extensive basement remodel, was only the beginning. The Chomisteks are currently working in another part of the basement on a bar in the style of a 1950s ice cream parlor.

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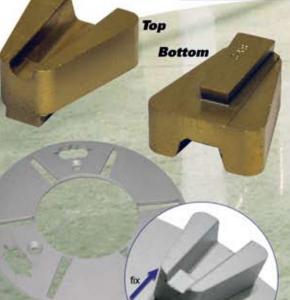
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