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OF DECORATIVE
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FROM THE editor's DESK

Dear Readers,

We're proud of what we achieved at the Charlotte Rescue Mission in March. Our workshops contributed an estimated \$250,000 worth of work to the facility. The teams created a more inspiring, inviting environment for the people who live there, and the improvements also help the campus better blend into a gentrifying neighborhood.

But we like to think that the decorative concrete industry as a whole got something out of it too.

The project — and the nearby Concrete Decor Show — garnered attention on Charlotte TV news and in the local newspaper. Was it a coincidence that I chatted on the phone with a reporter from the Wall Street Journal a couple of days later about trends in decorative concrete? Probably not. "Concrete has gone far beyond sidewalks and fallout shelters, and now it's increasingly popular in home décor," stated the article, by Megan Buerger, in its opening paragraph.

We've always seen part of our mission at *Concrete Decor* as spreading the word about the seemingly limitless possibilities of decorative concrete creation and design. It's a trade making an enormous impact across the country and worldwide in public, commercial and private spaces.

But let's face it — the magazine reaches mainly contractors and people interested in the building trades.

We proved this year that the Concrete Decor Show and the nonprofit makeover that accompanies it allow us to preach decorative concrete to the general public, too.

The Wall Street Journal and Charlotte news have been converted. Who's next?

We're creating potential customers everywhere we go. Supporters of the Charlotte Rescue Mission may well hire the pros who participated in the makeover to do work at their homes. People who walk by the Mission's grand new stamped entrance may do the same. And, of course, the more times people see decorative concrete on TV and in the news, the better.

One way or another, slowly but surely, we're winning them over.

Thanks to all of you who came to see us in Charlotte, and a special thank you to our exhibitors, sponsors, trainers, educators and product donors. We could not have done it without all of you. It's your Show too.

We look forward to seeing all of you next year at the 2014 Concrete Decor Show.

Sincerely,



John Strieder
Editor



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CONCRETE

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The Four W's of Business Strategy

by Jacob Webb

On the cover: Jeff Hershberger of Deco-Crete Supply, Orrville, Ohio, applies sealer to a new stamped entryway at the Charlotte Rescue Mission as part of the community workshops during the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. Kingdom Products was the official color sponsor for the project (and the Concrete Decor Show), and almost 30 other companies donated product to help complete the makeover at the Charlotte Rescue Mission.

For more about the projects that took place at the Charlotte Rescue Mission, see page 26. For a first-person account of the stamped project from lead trainer Jason Geiser, see page 61.

Photo by Steven Ochs



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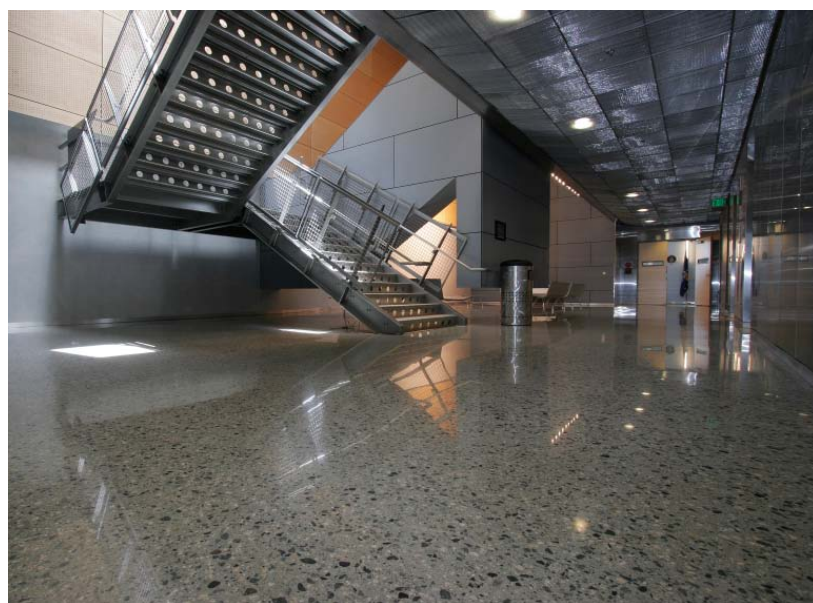
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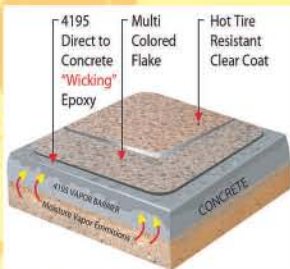
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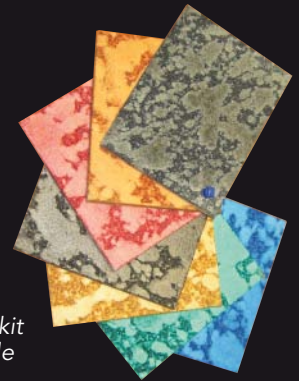


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Doug Carlton operates Carlton Concrete Inc. in Visalia, Calif. He can be reached at carltondoug@comcast.net. See Doug's column, "Carlton's Corner," on page 59.



Jennifer A. Faller is vice president of operations for The Professionals, a polished concrete contracting company in Greensboro, N.C. She is also co-chairman of the board of directors of the Concrete Polishing Association of America. Contact her at jfaller@pcpa.biz. See Jennifer's article on page 56.



Jason Geiser owns Deco-Crete Supply and Cornerstone Concrete Designs, both based in Orrville, Ohio. He can be contacted at jason@deco-cretesupply.com. See Jason's article on page 61.



David Padgett is president of Concrete Polishing Solutions, a manufacturer of equipment for grinding and polishing concrete. He can be reached at david.padgett@go2cps.com. See David's article on page 50.



Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Contact him at trowelanderror@protrade.pub.com. See Chris' article on page 36.



Jacob Webb, MBA, is a small-business strategy consultant and co-founder and vice president of NewLook International Inc., where he is primarily responsible for business development, sales and marketing. Reach him at jacob@getnewlook.com. See Jacob's column, "Fundamentals of Business," on page 24.



Travis Wilkerson is president and co-owner of TW Cleaning Services Inc. He is certified by the National Stone Care Institute and is a certified HTC Superfloor Installer. He can be reached at twcsinc219@comcast.net. See Travis' article on page 54.



Ray Wilkerson is general managing partner of a group of family-operated businesses that includes Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC and its polished and decorative concrete division DreamKrete, with offices in Richmond, Va., and Groveland, Fla. Contact him at twcsinc219@comcast.net. See Ray's article on page 54.

Talk back! Weigh in online at ConcreteDecor.net

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INDUSTRY NEWS

T.B. Penick receives patent for Pervious Concrete Elements

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has granted a patent to San Diego construction company T.B. Penick & Sons Inc. for a new, innovative building material called Pervious Concrete Elements. Pervious Concrete Elements reportedly provides a smoother, finer surface than traditional pervious concrete and, at the same time, addresses pervious concrete's aesthetic deficiencies.

Pervious Concrete Elements offers high water permeability and excellent durability. It's environmentally friendly and can be installed cost-effectively. Because of its exceptionally smooth surface, PCE feels extremely soft underfoot and is conducive to wheelchairs, walkers and heeled shoes. Due to its texture and appearance, PCE offers a palette for unlimited aesthetic applications, including integral color and

new faces

Dirk Bremm, senior vice president of Construction Chemicals Americas division, BASF

Craig Caliva, territory manager for Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, Husqvarna Construction Products

Carlos Gomez, district manager for northwest Mexico, Husqvarna Construction Products

Héctor Melo Goytortúa, Mexico sales and technical support representative, Dur-A-Flex Inc.

Tricia Ladely, director, ACI Foundation

Gary Morrisette, equipment applications manager for central United States, Husqvarna Construction Products

Ruben Rodriguez, territory manager for northeast Mexico, Husqvarna Construction Products

Jeff Takec, vice president of sales and marketing, Rudd Co. Inc.



Photos by Steven Ochis

A Showdown at the Polishing Arena

Xtreme Polishing Systems, Niagara Machine Inc. and Diamatic went head-to-head in the Polishing Arena at the 2013 Concrete Decor Show. Attendees named Diamatic's guitar the overwhelming favorite. **Top Left:** Xtreme Polishing Systems' entry. **Top Right:** Niagara's entry. **Bottom Left and Right:** Diamatic's entry.



extremely fine, precise decorative aggregate and glass additions.

Byron Klemaske II, executive vice president and head of the Innovative Concrete Group at T.B. Penick & Sons Inc. is the principal developer of Pervious Concrete Elements. Klemaske notes that PCE is a low-maintenance material that protects and extends the life of the pervious concrete bed below it. This is because small aggregate and glass material embedded in the surface of PCE acts as a filter preventing dirt and debris from penetrating to the pervious concrete bed beneath. Additionally, the product's Solar Reflective Index value is improved by the addition and use of decorative aggregates.

Pervious Concrete Elements is not exclusive to T.B. Penick and is available for use by other contractors.

www.tbpenick.com

World of Concrete's Most Innovative Product award winners announced

Hanley Wood has announced the winners of the 2013 Most Innovative Products Award program, held annually at the World of Concrete. There were seven categories this year. Here are three:

Concrete Construction Materials:

Industry Choice: PrimeComposite Structural Slabs, Primekss – Rabine North America LLC; **Experts' Choice:** LTM Concrete Coil Protector, LTM Concrete; and **Editors' Choice:** Aridus Rapid Drying Concrete, Stego Industries LLC, and Lythic Day-1, Lythic Solutions Inc. (tie).

Decorative Concrete Materials**and Equipment: Industry Choice:**

Colorspreader, Colorspreader by Triple Hard Tools; **Experts' Choice:** Deco-Strip, Nox-Crete Products Group; and **Editors' Choice:** Rhino RL450, NewGrind Inc.

General Tools and Equipment: Industry Choice: Dam it Dams Portable Cofferdam System, Dam It Dams; **Experts' Choice:** GSL 2 Surface Laser, Bosch Power Tools & Accessories; and **Editors' Choice:** Hilti PS 1000 X-Scan Rader Detection System, Hilti Inc.

The MIP award program allows attendees and readers of Hanley Wood publications a chance to vote for the products they judge as innovative. A panel of industry experts reviewed and selected MIP Award winners. The editors of Concrete Construction, Masonry Construction and The Concrete Producer also reviewed and selected products.

www.votemip.com

ACI releases 2013 Manual of Concrete Practice

The American Concrete Institute has released its 2013 edition of the Manual of Concrete Practice.

Containing more than 220 documents, the MCP is the most comprehensive and largest single source of concrete practice information available in one set of books. The MCP contains all of the ACI documents needed to answer any questions about code requirements, specifications, tolerances, concrete proportions, construction methods, evaluation of test results, and many more topics. The MCP also includes the 2011 version of ACI 318, Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete and Commentary.

[\(248\) 848-3800](tel:2488483800)

www.concrete.org

Sheryl Meyers receives Woman of Distinction award

The Women in Concrete has announced the winner of their third Woman of Distinction award: Sheryl Meyers, operations manager with Kut-Rite.

In her nine years with Kut-Rite, Meyers has held various positions, and she was elevated to operations manager in 2011. She is a key member of a team that transformed the company into a major player in the concrete polishing and scarifying market. To this day, Meyers remains the voice of Kut-Rite when it comes to the scarifying line of equipment.

www.womeninconcrete.org

ASCC, DCC elects officers and directors

The American Society of Concrete Contractors has elected new officers and directors to the ASCC board and the ASCC Safety and Risk Management Council. Mike Poppoff, Poppoff Inc., Moxee, Wash., has been elected president.

In addition, the Decorative Concrete Council, a specialty council of the ASCC, re-elected Chris Klemaske, T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif., as council director. Paul Schneider, Cincinnati, Ohio, was re-elected secretary/treasurer. Stevie Ray Lloyd, Forest, Va., Neil Roach, Danville, Ill., and Chris Sullivan, Littleton, Colo., were elected as new DCC directors.

Re-elected as directors of the DCC Advisory Council were: Nick Adams, Cleveland, Ohio; John Belarde, Woodenville, Wash.; Clark Branum, Marysville, Wash.; Tim Fisher, Louisville, Colo.; Marshall Hoskins, Columbia, S.C.; Dionne Hutchings Ojeda, Dallas, Texas; Gregory Hyde Hryniewicz, Annapolis, Md.; Jim Mullins, Naperville, Ill.; Kevin Percy, Walpole, Mass.; Rob Sousa, East Providence, R.I.; and Wes Vollmer, San Antonio, Texas. 📞

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PRODUCT NEWS

COATINGS

New metallic coating from Dur-A-Flex

Dur-A-Flex Inc. has introduced Reflexions. The poured-in-place material is a combination of Dur-A-Flex's resin system with the latest in pigments, resulting in specialty effects.

Available in 12 standard colors that can be used separately or with accents, Reflexions offers seamless beauty for a variety of industries, including food service, retail, education and hospitality.

In addition to its smooth, glasslike finish, stain resistance and solid wear characteristics, Reflexions offers UV stability that ensures consistent color for the life of the floor. Reflexions complies with VOC regulations and California specification section 01350 (relating to indoor air quality), making it a system of choice on projects designed to earn LEED credits.

☎ (877) 251-5418

🌐 www.dur-a-flex.com



New glow-in-the-dark coating from AGT

Ambient Glow Technology's new Safetycoat is a high-performance hybrid polyurea coating that is photoluminescent. It's designed to provide ambient light for pathways, stairs, handrails and obstacles so that individuals can discern these elements in dark conditions. It can be easily applied to virtually any clean, nonoil-based surface with a roller, brush or spray gun.

The photoluminescent properties need just 15 minutes of light to charge and will provide more than 10 hours of glow time. Safetycoat is 100 percent solids and contains zero VOCs. It exceeds New York City RS6-1 requirements for photoluminescent exit path markings.

☎ (877) 248-8641

🌐 www.ambientglowtechnology.com

UGL's Designer Drylock waterproofer

United Gilsonite Laboratories added a new product to its Drylock line of masonry waterproofers. Designer Drylock is formulated with an advanced color system that imparts a granitelike filler product with multicolored specks, an economical alternative to solid-surface color.

The latex coating can be brushed, rolled or sprayed on interior and exterior surfaces, and it dries in approximately three hours. Cleanup is easy with soap and water.

☎ (570) 344-1202

🌐 www.ugl.com

COUNTERTOPS & CAST CONCRETE

Resurfacing kit from Concrete Coatings

In an effort to help contractors and homeowners reduce costs associated with the GraniteLook Faux Granite system, Concrete Coatings Inc. has introduced the GraniteLook Kit.



Each kit includes enough material to resurface 60 square feet of countertops or floors. The kits include seven C-Series Liquid Colorants, which can be used in an almost limitless combination to achieve various effects, including light and dark granite.

☎ (800) 443-2871

🌐 www.concretecoatingsinc.com/granitelook

HARDSCAPING

Saw offers multiple cutting angles

The new Curbie Curb Cutting Saw, developed and marketed through a joint venture between Phoenix Curb

Machines and Stone Construction Machinery, is designed to slice concrete at nearly every angle.

The compact machine incorporates the MFASH, a multifunctional articulating saw head that cuts horizontally at pavement level for curbs, slices vertically in pavement, safety barriers or walls, and any needed angle in between. Powered by an 80-horsepower Yanmar diesel engine, Curbie easily handles up to a 54-inch diamond blade for deep cuts.

☎ (888) 443-6390

🌐 www.phoenixcurbmachines.com



MAINTENANCE

Removal products attack graffiti and stamped-concrete sealers

Nox-Crete Products Group has announced two new removal products: Deco-Strip and Tag-Erase.

Deco-Strip is an acrylic sealer removal product designed specifically for stamped concrete. The biodegradable product restores stamped concrete to its original condition without scrubbing, scraping or creating harmful waste. Deco-Strip quickly penetrates and softens acrylic decorative concrete sealers. Simply rinse Deco-Strip with a pressure washer and the surface is ready for a fresh coat of decorative sealer.

Tag-X restores porous, graffiti-defaced surfaces to their original appearance. This biodegradable remover softens and lifts graffiti from concrete, stone, brick and concrete masonry, allowing it to be easily removed with a pressure washer.

☎ (800) 669-2738

🌐 www.nox-crete.com

OVERLAYS & TOPPINGS

Rapid Set's self-leveling underlayment

Rapid Set has launched LevelFlor, an advanced hydraulic cement-based self-leveling underlayment that can be used both indoors and outdoors. LevelFlor rapidly levels, maintains workability for 30 minutes and produces a smooth, strong surface with high bond strength. It is designed for fast-track application, so it can accept foot traffic in approximately four hours and be coated in six hours at 70 F. Moisture-sensitive flooring can be placed after 16 hours.

The work area should be arranged to permit continuous placement without cold joints. LevelFlor can be poured or pumped onto the prepared and primed substrate with a minimum thickness of 1/8 inch and maximum thickness of 1 inch.

☎ (800) 929-3030

🌐 www.ctscement.com

POWER TOOLS

New scabblers from CS Unitec

CS Unitec's new triple-head concrete scabblers efficiently remove laitance and expose aggregate for the application of sealants and

coatings. Three tungsten carbide-tipped pistons produce 7,200 blows per minute to reduce,

roughen and texture concrete. Models 153.5200 and 153.5250 consume only 15.9 cubic feet per minute and have a vibration level (AEQ) of 8.7 meters per second squared. Both have a noise level of 98 decibels and weigh 11 1/2 pounds.

An optional dust shroud removes dust when attached to one of CS Unitec's industrial vacuum systems, providing a cleaner and safer work environment. There are two styles of TCT carbide pistons: Cruciform heads designed for leveling concrete and preparing cracks prior to repair and Bush heads designed for exposing aggregate for the application of coatings.

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🌐 www.csunitec.com



POLISHING

Kut-Rite's new grinder-polisher

Kut-Rite Manufacturing recently unveiled the Conquer20 SS. The machine builds on the features of other models in the Conquer series. The low-cost, lightweight machine is targeted to the residential contractor.

Although it will serve as Kut-Rite's entry-level machine, the SS offers most of the options of the original Conquer20. Two of its main features are its ability to be easily converted into a countertop grinder-

polisher and its overall maneuverability. It can be broken down by hand and transported in three easy steps, and it weighs just 210 pounds. It also offers a locking bowl design, enabling it to shift from planetary to rotary modes. The Conquer20 SS is ideal for both wet and dry uses. The tilt-back bowl design allows quick, safe and easy tool changes.

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🌐 www.kutritemfg.com

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Grinder-edger combo from New Grind

The Scan Combiflex 330 (SC 330) from New Grind acts as two machines in one. The SC 330 features a single 330-millimeter (13-inch) grinding disc that works great for grinding small areas, removing tough coatings and general surface preparation. The SC330 can also be configured as a single-disc edger.

The SC 330 can easily be separated into two different modules for easy and convenient transportation. The disc on the SC 330 can be configured with three, six or nine of New Grind's Scan-On metal or resin diamond tools. This allows the operator to cut more aggressively when necessary (three-tool configuration), or grind soft surfaces by spreading out the weight and using more tooling. Sandpaper and ScanPad maintenance pads can also be used with the SC 330.

☎ (855) 744-6648

🌐 www.newgrind.com

HTC pre-separator for dust collection

The HTC Greyline Pre-separator connects to any dust extractor to add an additional stage of filtration. Its bypass valve enables any dust extractor to continuously operate with limited downtime. With the use of the bypass valve you can achieve up to nine bags of dust on the Greyline Pre-separator for every one bag of dust with a dust extractor.

The Greyline Pre-separator utilizes a size of bag that fits on many dust extractors on the market today, and it can easily be adapted for use with any dust extractor on the market.

☎ (877) 482-8700

🌐 www.htc-floorsystems.com



New adhesive removal tools

Nufinish Corp. has released a new line of metal tools designed to remove adhesives. Available in 20 grit and 35 grit, they are capable of removing substantially thicker and more difficult VCT and carpet adhesives than standard tools of comparable grit size.

They are also effective for all surface prep and removal jobs and may be used in place of standard tools.

☎ (866) 550-7933

🌐 www.grindandpolish.com

TOOLS & ACCESSORIES

New tapes for decorative concrete

Intertape Polymer Group Inc. is targeting the decorative concrete industry with the DC line of tape products, specifically designed to meet the needs of contractors, installers and DIYers. Whether you're working with stains and dyes, microtoppings



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Concept by Andre Plouffe



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and overlayments, or exterior stucco and plaster, IPG has developed a solution for that application.

The DC line consists of five products. DC Ultra2in1 is a new double-sided masking tape designed to initially act as a barrier to an overlay application. When the liner is removed, that same strip of tape becomes the carrier for the masking film, protecting the general area from stains and dyes.

DC Blue is IPG's blue masking tape specifically designed to prevent chemical bonding resulting in sealer failure.

DC Orange is a heavy-duty, clean-removal duct tape designed to work on rough surfaces. DC Grout is reinforced tape for strong grout line pulls, and DC Drape is a compact, durable film that prevents overspray and provides solvent-resistant protection.

☎ (800) 474-8273

🌐 www.itape.com

Racatac updates kneepads

Racatac Products Inc. has improved its Racatac with a new EVA kneepad, which is waterproof, flexible and durable.



There are two models in the Racatac line, and both are available with a fully adjustable and easily removable chest support. Made of dual-density foam, the seat and chest support adjust at different angles and heights, and also slide from front to back. This allows users to utilize both hands in various working positions while their backs and knees are fully supported. The Racatac is available with 2-inch or 3-inch casters.

☎ (337) 886-1222

🌐 www.racatac.com

VERTICAL CONCRETE

Shine-free sealer ideal for rockwork

Walttools' new Tru-Block sealer utilizes water-based silicone technology that provides long-term environmental protection without being noticeable to the eye. This is ideal for the vertical concrete contractor when it is imperative that rock and stonescapes appear completely natural and free of any shine, yet the work must be preserved and protected from the elements.

Tru Block is good for almost any porous concrete, stone or block surface where discrete protection is needed, and it is very low in VOCs. It can be applied by sprayer, brush or roller.

☎ (888) 263-5895

🌐 www.walttools.com



SS Vertical Mix is an extremely versatile mix great for vertical, overhead and horizontal surfaces as evident of this hand carved vertical concrete wall behind SS Specialties founder, Doug Bannister.

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enFORCE
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enMAGIC
enPOXY
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EpoSeal 38
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Supreme 2500 High Gloss *
Supreme 2500 PLUS Medium Gloss *
Supreme 3000 High Gloss *
MCP 45 *
MCP 60 *

COATINGS

Water Based 40 Epoxy
Water Based 55 Epoxy
Water Based 60 Urethane Gloss
Water Based 60 Urethane Matte
Poly Pro 38 *
Aliphatic 100% Epoxy
Aliphatic 60% Urethane
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Photos courtesy of Morley Construction

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CONCRETE CONTRACTORS
DECORATIVE CONCRETE COUNCIL PRESENTS

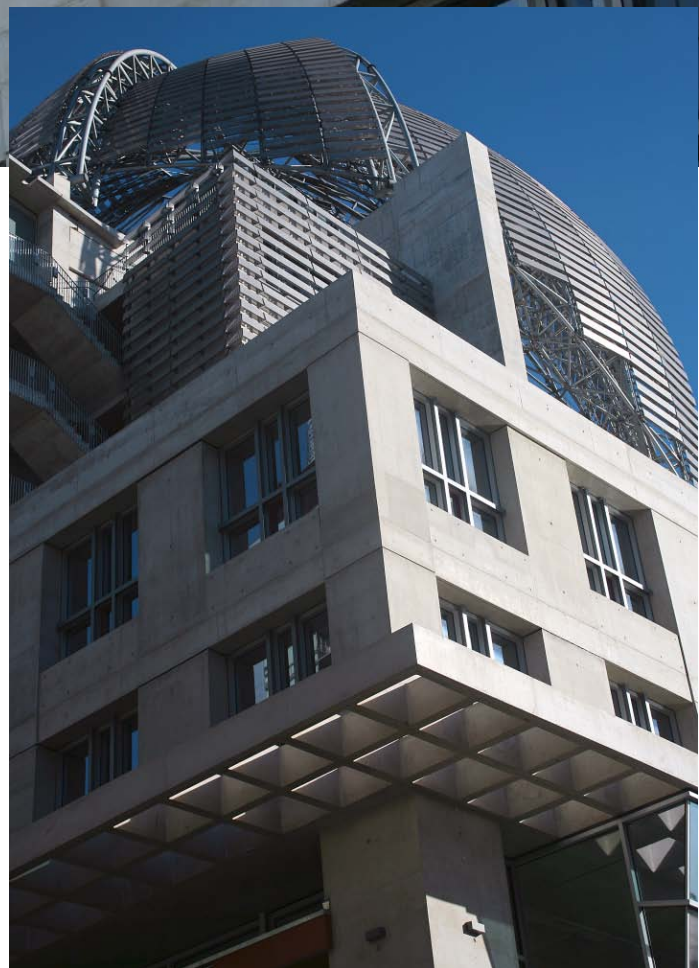
The 2013 Award Winners

The Decorative Concrete Council, a specialty council of the American Society of Concrete Contractors, St. Louis, Mo., has announced the winners of its fifth annual Decorative Concrete Awards competition. The winners were recognized at a ceremony at the World of Concrete, Las Vegas, on Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2013.

San Diego's new Central Library, by Morley Construction, Santa Monica, Calif., won the WOW! Award for best overall project.

The entries were judged by Rebecca Wasieleski, Concrete Contractor magazine; Bob Harris, Decorative Concrete Institute; Chris Sullivan, ChemSystems Inc.; and Michael Paul, of structural engineering firm Duffield Associates.

The Decorative Concrete Council is composed of contractors, manufacturers and suppliers of decorative concrete products. The Council is dedicated to improving the technical and business expertise of the contractors who pursue this specialty market. 📱



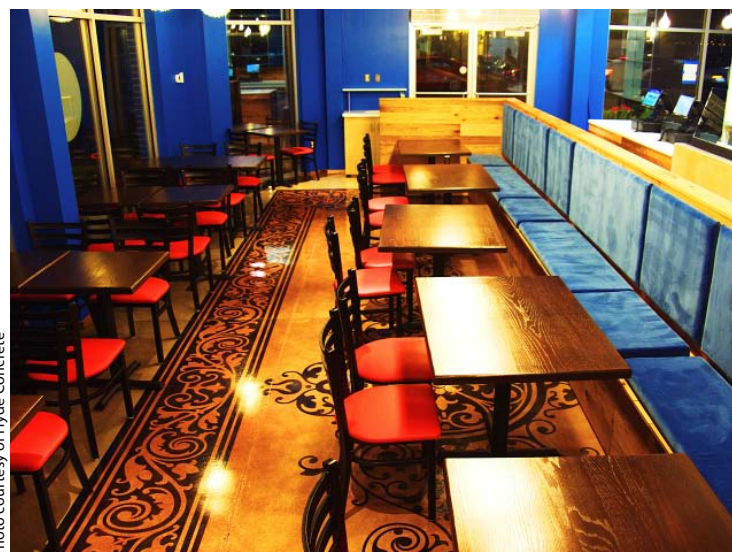
WOW! Award

Morley Construction, Santa Monica, Calif.

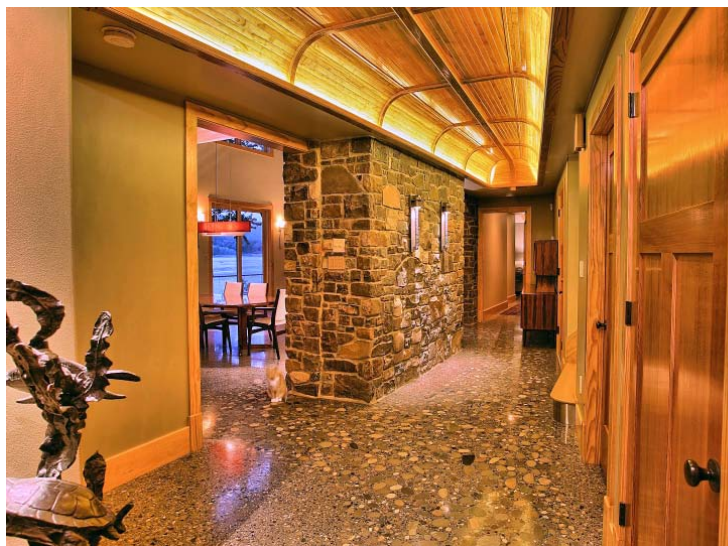
New Central Library, San Diego, Calif.



Cast-In-Place Stamped, Over 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Edwards Concrete Co., Winter Garden, Fla.
Phillips Toyota



Graphics, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Hyde Concrete, Annapolis, Md.
Spice 6



Cast-In-Place Stamped, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place ▲
Salzano Custom Concrete, Centreville, Va.
Manassas Residence

Cast-In-Place Stamped, Under 5,000 Square Feet, Second Place:
 Salzano Custom Concrete, Centreville, Va.
Centreville Residence



Polished, Over 5,000 Square Feet, First Place ▲
T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif.
P742 BEQ Coronado Naval Base

Polished, Over 5,000 Square Feet, Second Place:
 Creative Construction by Design/Surface Tech, Danville, Ill.
Blue Line Lower Level

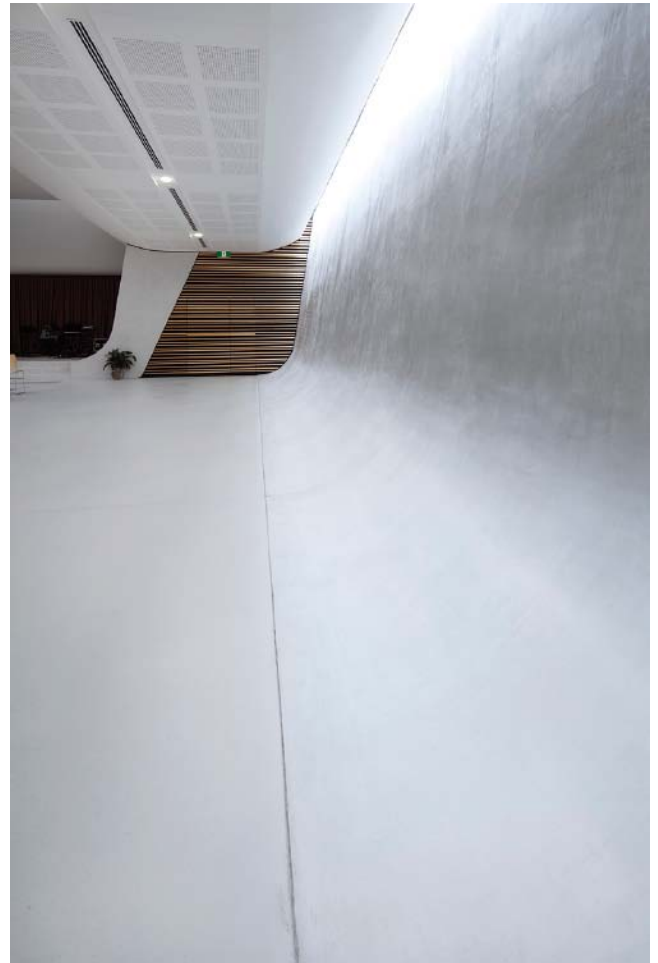


Polished, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Rosebud Concrete, Myerstown, Pa.
The River Lodge on the Susquehanna



Overlays Under 1/4 Inch, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place ▲
Salzano Custom Concrete, Centreville, Va.
Haverhill Apartments

Second Place:
 Concrete Mystique Engraving, Nashville, Tenn.
Lance Residence

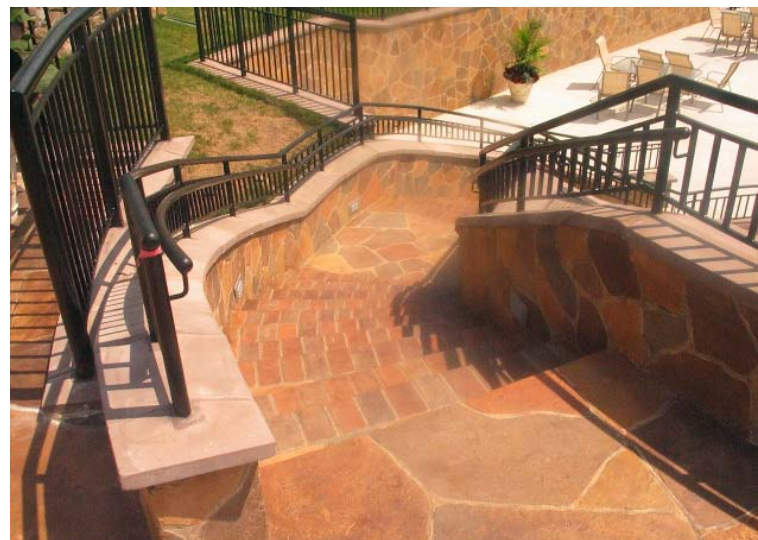


Overlays Under 1/4 Inch, Over 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Honestone, Tuggerah, New South Wales, Australia
St. Barnabas Church



Overlays 1/4 Inch to 2 Inch, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place ▲
Concrete Mystique Engraving, Nashville, Tenn.
Bullard Residence

Second Place::
 Sundek of Illinois, Rolling Meadows, Ill.
Mooncotch Residence



Overlays 1/4 Inch to 2 Inch, Over 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Sundek of Washington, Chantilly, Va.
Cameron Grove Resort & Retirement Center



**Cast-in-Place Special Finishes, Over 5,000 Square Feet,
First Place (tie)**

T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif.
Myriad Botanical Gardens



**Cast-in-Place Special Finishes, Over 5,000 Square Feet,
First Place (tie)**

Belarde Co., Woodinville, Wash.
East Bay Public Plaza



**Cast-in-Place Special Finishes, ▲
Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place**
Tom Ralston Concrete, Santa Cruz, Calif.
Pleasure Point Geo Strata Terraces

Second Place:

New England Hardscapes Inc., Acton, Mass.
Olinger Residence

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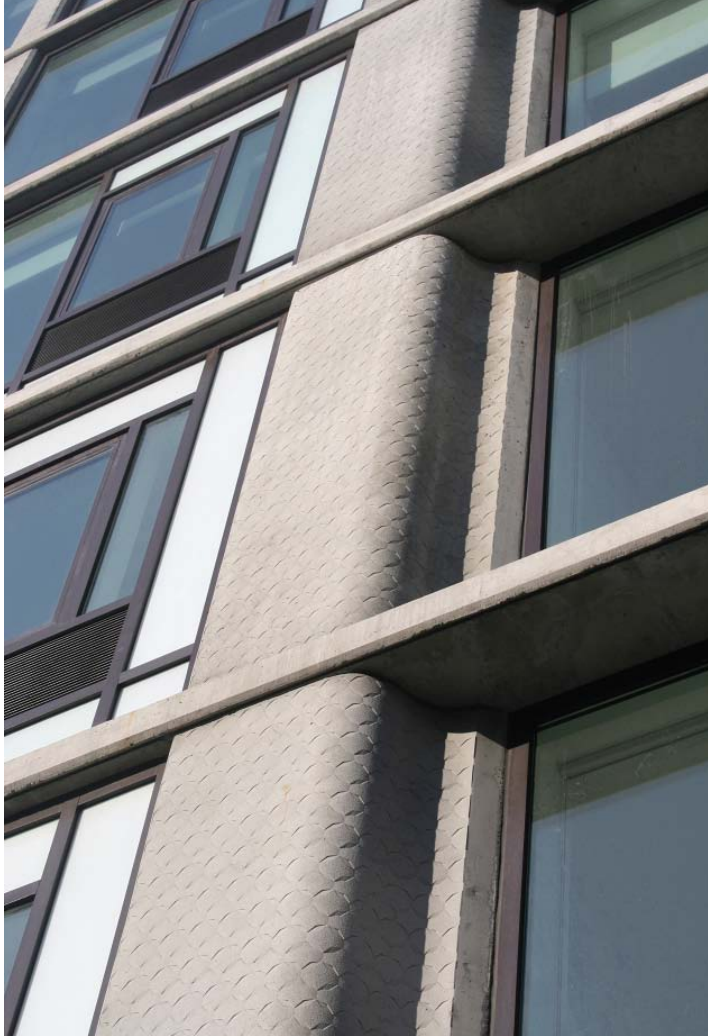
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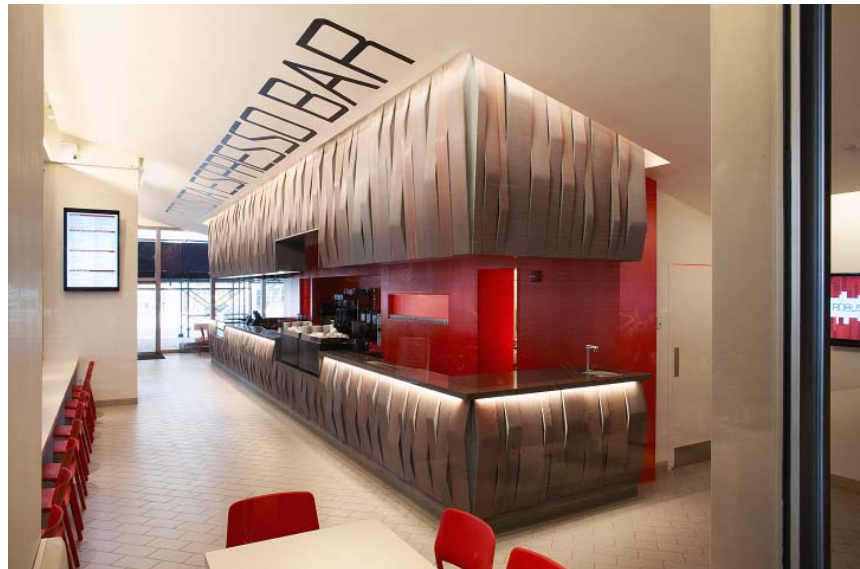


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Vertical Application, Over 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel, Architects PC, New York, N.Y.
TEN23

Second Place:
 Honestone, Tuggerah, New South Wales, Australia
St. Barnabas Church



Vertical Application, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Lavada Inc., Brooklyn, N.Y.
Robusta Espresso Bar



Countertops, First Place
Hyde Concrete, Annapolis, Md.
Schutt Residence

Second Place:
 Brooks Construction Services Inc., Sioux Falls, S.D.
Dining With the Stars



Concrete Artistry, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
New England Hardscapes Inc., Acton, Mass.
Olinger Residence

Second Place:
 Concrete Mystique Engraving, Nashville, Tenn.
Hite Residence



Multiple Applications, Over 5,000 Square Feet, First Place

T.B. Penick & Sons Inc., San Diego, Calif.

Reunion Trails Park

Second Place:

Belarde Co., Woodinville, Wash.

East Bay Public Plaza



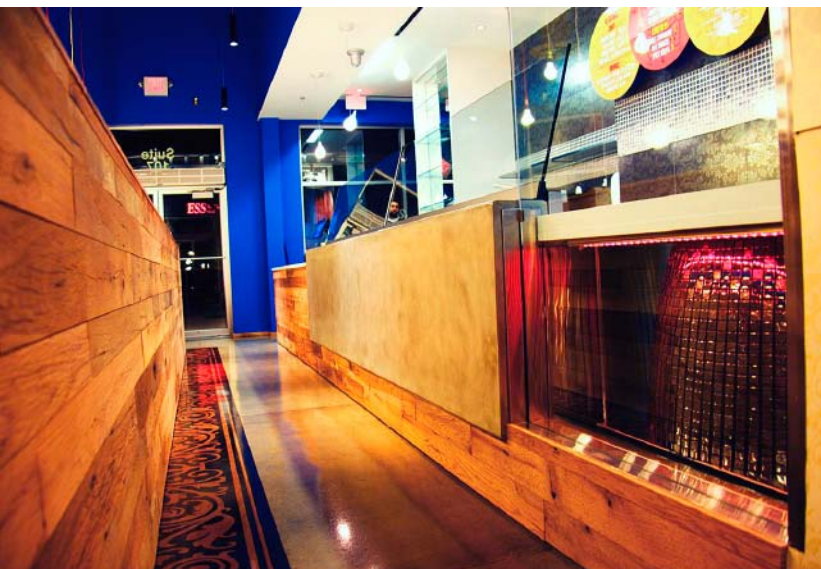
Multiple Applications, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Cornerstone Decorative Concrete, Fennville, Mich.

Hudsonville Winery/Pike 51 Brewery

Second Place:

Artistic Concrete Surfaces, Olathe, Kan.

Holton Residence



Stained, Under 5,000 Square Feet, First Place
Hyde Concrete, Annapolis, Md.

Spice 6

Second Place:

TODDRose Decorative Concrete Inc., Lincoln, Neb.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF BUSINESS

The Four W's of Business Strategy

BUSINESS strategy is the conscience you need for effective decision-making as you wade through the ambiguous waters of entrepreneurship. You face a lot of uncertainty as a decorative concrete business owner, and having a coherent business strategy is fundamental to minimizing that uncertainty.



by Jacob Webb

But strategy is more than simply stating that you intend to move your decorative business from point A to point B. It must involve specific elements that clearly define your company's goals and the direction you will take to achieve them.

A coherent strategy should include four separate and distinct components: long-term goals, a defined scope, a description of your competitive advantage and, finally, the logic by which you plan to achieve your goals.

Let's first define each component and then put some meat on the bones with specific examples.

Goals

A lot has been written about goals. It is not my intent to redefine the significance of a goal — rather, I wish to emphasize specific aspects of goals within the context of developing a strategy for your decorative concrete business.

Of course, your goal must be measurable. It must be realistic. It should challenge you.

And it needs to be a long-term goal. By "long-term" I mean something like becoming the dominant decorative concrete contractor in your market, not something like hitting your third-quarter sales target. A long-term goal is not a target you can just hit and then check off a list. Nope. It will take time to accomplish, and it must be vigorously preserved when achieved.

Your long-term goal must give you direction. Think of it as the "where" that guides your managerial decision-making: Where do you want your decorative concrete business to be? For example, dominating a specific market implies a plan of action you and your team will need to follow.

Also, having a shared direction gives your team a sense of purpose when they work together to achieve a common goal.

Scope

The scope of your decorative concrete business is defined by the actions you will take and what you will pursue. Think of scope as the "what" of your business strategy. What markets, products, technologies, processes and geographies will your decorative business be involved in?

Your scope should also describe the services you will provide your customers. A decorative concrete contractor, for example, might state his scope as advice and concrete polishing services for commercial retail customers in the Southern California market. Or perhaps his market research might indicate this scope is too broad and it should be narrowed down to commercial retail customers with properties in excess of 100,000 square feet in the Southern California market. He may also describe in his scope the operations processes he intends to do in-house and which processes he intends to outsource. Will reducing concrete dye inventory help him maximize profits or will increasing inventory ensure his customer service is unmatched?

One of the challenges entrepreneurs (like you and me) face is managing all the opportunities they are presented with. So it is not uncommon for a scope to also define the opportunities you should not pursue. Suppose that while you are staining a customer's restaurant floor, the owner asks if you would also stain the wood pool deck at his house. Is that within your scope? Should you break from your

strategic focus just to take advantage of an income-producing opportunity? Having a well-defined scope will help reduce confusion about whether or not you should take advantage of new opportunities. It will allow you to remain focused on accomplishing your long-term goals.

Competitive advantage

There are a variety of competitive advantages you may develop. The list of possibilities includes (but is not limited to) lower installation costs than your competition, the ability to respond faster when customers change their mind, higher quality and fewer installation errors, stronger customer loyalty, a more conveniently located showroom location, secured exclusivity of resources, greater access to resources, more relationships with key members of the supply chain, or a more efficient inventory management system.

Essentially speaking, a competitive advantage means you're able to provide better service than your competition or provide it at a lower cost. In fact, cost and quality are generally the two dimensions in which a competitive advantage is summarized.

Your competitive advantage is the "how" of a business strategy. It defines how you will achieve your long-term goals within the context of your scope. Consider the polishing contractor mentioned earlier. One way he could become the dominant concrete polishing contractor (the "where") within Orange County's commercial retail market (the "what") is by investing in equipment with higher efficiency ratings than what his competition has (the "how").

Logic

The most important component of a well-developed business strategy is its rationality — the logic. This is the part where you articulate the "why" of your strategy. Why exactly will your scope

and competitive advantage result in the accomplishment of your long-term goal? The logic is the centerpiece of your argument, the rock-hard foundation upon which your successful decorative concrete business strategy will be built.

Consider the following simplified example of a business strategy:

Our strategy is to dominate the Arizona market for decorative concrete restoration by being the premium-quality concrete maintenance service provider.

The goal here is to dominate a defined market — Arizona. The scope is to provide premium concrete restoration services. And the competitive advantage is the premium quality and exclusive nature of the service.

But this example is way too simplistic. It fails to articulate the logic — *why* the strategy will work. So let's look at the following expanded strategy to better understand how logic ties it all together.

Our strategy is to become the dominant player (goal) in Arizona's upper-class residential market for concrete driveway

restoration by providing unique and premium concrete maintenance services (scope). Our exclusive rights and protected access to NewLook's Original Solid Color Stain (competitive advantage) will allow us to charge a premium price for needed driveway restoration that is typically paid for by property owners with discretionary income (logic).

There. Now you see how adding a little specificity and reasoning can turn an incomplete statement of elements into a more coherent business strategy.

Of course, even this expanded example is oversimplified. Successful companies spend considerable time composing more sophisticated strategies with detail that provides needed clarity and managerial focus. 📁

Jacob Webb, MBA, is a small-business strategy consultant and co-founder and vice president of NewLook International Inc., where he is primarily responsible for business development, sales and marketing. Reach him at jacob@getnewlook.com.

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THE MAKEOVER AT THE CHARLOTTE RESCUE MISSION

by Emily Dixon

THE notion that decorative concrete can change lives might seem like a bold idea, but it has never been so apparent than at the Charlotte Rescue Mission, the recipient of this year's community makeover courtesy of the Concrete Decor Show.

The nonprofit organization provides an intensive drug and alcohol recovery program to homeless or about-to-be-homeless men and women. Their goal is to address the spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, social and vocational issues of addiction with each person and return them as contributing members of society. Reportedly, 75 percent of the residents remain clean and sober one year after they finish the program.

Seven areas at the organization's men's campus, known as Rebound, were slated for the makeover as part of the Concrete Decor Show's hands-on workshop component. It was here that artisans, contractors and manufacturers from across the globe came together to gain real-world experience while lending a helping hand to a facility in need. 🛠️

More photos and a list of manufacturers and suppliers that donated to each space are available at ConcreteDecorShow.com.



Adding New Dimensions with Metallic Coatings

The buildings that make up the Charlotte Rescue Mission campus each have a colorful history. Troy Lemon of Cornerstone Decorative Concrete, Holland, Mich., chose to conduct his course, "Adding New Dimensions with Metallics," in an old thrift store. Although the building is now used for storage, the Mission hopes to transform it into office space and conference rooms. While the rest of the building won't be ready for a while, eye-catching metallic-coated floors are in place for the future.

Decorative Effects for the Polishing Contractor

Playing basketball is a popular pastime for residents at the Mission. Wanting to spruce up the existing playing space, Jeremy Wilkerson, DreamKrete, Richmond, Va., teamed up with Cliff Rawlings of HTC and Brad Burns of the Concrete Polishing Association of America to polish the existing concrete floors and create a basketball court. After polishing to 3,000 grit, the team used decorative saw cuts, stencils, and dyes to replicate a court using nontraditional materials. They were helped by the exposure of beautiful multicolored aggregate in the old concrete floor.



Creating a Concrete Fireplace Surround

Making a fireplace surround for a functioning fireplace can be challenge enough, but what about a fireplace that has been out of commission for years? Jeff Kudrick of JM Lifestyles LLC, Randolph, N.J., designed what he calls a "living-place" surround for the residents at the Charlotte Rescue Mission. The surround is designed to look like the base of two trees, and the mantel is full of green plants to complete the idea of the living-place.





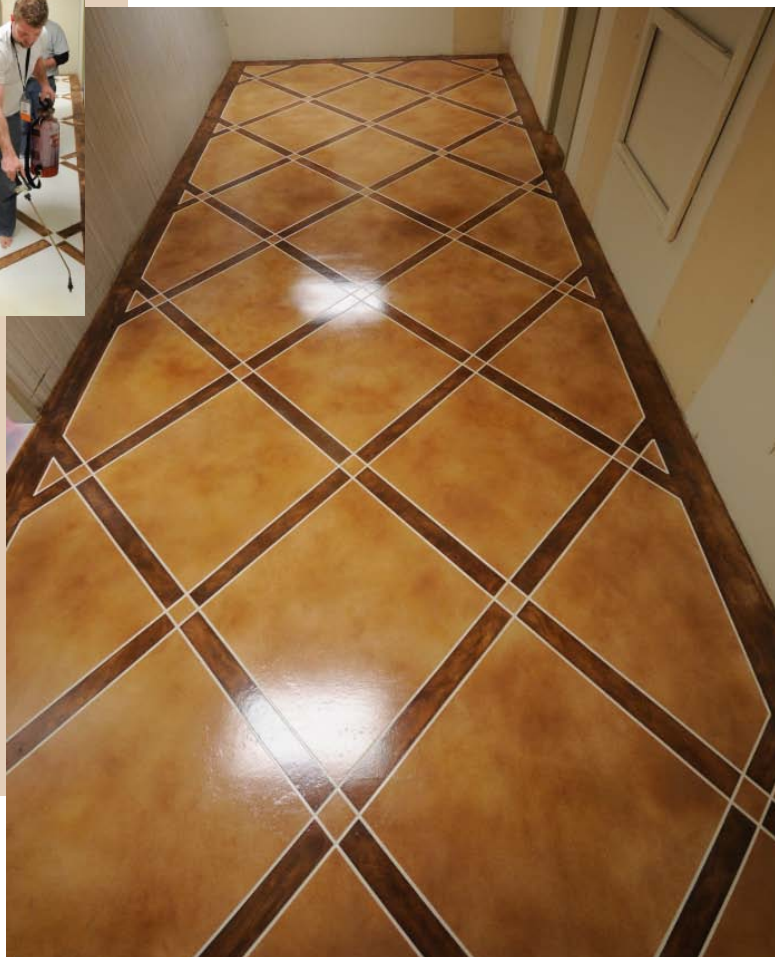
Going Vertical in a Flat World

Wanting to highlight the doorway of the gymnasium where the newly renovated basketball court is housed, Nathan Giffin created an elaborate faux-rock entryway complete with a concrete barbell. Although rainy weather threatened to delay the project, Giffin and his students were able to catch a sun break and stain the rocks for a final touch. The door opens onto the Mission's new patio, which was renovated as part of a preshow project. The organization is already thinking about ways in which they can fully utilize this new space.



Vision and Color in the Heart of the Mission

When residents of the Mission first enter the program, they are housed in the facility's pre-program area. Thanks to Rick Lobdell of Concrete Mystique, Nashville, Tenn., the residents' first impression of the Mission is one of hope and inspiration. The floors were shotblast, and a moisture vapor remediator and an overlay were applied. Then Lobdell and his team of students applied decorative saw cuts, dyes, and hand-painting to transform the surfaces.





The Style of Venetian Plaster with Concrete

Much of the resident's time is spent in the courtyard, where the men play games and relax. Once, a dull block wall surrounded the area. That's not the case anymore, thanks to Tim Couse of Advanced Surface Solutions, Charlotte, N.C. The old wall has been covered in a vertical concrete mix and given new life. A variety of textures have been applied, including Venetian-style and knockdown, and the wall is colored in subtle earth tones to make it blend into the outdoor space.

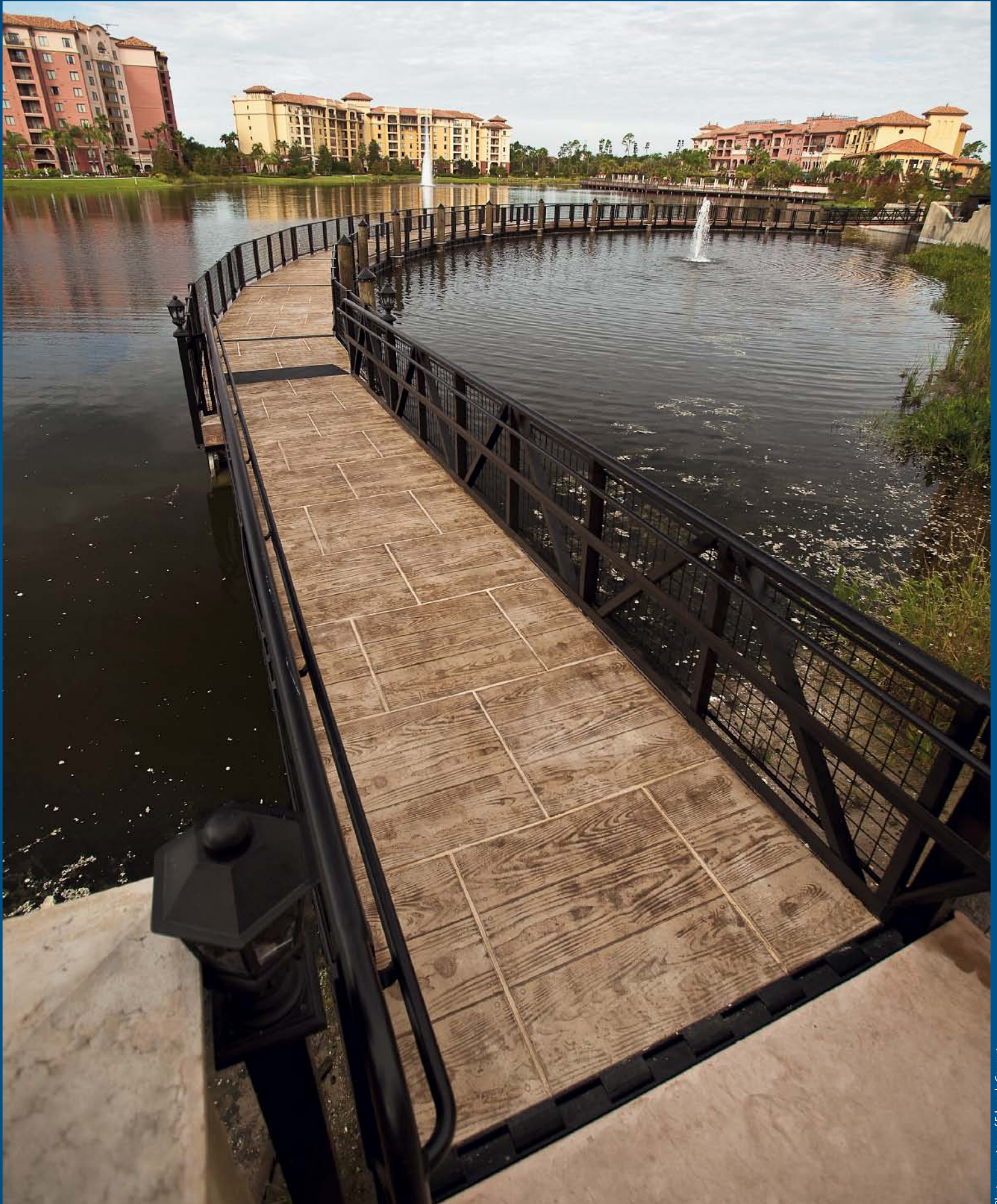


Creativity and Innovation in High-End Stamping Applications

The main entrance to the Charlotte Rescue Mission is now a show-stopping work of art thanks to Jason Geiser and the team at Deco-Crete Supply, Orrville, Ohio. Wanting to make a positive first impression on everybody from major donors to the garbage man, they tore up the old asphalt driveway and replaced it with a stamped concrete entryway. The team also added borders and faux grout lines for a high-end look. A red logo with the Mission's name completes the project. (Read Jason Geiser's first-hand account of this project on page 61.)



More photos and a list of manufacturers and suppliers that donated to each space are available at ConcreteDecorShow.com.



Photos courtesy of Edwards Concrete

ARTISAN IN CONCRETE

David Edwards, Edwards Concrete Winter Garden, Fla.

by Joe Maty

THE decorative concrete business often can follow a roller-coaster trajectory, with ups and downs that can challenge the stomach — and nerves — of the most confident and proficient practitioners.

Fortunately for David Edwards and his 30-year-old company Edwards Concrete, a long and profitable relationship with Florida's bustling amusement and theme parks has played a key part in smoothing out the roller-coaster ride.

David Edwards got his start in the construction business in 1972, with Buena Vista Construction Co., Disney Co.'s in-house unit, at Walt Disney World in Florida. The park had been open just a year when he went to work there as a teenager.

"I ended up on a concrete crew right off the bat," he says of his start at square one. Edwards held a series of jobs with Buena Vista during his nearly 10-year stint there, eventually moving up to foreman.

"It always revolved around concrete," he says of his work for Disney, which embraced decorative treatments early on. "Disney poured a lot of colored concrete." Other techniques included the use of exposed aggregate for color and texture and employing rock salt to produce a concrete surface with holes and pits.

New decorative concepts, materials and methods were emerging, pioneered by companies such as Bomanite, which "was making things look like bricks and stone," he says, "with stamps."

With nearly 10 years of concrete experience under his belt with Disney, Edwards decided to strike out on his own in 1981, at age 25. Now looking back at age 57, he recalls, "I was just one of those young guys working concrete for someone else, and I just always wanted to have my own business." He also saw it as the best route to achieving his career aspirations.



Evolution and adaptation

Early on, Edwards Concrete offered a variety of conventional concrete services, with some residential installations but more commercial work — "big floors," as he calls them, in the thousands of square feet at a time.

But alas, the returns were shrinking.

"The floors were getting bigger and the prices were getting smaller, basically," he says, putting the time frame in the mid-1980s. "And they were labor intensive." Decorative concrete required a smaller work force than high-volume gray concrete contracting.

Besides, decorative concrete offered another advantage: it was much more entertaining, Edwards says, for the installer-creators as much as for the customer.

Edwards began steering the ship toward a decorative focus. Then in 1989, Bomanite made contact with Edwards Concrete, and informed Edwards a license for Central Florida was available.

"We were imprinting concrete in the mid-1980s," Edwards notes, but the deal with Bomanite opened up broad new horizons.

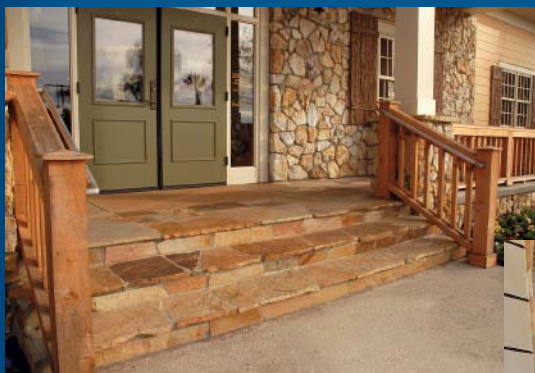
"When we got on board with Bomanite, we had a tool source and resources we'd never had in the past. We had a brand at that point. Prior to that we were just a little company trying to peddle decorative concrete with not a great deal to show.

"Back in the '80s when I started doing it, it was very basic. We had to learn from the seat of our pants. It was trial and error, with a lot of scrapped jobs.

"Nowadays, if you and I didn't know something, we would be overwhelmed with information. Back then very few knew about it, and they weren't going to share it.

"With Bomanite, they were there to provide technical support and endless resources. And they are always coming up with new lines of products. Now I'm one of the old guys at Bomanite, but they have been very good for me."

The deal with Bomanite carried with it in an array of materials and systems, ranging from exposed aggregates of various



types to all manner of stamping tools, to overlays, to polishing and precast systems, in addition to programs and marketing know-how.

Edwards concedes that marketing has never been his company's strong suit, with word of mouth proving to be his biggest help in that department.

"That might be our weak point," he continues. "We've not spent a great deal there. But we've been very fortunate to be located where we're at, in this part of the world."

You dream it, they do it

Asked about other keys to the company's

longtime success, Edwards replies, "If you dream it up we can find a way to put it in concrete." A recent example: Edwards Concrete's work at the new town center of Brownwood, part of the sprawling residential development of The Villages, in Central Florida.

Michael Pape of Michael Pape & Associates, who has played a major design role with The Villages, gives the work of Edwards Concrete a hearty two-thumbs-up review.

"In today's construction industry, where the concept of craftsmanship is disappearing, I have found Edwards Concrete to be a valuable resource," Pape

says. "They still understand true artisanship in concrete effects and finishes, and they share a wealth of knowledge and experience by partnering with the design team to make special projects come to life."

Pape cites Brownwood Town Center at The Villages as "a perfect example. They embraced the challenge of creating a setting that felt like it had been there for 100 years. The resulting creative effects are more than just 'pavement,' really making the end users feel like they're in another time and place."

Edwards Concrete's portfolio is diverse, and includes a wide range of imprinted concrete designs, often custom-crafted:



exposed aggregates, stained and dyed concrete, overlays and polished concrete. Making it all happen is a veteran team led by superintendents George Hultin, Alex “Roho” Waters, Jesus Rivera, polishing division head Shawn Ciccarello and operations manager Ronald Hart. The company’s current workforce totals 25.

“One time NASA called us, 15 to 17 years ago, and asked, could we make concrete look like the surface of the moon? Our office found a photo taken from a spaceship that landed there, one of our guys went to the store and used Tupperware to make craters, and we showed them a 3-by-3 sample,” Edwards says. “And from that

point on we placed and finished a lot of concrete for NASA.”

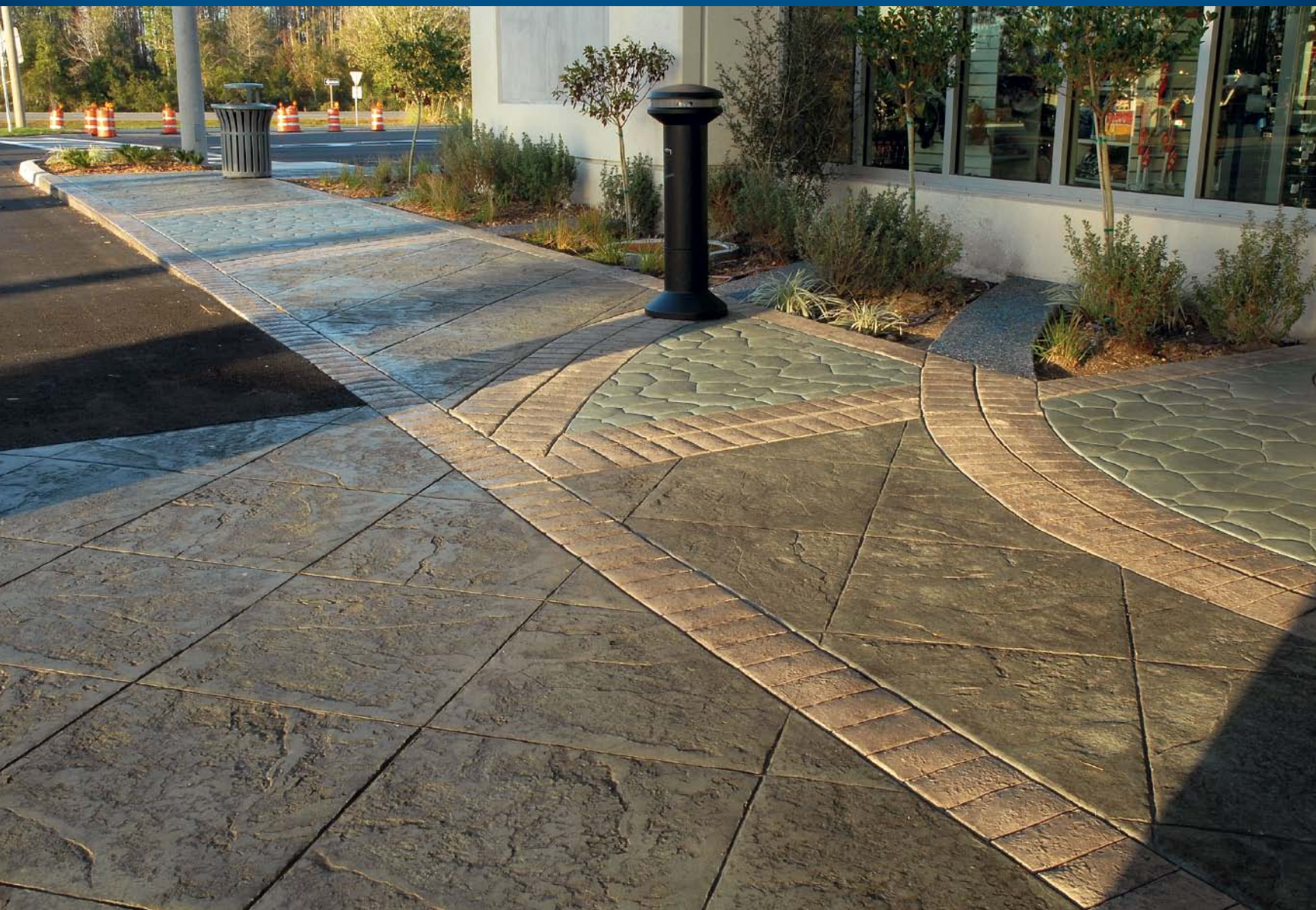
To create the moonscape at the NASA visitors center at Cape Canaveral, Edwards Concrete used gray concrete colored with a couple of different shades of dry-shake hardener, a darker gray release powder, an imprinting tool that produced the effect of the moon surface’s rocky and dusty terrain, rock salt for additional pits and irregularities, and the Tupperware containers to add craters. Boot prints were added, using a mold made from an actual moon-suit boot provided by NASA.

“It was a couple of guys hitting a home run,” Edwards says of the resourcefulness and

imagination of his artisans. “And it turned into a million-plus dollars of work, just at NASA.” A long-term customer relationship was launched with that initial success.

Turning to more recent history, Edwards says the company has added polished concrete to its portfolio as that specialty has emerged to reshape the decorative concrete landscape.

The company’s versatility is showcased in another triumph Edwards is particularly proud of — the exterior of a church in Key West fashioned with tilt-up decorative concrete panels cast on-site. The project required painstaking attention to detail in getting the color and brick-stamp patterns



to integrate precisely, he says.

Also a favorite, he says, is work at SeaWorld Orlando, where Edwards Concrete produced a river rock design for the thrilling Manta roller-coaster attraction, while interior concrete was given the look of slate with integral color and decorative highlights added with mosaic-tile inlays.

The creative process often begins with a discussion with the prospect or client.

“They kind of give me something to go on, and they’re looking for that ‘wow’ factor. Like at Brownwood (The Villages) — they give us the setting and the concept, in that case a Florida cracker town, and tell us they want the concrete to look like a dirt paddock. That’s kind of how those things evolve, with meetings. Often I will

come up with the ideas, and they (Edwards Concrete’s professionals) have the artistic abilities to put it into reality.”

Taking on the tough challenges

Asked where the company’s growth is concentrated, Edwards identifies, simply, things nobody else wants to do. “If it’s something easy that anyone can do, it’s not an Edwards concrete job.”

Theme parks continue to be a primary revenue stream, accounting for some 75 percent of Edwards Concrete’s work.

Edwards Concrete’s expertise also is catching the public eye along the Florida Turnpike, thanks to a long-term renovation program involving interchange service areas along the route. The company is replacing

sidewalks at turnpike service areas with decorative treatments that include exposed aggregate and imprints. Earth-tone colors that reflect the natural environment are a central theme.

Asked to speculate on the future direction of decorative concrete, Edwards says he envisions continued growth and innovation in areas such as polished concrete, where the “chemical companies are going to come up with easier materials to work with.” Elsewhere, he says the industry tends to see design phases come and go. Currently, he senses a renaissance for imprinted concrete, driven in part by the inherent durability and long service life of the technology as much as its visual appeal. 🛠️

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CONCRETE QUESTIONS

Why Do High-Performance Coatings Outperform Sealers?

HIGH-PERFORMANCE or high-build coatings offer a higher level of performance than thin-build sealers. A brilliant insight, I know. But in reality, the statement often sums up most of what many people know about high-performance coatings compared to thin-build sealers.



by Chris Sullivan

This explains why I am often asked the question that is the subject of this column.

Question: What is the difference between a sealer and a high-end coating?

For years, I have been using the analogy of toothpicks and cooked spaghetti noodles when comparing sealers to coatings. When you drop a bunch of toothpicks on a table you can see how they tend to line up. You get limited places where they touch and lots of voids or places where you can see right through the pile. Now look at a bowl of cooked spaghetti. This is a dense mesh of noodles that has virtually no voids, and you can't see the bottom of the bowl.

With the images of toothpicks and spaghetti fresh in your mind, you now possess all you really need to know to differentiate between sealers and coatings. Read on to complete the picture and bring it

all together.

Thin-build (or traditional) decorative concrete sealers are for the most part single-component acrylics. This means the resin (the solid part of the sealer that remains on the concrete surface) is some form of acrylic polymer dissolved or dispersed in a liquid solvent (which can be water or a blend of more aggressive solvents such as xylene, acetone and TBAC).

Acrylics are the most popular sealer used in the decorative concrete industry, hands down. Their cost, performance and relative ease of application is what makes them so popular. Solvent-based acrylics tend to darken the substrate, enhancing the final color with a gloss finish, while water-based acrylics provide more of a natural matte or satin appearance.

Discovered in the 1890s, acrylic plastic really took off when Plexiglas became a staple for military aircraft canopies during World War II. One of the big benefits of acrylic plastic was its ability to weld to itself seamlessly after being melted — this characteristic is exploited to this day when you reapply or fix solvent-based acrylic sealers. They range from high-quality pure acrylic sealers to styrene acrylic-based cure-and-seals to curing compounds.

While they all have distinctive and different chemistries, the one thing they have in common is an acrylic backbone that requires thin application for success.

With solids content of 30 percent or less, acrylic sealers are known as thin-build sealers. They have to be applied at less than 2 mils per coat to perform properly. As a reference, a standard credit card is 30 mils in thickness.

The “toothpicks” in acrylic sealers are designed to lie down in a single layer, with limited overlap or cross-linking.



In comparison, most high-performance coatings start at 5 to 7 mils in thickness and go up from there.

The other major factors that separate thin-build acrylics from high-performance coatings are their chemistry and durability. Single-component acrylics exhibit good resistance to most contaminants, but not excellent resistance like high-performance coatings do. Most acrylics are breathable, allowing the migration of soils and contamination through the coating over time. Remember the gaps between the toothpicks? This is why acrylics do not make good sealers for surfaces that are constantly wet, or where harsh chemicals and solvents are being used. What they do offer is a strong and relatively abrasion-resistant film that is cost-efficient and easy to apply. Thin-build acrylics are most often used on exterior decorative concrete. Their ability to breathe is well-suited for exterior concrete, and they provide a good level of performance for a relatively low cost.

Lastly, keep in mind that single-component acrylic sealers dry through evaporation of the liquid solvent. This is important, because in many cases rewetting the sealer with the same solvent allows for quick and easy resealing and repair of blemishes and surface defects.

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Unfortunately, this does not hold true when using water-based systems, which is one of the reasons why solvent-based acrylics are still the most popular on the market.

In comparison, high-performance coatings are made up of multiple resin families. The most common in decorative concrete are polyurethanes, polyureas and epoxies. Just like their thin-build counterparts, they are available in a water or solvent base, but unlike acrylics, they are usually two-part systems.

Like acrylics, high-performance resin technology came into play in the early to mid-1900s. Most of the high-performance coating technology we use today came from other industries, such as automotive or aerospace. While we all think decorative concrete is an amazing industry, creating lots of new and innovative finishes, the truth is that most of the technology we use is hand-me-down, having come from some other industry. This is especially true when it comes to high-performance coatings.

While acrylics are considered thin, high-performance coatings are thick in comparison. Think about the bowl of spaghetti.

A thicker film adds to the durability of the coating (how well it stands up to

traffic and wear), as well as its chemical and abrasion resistance (how well it handles chemicals and contamination). Two-part systems also exhibit much more cross-linking, as part "A" chemically bonds with part "B" to form long chains. The reaction goes on until all of the parts have come together in a tight mesh that looks like our bowl of spaghetti.



Imagine all those noodles touching each other. Every place they touch, they form a bond, and each bond adds to the overall strength, durability and performance of the coating. Once all the A's and B's have reacted, the coating cures and gets hard. In most cases the tight mesh is not permeable and much more resistant to chemicals and contamination. Remember how spaghetti has very few voids.

The mesh also provides extra durability when compared to single-component acrylics

that do not exhibit the tight mesh network. A combination of the cross-linking "spaghetti" and thicker build is why we see high-performance coatings used in harsh or high-traffic environments where extra chemical resistance and durability are required.



High-performance or two-part systems for the most part are a one-time use. Once you mix part A and part B, the clock starts running, and the coating will cure and get hard. Once it is hard, there is no rewetting the coating with solvents like you can with single-component acrylics. This is a downside to high-performance coatings, as any damage to the film is not easy to repair and recoating the system needs to take place during the recoat window, which is usually during the first 24 hours.

So there you have it, a quick and easy overview of how sealers differ from high-performance coatings. The next time you are faced with the decision of whether to use a sealer or high-performance coating, or someone wants to know the difference, just think toothpicks or noodles. 🍝

Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Contact him at trowelandererror@protradehub.com.


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The Great Debate: Glossy vs. Matte Sealers

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

MOST people will tell you choosing the gloss level of a sealer mostly comes down to preference and personal taste. But besides aesthetics, what are some factors to consider when choosing one finish over another?

If you want to make your decorative concrete stain and design really pop like what you'd see in polished stone, choose a high-gloss sealer. "It will achieve more vibrant hues," says John Bennett, founder and president of Eco Safety Products.

Sealers with a higher solids content tend to form a thicker film or coating, creating a glossy surface that looks as if it's wet, a look many people today associate with high-end projects.

Another of the benefits of a high-gloss finish is its reflectivity, says Richard Cofoid, national sales manager for Increte Systems. "The glossier the finish, the more reflection from lighting you'll get. And the more

reflective a surface, the less lumens you'll need to produce a decent amount of light. In office settings, this means you can cut down on power usage because of the reflectivity."

But reflectivity also can be a deterrent in some instances, such as in a restaurant with southern-facing windows. "If the floor is really glossy it will bounce the light too much and you'll need more window coverings to tone down the reflection," says Dennis Florianovich, owner of FloriArtisan, a decorative concrete company in Spokane Valley, Wash. "In this instance, I think a matte finish would be more beneficial."

Matte finishes are also a better choice if you are after a natural stone appearance. "The matte finish looks more realistic if you are going for that quarried-stone look," Cofoid says. "You don't see a lot of shiny rocks in nature."

Another variable to consider, Florianovich says, is the level of darkness in a particular room's design scheme. "If there aren't a lot of windows, a high gloss is nice because the floor will reflect the lighting you do have. If you have a dark room with dark-colored fixtures or furniture and walls, gloss is nice because it makes the room look bigger. The reflections exaggerate the lines and give the room more depth. A matte finish will make the room look darker and smaller."

Cleaning and upkeep are factors

Florianovich says that a floor with a glossy finish is easier to clean than a matte because it's so much smoother.

On the other hand, Cofoid notes, that high-gloss look will require a more stringent maintenance program. "High-gloss finishes will show scuff marks, and areas on floors where there's higher traffic can get hazy."

Florianovich points out that a matte finish on an interior floor hides more imperfections than a glossy one and also doesn't show dirt as easily. If a floor is uneven, he says, matte is really the only way to go. "A high-gloss finish will emphasize how uneven the floor is."

Color and effects

A decorative concrete contractor may



Photo courtesy of Rick Richter

This job was sealed with Acry-Soy Penetrating Sealer from Eco-Safety Products, which offers a satin sheen.

note that the differences between gloss and matte present some design possibilities. When he can, Florianovich likes to mix gloss and matte finishes to create a visual effect. "Instead of using an area rug at an entrance with a shiny floor, I'll work in some strips of matte," he says. In restaurants, he likes to seal floors with a matte finish and include a logo somewhere with a glossy finish. "You change up the sheen instead of the color and it looks pretty cool."


Also, when comparing sealers that have different gloss levels, keep in mind the related fact that a solvent-based sealer will do a better job than a water-based sealer



Photo courtesy of Increte Systems

This church floor by Increte of the Ozarks was sealed with a high-gloss sealer from Increte Systems.

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enhancing the color of the concrete. "Not only is the gloss level slightly lower on the water-based (sealer), but because it doesn't penetrate the concrete as deeply as the solvent-based (sealer), it doesn't darken the concrete as much," Cofoid says.

Something Bennett has been seeing more of these days involves sealing a floor with a penetrating sealer, which doesn't increase the sheen level, but does slightly darken the colors while protecting the concrete against moisture. With a penetrating sealer, customers may later change their minds and decide they want a shiny surface. In these cases, applying a high-gloss floor finish over the sealer does the trick. "You can regulate the sheen level by the number of coats applied," he says. "The more coats you put on, the higher the gloss."

As for which type of sealer is more popular — glossy or matte — the general consensus is that overall there isn't a movement one way or another. Some people lean toward the natural look and abhor the shine. Others are ecstatic about a shoddy job just because it's shiny.

"The design options are endless,"

Florionovich says, noting that one day clients are calling to tone down the gloss on their floor and the next it's someone looking

for more pizzazz and shine. "Every year it's something different. It comes and goes in waves." 📱

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Q&A: Mike Cook

The concrete artisan behind ModaCrete explains how he mass-produces precast countertop slabs on an assembly line

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

MOVE over marble, granite and engineered composites. With the popularity of concrete countertops on the rise, the time has come for mass-produced precast concrete slabs to enter into the fray.

After four years of research and development, a fledgling company named ModaCrete, a U.S.-based manufacturer of precision high-performance concrete products, stands ready to offer consumers a new kind of premium concrete option for their kitchen and bath countertops.

ModaCrete's primary products are 5-by-10-foot concrete slabs that local stone professionals can fabricate into countertops, fireplaces and other architectural elements for both residential and commercial applications. ModaCrete slabs are offered in four variations. Pearl and Cosmopolitan come with a variety of exposed aggregate



such as mother of pearl and colored recycled glass. Java features flowing earthy tones, and the solid colors of the Elements collection complement designs from modern to rustic.

Back in fall 2008, Michael R. Cook, an artisan dealing in concrete design, fabrication and manufacturing, began consulting with Ferazzoli Imports of New England Inc., a well-established regional importer, distributor, fabricator and retailer in Middletown, Conn., that dealt with stone, porcelain and glass. The company wanted to expand its inventory to include precast concrete.

Together, Cook and the Ferazzoli team worked to develop a fashionable concrete slab with the proper strength so it would be in direct competition with other premium materials and could be sold through traditional means.

Although a lot of the equipment needed to bring the concept to fruition was already



in place because of Ferazzoli's stone fabrication business, the partners still had to basically build a semiautomated production plant for something that had never been done before, says Cook, now chief operating officer of ModaCrete, an affiliate of Ferazzoli that's producing the concrete slabs.

"We were in a gray area," he says. "We had to design and make a lot of the machines needed to produce the concrete slabs. We couldn't buy them because they didn't exist."

They also had to develop their own concrete mix. "We had to build a 15,000-psi compressive, 1,200-psi flexural concrete mix with no reinforcement that delivered cosmetically desirable appearances," says Cook. "Then we had to find a feasible way to scale it up from the lab into a mass-production process."

While developing their concrete mixes, they made some unique discoveries — the most intriguing was a mix and process that Cook says produced samples exceeding 40,000-psi compressive and 5,000-psi flexural strength with no reinforcement (well beyond what they needed for ModaCrete).

By 2012, ModaCrete's slabs were ready to be introduced to market.



Photos courtesy of ModaCrete

Since it incorporated in 1988, Ferazzoli Imports of New England Inc. has operated a design center, showroom, warehouse and manufacturing facility in Connecticut. Today, after the addition of the ModaCrete concrete production facilities, its campus encompasses about 190,000 square feet.



Who buys ModaCrete products?

The bulk of our sales are to distributors and fabricators of natural and engineered stone, who in turn market to consumers ranging from homeowners to commercial retailers.

What is your distribution area?

Currently, ModaCrete products are being distributed in northeastern United States by Ferazzoli Imports of New England. We also are negotiating with additional companies to distribute our products throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. Eventually, we hope to distribute globally.

What did it take to launch your new business in the way of capital, facilities and time?

It took about four years, a fluctuating staff of two to 15-plus people, a 50,000-square-foot facility and more than

\$1 million dollars in capital to research and develop a highly stain- and scratch-resistant precast concrete slab that could be fabricated and sold through traditional means by regional businesses around the country.

What were some of the challenges in developing ModaCrete slabs?

The first obstacle was strength. We wanted to develop our concrete slabs with enough compressive and flexural strength so they could withstand the fabrication process without the need for any reinforcing materials. Currently we are accomplishing 14,900 psi compressive and 1,224 psi flexural.

The second and more challenging obstacle was to create a working surface that would be comparable to or outperform competitive surfaces in regard to staining, etching and

scratching. We are not chemists — and still aren't — but we were able to identify and formulate our own proprietary sealer and system that may prove to be the new benchmark for concrete sealers.

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Consumers can pay a fee to decide where a template should be placed on a ModaCrete slab to customize an interesting design.

Describe the materials and methods used to produce your slabs.

Our precast concrete slabs are produced in a semiautomated plant of our own design with our proprietary high-performance concrete mixes. Once the castings are cured, a CNC (computer numerical control) machine gauges the slabs to a specific thickness and creates the desired finish, such as polished or honed. The slabs then go through a multistep sealing process and cure for 24 hours. After they cure, the slabs are stacked on A-frames and prepped for shipment.

Besides concrete slabs, what other products do you offer?

ModaCrete is in the final stages of developing a line of sinks and shower systems that will be ready for mass

production this spring. We also are working on vanities, cladding, tile and furniture that we will market in the future.

Why did you decide to move to mass production?

It's the only way to take concrete countertops mainstream. In order to accomplish this we had to put a system in place where consumers could readily see our product as a viable premium-surface option. We chose to do this through the kitchen and bath retailers and their local countertop fabricators. In order to supply this industry, we had to be able to produce a suitable product in large volumes.

Do you see mass production as being a trend for the precast market in general?

I don't believe mass production is a trend. I believe it was an unforeseen component of concrete's product cycle.

Decorative concrete has grown significantly in popularity over the last decade and has shown its capability to accept and overcome extreme design challenges. As more technical advances are achieved with concrete, I think we'll see additional innovations in the area of mass-produced concrete products.

How do you think your products stack up to the competition?

Based on our diverse designs, aesthetics, price point and performance, ModaCrete products can fiercely compete against the premium surfacing options of engineered stone, natural stone and, of course, concrete. Our level of stain, etch and scratch resistance will outperform at least 75 percent of natural stones on the market today.

When compared to the few mass-produced concrete slabs in today's market, ModaCrete products are in a category all their own. While our competition only makes slabs containing recycled glass, ModaCrete's offerings include recycled glass, natural aggregates, solid colors and marbleized designs. Plus we've optimized the size of our slabs at 5 by 10 feet for the fabrication industry and raised the bar on the level of stain and etch protection.

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PROJECT PROFILE

Steps From the Ground Up for Weddings in the Country

Staircase and Deck at Azure Standard, Dufur, Ore.

by *Natasha Chilingirian*

THIS sweeping outdoor staircase and wraparound deck at Azure Standard, in Dufur, Ore., is more than just an update to an old warehouse on a rural Northwest farm. It's the latest chapter in the story of a business that has spanned four generations and was built on a strong foundation of organic farming, sustainability and close-knit family ties.

Azure Standard, a natural foods grower and seller that runs one of the largest biomass generators on the west coast, got its start in 1971, when the business' founding family, the Stelzers, stopped using chemical fertilizers on their farm's crops. The business officially launched in 1987, soon



Photos courtesy of Robert Merrill

after the family expanded their organic and natural food offerings to meet the demands of their growing customer base.

They renovated the farm's original warehouse — the site of the new staircase and deck — 20 years ago, adding a second building and turning the space into a distribution center. Fifteen years later, they transferred their distribution activities to a new location, leaving the original space abandoned, explains Benjamin Brewer, a third-generation Azure Standard co-owner and project manager. Brewer says the staircase and deck, constructed between May and July 2012 for a family member's wedding, has transformed the backside of the old, two-story building into an inviting special events venue.

"We wanted an upgrade that would be customer-friendly and pleasing to the eyes, and to turn it into a place where we could

hang out and hold events," Brewer says.

The Azure Standard family met Robert Merrill, a Northport, Wash.-based independent consultant, designer and installer who specializes in sustainable construction, when Brewer invited him to tour the facility and examine the biomass

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Project at a Glance

Client/Designer/Installation Crew Provider: Azure Standard, Dufur, Ore.

Consultant/Designer/Installer: Robert Merrill, Northport, Wash.

Project Specs: A ferrocement staircase and wraparound deck with a surface area totaling 4,000 square feet

Timeline: Two months

Materials & Equipment Used: Merrill's own custom-mixed ferrocement system, Mortarsprayer.com Mortar and Stucco Sprayer, SpiderLath fiberglass lath system



generator. When it came time to plan the staircase and deck project, Brewer reached for Merrill's number.

Going against the grain when it comes to typical staircase designs, Merrill says he and his client chose a large, curvaceous shape to match the unique business philosophy of Azure Standard.

"The predominant thought was to get away from the box look," Merrill says of the design. "An organic appearance was needed to reflect what the family and their business stands for. For example, the railing is a large, sweeping feature that looks alive."

To build the staircase and deck, Merrill and a crew of Azure Standardites (who, having built their own homes and farm structures, had ample construction experience) constructed a post and beam skeleton in a pattern of opposing arcs, to which they attached a rebar grid. David Brow, a welder with a background in boat construction, played a key role in building the staircase and deck foundation, Merrill says. The final step in the foundation construction process was the installation of SpiderLath, a fiberglass lath system that Merrill says is more lightweight and durable than other mesh products.

The ferrocement product used to coat the structure's foundation can't be purchased in a store — it's Merrill's own custom mix, which he makes using cement and natural materials such as sand, fibers, lime, and in this case, soil taken straight from Azure Standard farmland.

"The cool thing about working with Bob is that we could use our native soil (in the ferrocement product)," Brewer says. "A good percentage of the dirt we used came right off the farm."

The crew sprayed on Merrill's ferrocement using a mortar and stucco sprayer manufactured by Mortarsprayer.com, then troweled the material smooth. The staircase has room underneath that



serves as storage space for the business, and the overall structure gave workers a lot of surface area to cover with material (about 4,000 square feet total), Merrill says.

Adding character to the structure are round windows in the walls that support the wraparound deck, which Merrill bordered with curved pieces of Styrofoam coated with his ferrocement, and the staircase's wide railings, which double as plant and flower beds. He used a brick red powder pigment to add a layer of solid color to the steps, and he installed colored pavers and tiles in a cross pattern on the deck to symbolize the group's commitment to Christianity.

Throwing a curve ball into the process was the location of a fruit tree that had been planted by a second-generation Azure Standard owner. Because of its close proximity to the building, workers were forced to split the bottom portion of the staircase into two separate staircases so as

not to interfere with the tree. Rainwater drainage was also a consideration in the structure's design. Brewer says the deck sits on a slope to allow for water runoff. Several drainpipes were installed on the edge of the deck and a roof membrane was added underneath the deck's pavers and tiles.

At the tail end of the project, the crew worked 14-16 hour days, finishing just in time for the wedding, the remodeled venue's first official event, on July 14, 2012. This summer, Brewer says the company plans to have a similar structure built on the front side of the building.

"This was a family dream, and unlike for most of my projects, a lot of family members were involved in a consensus-based decision-making process," Merrill says. "They were most gracious and as I met more of them, the story of a hard-working group of people unfolded before me. No doubt, I was blessed to be a part of their dream come true." 📱



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PROJECT PROFILE

A New Overlay Scores Points at a Sacramento Ballpark

Raley Field, West Sacramento, Calif.

by Natasha Chilingirian

TEAMWORK, expertise and a carefully picked set of products were the secrets to success during a recent concourse floor coating job at Raley Field, home of Sacramento's minor-league baseball team, the River Cats.

A crew led by Warren Ruben, owner of El Dorado Hills, Calif.-based decorative concrete design and installation company Artistry in Concrete, installed 50,000 square feet of coatings using products manufactured by Miracote, including Miracote RT (RenewTop), the company's new spray-on cementitious overlay.

Plans for the concourse floor makeover initially began in fall 2011, when Sacramento River Cats CEO Susan Savage read a Sacramento Business Journal article about the role of art in the construction industry. The article included a section about Ruben's company, which is run by Ruben and his wife, Wendy, an interior-design professional.



Photos by Amber Felts

Intrigued, Savage contacted Ruben and asked him to resurface 15,000 square feet of flooring in Raley Field's bathrooms.

"I had been looking for someone local who did this type of work and Warren seemed like a perfect fit, so I reached out to him," Savage says. "I was attracted to his creativity and how he catered each job to the customer's specific needs."

Using a microthin overlay product and a gray metallic stain, Ruben, who is a regular user of Miracote products, transformed Raley Field's epoxy bathroom floors into urban, contemporary spaces.

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Project at a Glance

Client: Sacramento River Cats, West Sacramento, Calif.

Decorative Concrete Contractor: Warren Ruben, Artistry in Concrete, El Dorado Hills, Calif.

Project Specs: 50,000 square feet of floor coatings on the concourse at Raley Field, home of the Sacramento River Cats

Timeline: Six weeks

Product Distributor: National Pool Tile Group, Rancho Cordova, Calif.

Materials Used: MiraPrime Universal, Miracote RT (RenewTop), ColorPax LIP pigment packs in Dodge City Tan and MiraGard HDWB from Miracote; Smith's Color Floor stains in Bark Brown and Nutmeg from Smith Paint Products; NewLook EcoAcid from NewLook International

Putting a rookie on the mound

Pleased with the results, Savage contracted Ruben to resurface the stadium's U-shaped concourse — a 50,000-square-foot covered outdoor facility that is home to crowds of fans on game days and often rented out for special events.

Prior to its resurfacing, the concourse was somewhat of an eyesore at the stadium. Water lines and uneven patchwork had left the plain gray surface looking worn and dull, and Savage decided a fresh, new look was in order, Ruben says. For the new concourse coatings, they chose a system of products manufactured by Ruben's beloved Miracote: the water-based, adhesion-promoting primer MiraPrime Universal, the ultrathin, polymer-modified cementitious coating Miracote RT, and MiraGard HDWB, a water-based sealer suitable for any concrete or masonry surface.

As these three products comply with VOC regulations, meet the stadium's stringent LEED requirements and can hold up under a lot of foot traffic, they were a perfect fit for the concourse, says Miracote Western sales manager Trevor Foster.

The Raley Field concourse makeover was an opportunity for the manufacturer to debut Miracote RT on a large scale, he



says — until that point, the newly released product had only been used on a handful of smaller jobs.

The RT stands for Renew Top, and like its name suggests, Miracote RT is engineered to give a uniform, attractive look to old substrates while preserving original texture. Unique benefits touted by the manufacturer include moisture-vapor permeability, a coverage rate of 700 square feet a bag

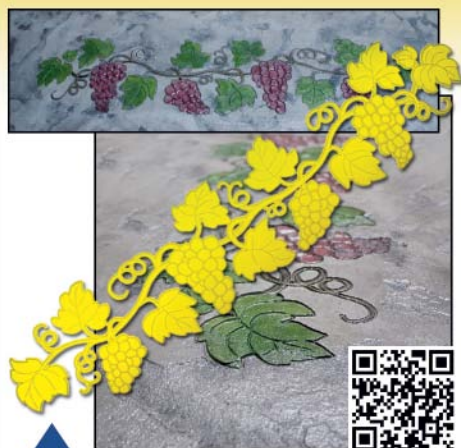
and the ability to prep, spray and stain in one day.

"We chose Miracote because of its proven track record and durability," Savage says. "Raley Field is an outdoor venue that hosts approximately 100 events per year, so our concourse takes a beating. For this reason, we really needed a product that would stand the test of time."

Ruben and his crew began the six-week

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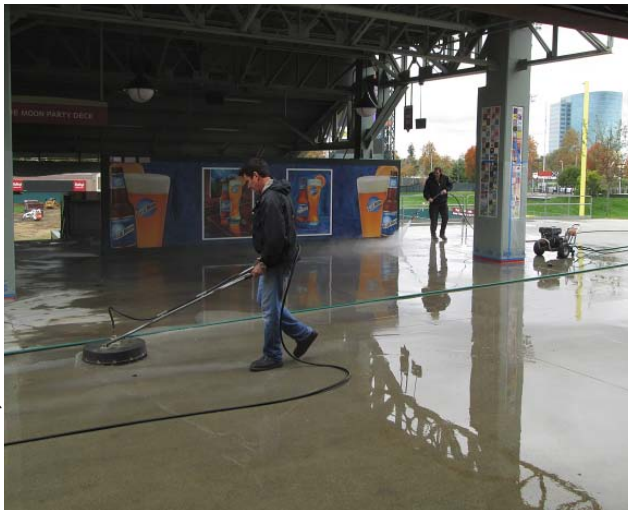
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Photos courtesy of Miracote



project by grinding the concourse's patched areas and applying NewLook EcoAcid to open up the surface and expose the aggregate. They applied MiraPrime Universal using airless spray guns, followed by the Miracote RT, which they sprayed on using a high-performance spray gun from C.A. Technologies attached to a pressure pot that contained the material.

To give the surface a solid taupe color, they added Miracote's ColorPax LIP pigment packs in Dodge City Tan to the



Miracote RT, as well as the MiraGard HDWB, which they applied in a single coat with airless spray guns. Finally, they added Smith's Color Floor stains in Bark Brown and Nutmeg, followed by two clear coats of the MiraGard HDWB.

"We chose to add pigment to the Miracote RT and the sealer so if any scratching or abrasion occurred on the top layer, the color would still pop through from underneath," Ruben explains.

Adverse weather brought on challenges throughout the installation process, with cold temperatures and freezing rain causing delays and forcing project managers to make some tough decisions. Foster explains that in order for each layer of product to properly cure, conditions must be completely dry and the surface's temperature must be a minimum of 50 F. Cold air and moisture can cause material to run off the surface

before it cures and prevent it from gaining adequate strength.

Ruben and Foster in fact made the decision to remove nearly 15,000 square feet of primer and Miracote RT from the concourse's shaded ramp area and start from scratch after temperatures froze and left a light dusting of ice on the surface, they say.

"We weren't confident enough to put the next layer of material down over it, so we decided to start over," Foster says. "As a contractor, Warren is highly skilled and proactive. He'd say, 'This doesn't look right, so I'm going to look into it.'"

The fact that key materials came from a single manufacturer, not multiple manufacturers, helped streamline the decision-making process when rain and cold weather hit, says Foster.

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affects the products was another important part of a successful installation, and Savage says she and her operations team knew flexibility on their end was critical.

"We understood that any custom outdoor project like this one would have its ups and downs, and we needed to adapt to circumstances that were out of our control, such as the weather," she says. "Warren and Trevor worked well with our operations staff to adjust to everything that was thrown at them."

Workers finished installing the concourse coatings in February, leaving plenty of time before the River Cats' first game of the 2013 season on April 4.

"The concourse looks amazing," Savage says. "It's going to be a real treat for our fans, both practically and aesthetically. Of course from a practical standpoint, we're excited about the long-term durability of the new surface, but it's also exciting from the fans' point of view. We pride ourselves on having a clean, professional look and feel to the ballpark, and this really ties into that theme. We can't wait to show it off." 📱

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A Weighty Decision: How Heavy Should Your New Machine Be?

DOES size matter in the world of polished concrete? I have heard the arguments on both sides for why smaller or larger polishing machines are better, but ultimately it depends.



by David Padgett

There are jobs where a small lightweight machine would be out of the question due to the scope of work or the slab condition, and there are some jobs where it would be ridiculous to lug a thousand-pound machine onto the floor. The tool should fit the scope.

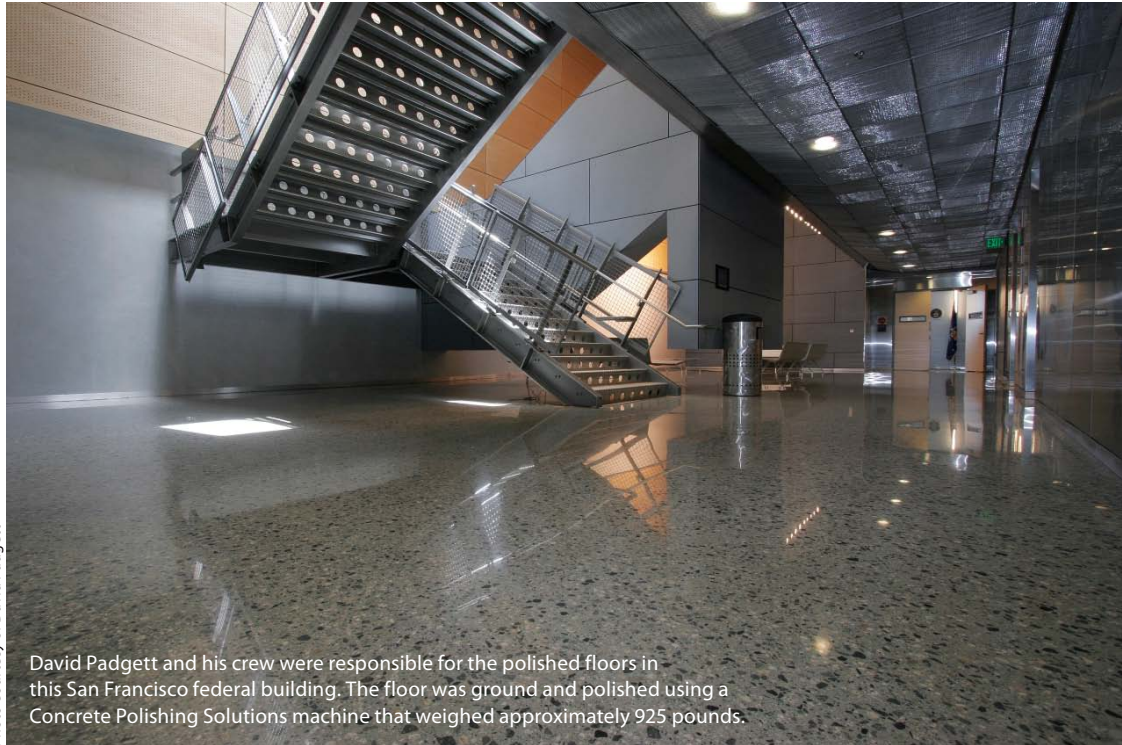
That makes buying decisions for newbie polishers a bit complicated. Different machines have different weights. How does a buyer decide which weight to go with when making that expensive leap into polishing-machine ownership?

Let's look at some specific projects as examples.

First, consider the 250,000-square-foot floor of a manufacturing plant that was installed in the late 1970s. Covered and re-covered with various types of industrial coatings, it is under contract to be ground and polished. The contractor has 17 days of shutdown to completely remove the coatings, densify the floor and polish it up to a 3,000-grit finish, followed by the proper application of sealer and a final burnish step.

On a project of this size and scope, some lighter-duty machines can be used in supporting roles or processes that can assist in the speed of production. However, due to the amount of solid material at the surface that needs to be removed, larger and heavier-duty pieces of equipment are not optional.

Example two: A high-rise government administration building calls for a large-aggregate finish in all of the commons areas, which add up to approximately 60,000 square feet. The scope includes aggressive removal of 1/4 inch of concrete



David Padgett and his crew were responsible for the polished floors in this San Francisco federal building. The floor was ground and polished using a Concrete Polishing Solutions machine that weighed approximately 925 pounds.

Photo courtesy of David Padgett

from the surface to expose the accurate size and density of aggregate envisioned and specified by the design team.

Again, the larger-platform heavy-duty pieces of equipment coupled with "super shavers" are the only realistic option to perform the demolition and preparation necessary to achieve the desired outcome. In these situations, all of the grinding and polishing processes could be performed using the heavy-duty machine, including the burnish step, thanks to the technology available now for this machine class.

Other situations favor smaller-platform lighter-duty machines. Let's consider a residential project. A 1,800-square-foot project in a 4,200-square-foot home is requiring a lightly ground and polished and dyed concrete floor, with no coating or mastic removal, in four different locations within the residence. These locations are located on the main and basement levels. There is no ground-level access to the basement. This means that the machines

that will be used will have to be carried (probably by hand) down the stairs and be capable of passing through interior doorways.

A high-speed light-duty polishing machine or a heavy-duty small grinder and polisher will be a much better fit for this project than a large-platform piece of equipment. With quality products and a knowledgeable craftsman, either of these types of equipment will be able to open the surface of the slab and prepare for dye as well as close the surface of the slab and polish to a high gloss.

In some larger-scale situations with concrete slabs that are in relatively good condition and require no coarse grinding for aggregate exposure or removing surface material, we find that both large and small types of equipment can produce a highly polished concrete surface.

In a situation where the slab needs only a light abrasion of the surface to open the pores to receive dye or densifier and then

to close those pores with progressive light high-speed polishing steps, an entire project can be effectively completed using small-platform light-duty machines. However, while there are polishing projects like this in the market, a contractor who exclusively uses light equipment is limited to bidding only these perfect scenarios.

In a nutshell, when it comes to the optimal weight of the grinder-polisher you are about to purchase, the answer has everything to do with what type of projects you are interested in being capable of performing.

Down force

There are machines made mainly for prep that weigh more than 1,700 pounds. And there are machines made mainly for polishing that weigh less than 250 pounds. Both of these types of machines will represent themselves as grinder-polishers.

In general the larger machine is the more effective grinding tool, whereas in polishing the smaller machines can definitely hold their own. Why is it possible for the smaller machines to hone and polish the surface of the concrete so effectively but not be as effective grinding down into the surface?

In short, the grinding process requires “down force” while the polishing and honing process does not need as much.

If I am digging in the garden with a shovel and my 3-year-old son is digging beside me, we can use similar tools and perform similar steps but yield much different production rates. The size of my shovel and the down force I am able to apply to the surface allows for a much increased production rate. The same laws of physics apply using diamond grinding.

There are a few factors that can limit the effectiveness of added down force, such as the hardness of the slab and heat's effects on the diamond segments. These will limit the effectiveness of increasing weight beyond a certain point by affecting the hardness of the tool face in contact with the surface. This is where added weight meets the point of diminishing return.

This effect can be offset by adding large amounts of water to the floor while grinding, to cool and lubricate the tools. This process makes a mess that adds significant time to the cleanup process, but it can break through the problems caused by heat and allow the added machine weight to increase the production of the diamond tools.

The grinding process requires a certain amount of pounds per square inch on the contact point to effectively drive the diamond mesh protruding from the tool face into the surface and be effective in removing stock.

Polishing and honing steps do not require all that head weight. These steps use speed instead of weight to close the surface.

I'd start big

In summary, it is my opinion that while light-duty polishing equipment definitely

has its place in the market, I would not recommend that a contractor looking at starting a full-time business in this industry start with that type of equipment.

A light-duty machine may make a great second machine to follow the larger unit with fast-speed polishing steps or to polish those slabs that do not need any grinding or grouting. However, I would recommend that the contractor first buy a good heavy-duty piece of equipment that is designed for grinding and polishing. Learn the capabilities of that machine and



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the technologies available to that machine. This choice ensures that no matter what the concrete slab may need by way of prep or repair, the contractor is prepared and has the tool for the job.

In my previous business, we owned and used many light and heavy-duty units over 15 years of grinding and polishing production. We found certain jobs that were a perfect fit for the light-duty equipment, and we were glad to have a fleet of them when those projects came up. We also found many projects where it was good to have one or two of the light-duty machines to follow the larger units and thus increase production. But day-to-day production in that company to this day is performed using crews built around the number of heavy-duty grinders and polishers allotted to that team.

I also find this to be true with most of the larger polishing contractors that my current company supplies with grinding polishing equipment, chemicals and tooling today.

While light-duty polishing equipment has a great role in the grinding and polishing industry it does not yet appear to be ready to take the mantle from the large heavy-duty grinders and polishers in the market. While

resourceful people and products are always improving the capabilities of both of these machine classes, I do not see a replacement for the large heavy-duty grinder and polisher as the main production tool in the near future. 🛠️

David Padgett is president of Concrete Polishing Solutions, a manufacturer of equipment for grinding and polishing concrete. He can be reached at david.padgett@go2cps.com.

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Getting a Retail Chain Hooked on Your Maintenance Services

by Travis Wilkerson, with Ray Wilkerson

AFTER we had just finished working all night stripping and waxing tile floors in October 2002 for one of our customers, my dad (Ray) and I (Travis) went into our favorite convenience store for some coffee and a made-to-order breakfast sandwich. Wawa Inc., a chain of convenience stores up and down the East Coast, had recently opened several new Wawa markets in Richmond, Va. They had expanded their operations from their core market of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, where they had operated convenience stores since 1964.

We noticed a small group of people pointing at the floors and having a discussion. My dad then taught me his first rule of business development: Always be prepared to be of service when an opportunity arises. We walked over, politely introduced ourselves and handed them business cards. (Not having business cards readily available is a common business mistake.) We told them we were in the floor cleaning, maintenance and restoration business and that we believed we could help them with the cementitious terrazzo floors that we had noticed were the signature feature in their stores.

The group was very impressed that my dad knew precisely what type of floors they had, as terrazzo is not extremely common anymore, particularly in convenience stores. The members of the group happened to be the Virginia-area retail operations manager, the corporate facilities contracted services manager, the zone manager and the store's general manager. Wawa was in the infancy of its expansion into Virginia, and the group said that they might need to make a change in the floor care services. We explained that we were experts in maintenance and restoration of exotic floors such as terrazzo (concrete with marble chips).

Then I learned another rule: Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it. My dad said we would be willing to do trial services for them in some stores to show them what we could do.



Photo courtesy of TW Cleaning Services Inc.

Nate Baggett of TW Cleaning Services Inc., one of a group of family-owned companies, uses a HTC 500 grinding machine with HTC terrazzo diamond tooling for a remodel job at a Wawa convenience store in Glen Burnie, Md.

Within 24 hours, our very young company TW Cleaning Services Inc., which consisted of me and my mom as owners (my dad was and is retired, or so he insists) and my loyal staff of one employee, plus my younger brother Wesley when I needed him, had a 90-day trial opportunity. We were to service five new stores — three in Richmond, one in Virginia Beach some 125 miles away and one in Fredericksburg, Va., about 75 miles away.

Very soon, we were called to have a meeting at Wawa's corporate offices just outside of Philadelphia. During that meeting we were asked if we were prepared to take over all of the Virginia-area stores, some 35 at the time, and if we could maintain the same level of service we had during our trial period with only five stores. Much to their surprise (and mine), my dad told them that we probably would not maintain the same level. When they said they appreciated his honesty but now had some concerns, he advised them that they

misunderstood his meaning. With only five stores, Wawa was really only a "secondary customer" to our company, even though we had given them excellent service. With them giving us all 35 stores in Virginia, they were going to become a "primary/priority customer" and with us applying more resources to their services, the quality level of our services would not just maintain at the same level — they would increase. Obviously, that was music to their ears and we were given all the work.

Since 2002, our floor-care services for Wawa have grown to cover more than 100 stores, including all stores in Virginia and most of Maryland. We have a great cooperative working relationship with the other four floor-care vendors for Wawa under the leadership of the current contracted services facilities manager, and we combine to service more than 600 stores in the Wawa chain.

Our family's group of companies, which includes Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC and

the DreamKrete polished and decorative concrete division, has grown exponentially because of Wawa, but not just because of their growth or any additional services we provide them.

With other prospective new customers, usually the only reference we have to put on our resume is Wawa, and when we explain we service all their stores in Virginia and Maryland, the doors immediately open wide due to their credibility in the Mid-Atlantic region.

When we learned more than two years ago of Wawa's plan to expand to Florida, we thought it would be a great opportunity for our companies to expand along with them. With already one additional national-level floor cleaning account in Florida for which we serviced six stores on a quarterly basis, establishing a branch was an easy decision. It will allow my dad and mom to fulfill their dreams of retiring to Florida, have some business to keep him occupied and allow him to turn the rest of our work over to my brother and me.

So this relationship has meant everything to our family businesses. And here's how we've developed it.

We have been successful with this chain by utilizing the three C's of contract management:

Commitment: First and foremost, we are committed to Wawa's Partners in Safety Program. We have a mandatory monthly safety and operations meeting, and our technicians know that if they don't attend they don't get assigned to work in the stores. Safety, with proper safety signage and notices, is a must since Wawa stores are open 24/7/365. We are also committed to following the specifications of the programs, procedures and processes for completing all services.

Consistency: We consistently follow a service schedule that we provide our customers at the beginning of each month. Our "service-to-schedule" ratio with which we rate our crews and field operations managers is annually 98 percent or better. Needless to say, we make every effort to ensure that we deliver consistently high-quality service on each and every store service visit. Our post-service follow-up programs include phone calls and in-store inspections, many of them done by me or my dad personally.

Communication: We periodically provide all our customers with progress reports of our programs and projects. Annually, we provide Wawa with a report, with supporting pictures, of both our accomplishments during the past year and plans for improvements going forward. We give all customer correspondence high priority — we pride ourselves in giving timely and thorough attention, reaction, responses and recommendations. When you properly communicate, you not only develop a happy customer but you develop a service partnership relationship for life. 📞

Travis Wilkerson is president and co-owner of TW Cleaning Services Inc. He is certified by the National Stone Care Institute for maintenance and restoration of natural stone and exotic floors and surfaces, and he is also a certified HTC Superfloor Installer. He can be reached at twcsinc219@comcast.net.

Ray Wilkerson is general managing partner of a group of family-operated businesses that includes Mid Atlantic Floor Care LLC and its polished and decorative concrete division DreamKrete, with offices in Richmond, Va., and Groveland, Fla. A former CPA, he has been in the floor cleaning, maintenance and restoration business since 1996. Contact him at twcsinc219@comcast.net.



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The Chemistries That Help You Polish Concrete

RECENTLY I spoke at the Concrete Decor Show about chemical accessories for polished concrete, and I'd like to recap that information with you. Historically, chemistry for polished concrete consisted only of a hardener-densifier, and it was often viewed as an added expense with an unknown benefit. The times are changing!



by Jennifer A. Faller

Currently, I identify nine unique categories of chemical accessories for polished concrete.

Pre-grind chemistry is used before we even run a diamond across the concrete.

Repair products fill surface voids so that we can achieve truer surface reflection and shine.

Densifier-hardener is considered a necessity.

Topical color came into vogue when acetone dyes were introduced.

Color enhancers help bring a floor more vividly to life.

Stain resistance product allow the use of polished concrete in environments where food is prepared, served and spilled.

Protection products are often applied at the end of every polish job.

Slurry management options have

expanded with the popularity of wet grinding.

Maintenance and slip prevention products (including treatments and cleaners to improve coefficient of friction) are coming to the forefront.

Let's consider some of the driving reasons for the existence of each category. When you are on a polishing job and a situation arises, these chemistries allow you to complete your job better, faster, and with greater profitability and customer satisfaction. Let's also consider some pros and cons.

Pre-grind treatments help improve the appearance of concrete by removing the laitance, salts and haze that can occur as a result of wet curing. Proper use will remove the residue and expose the actual concrete. This becomes important when you're polishing a cream finish and a uniform color is needed.

Pre-grind chemistry also helps with removal of the hard, burnt concrete cap created by overtrawling or previous densification. By keeping the product wet, etching the concrete with pre-grind treatments, and breaking the surface tension, you can start to expose an aggregate or sand finish.

These chemicals allow for a uniform first cut. More benefits are significantly less diamond usage, fewer passes, and less labor (up to 30 percent less time) during the first cut. The downsides are the use of

acids, the need for neutralizers, and added product cost.

Repair products are used in concert with the grinder to fill in and hide surface imperfections. Repair chemistries currently include resinous chemistries (epoxy, polyurethane, polyurea), acrylic or latex, and silicate.

Resinous epoxies, urethanes, polyurethanes and polyureas are coated onto the entire area in need of filling. Once cured, these resinous coatings are cut with metal diamonds, leaving an effective clear fill. The downsides are that they require significant downtime, may not be UV stable, and are not able to take color or densifier.

Straight acrylic/latex technologies are the most widely used repair systems due to ease of use, minimal cost, and lack of needed waiting time. Hybrid formulations contain silicates and resinous filler. The disadvantage of these types of products is that they cannot absorb color or densifier.

Catalyzed silicate technology is chemically compatible with both color and densifier and requires little or no waiting. The downsides are that the process may require more attention to detail and the cost per square foot may be higher depending upon the actual surface.

Topical color is leading polished concrete into the forefront of architectural design. The two categories of concrete surface color are reactive and nonreactive. Both will penetrate into concrete and polish up beautifully, yielding a gorgeous colored, polished concrete floor. With the correct carrier, topical colors leave no surface film. Reactive materials such as acid stain or silicate pigmented stain result in permanent color characteristics. Nonreactive dyes will penetrate and dwell where left, but they can be affected by environmental conditions such as moisture, UV exposure and pH.

Densifier comes in four primary chemical types: sodium, colloidal silica, potassium and lithium. The reactive metals are the carriers for the silicates, which do



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the actual densification. All will harden the surface, increasing abrasion resistance and allowing the polished shine to last longer. The key factors in each densifier are application rates and the percentage of active silicate. When properly applied to rejection, all four chemistries improve the finished result, and the cost differential is usually minimal. Select a system that is easy to apply, performs well and that offers you effective service and support.

Color enhancers help satisfy the demand for a more vivid appearance as our customers' expectations grow. These products are not film-forming and are applied after polishing is complete. The downsides are another product cost and another labor step to consider.

Stain resistance products are applied after polishing to reduce the surface vulnerability to organic acid staining. The first technology is a low-cost, water-based fixative that removes unreacted silicates from concrete pores. Unreacted silicates can chemically respond to a liquid spill and result in a permanent stain. These fixatives require a water rinse.

The second technology is an impregnator — its oleophobic and hydrophobic properties hold off spilled

liquids longer, allowing the spill to be removed before it can react. This technology has a steeper price associated with it and requires another step. The technologies can be used together on the same floor.

Protection products are applied once

the polish is complete. These come in two general types, film-forming and nonfilm-forming. Both can hide scratches and blemishes and can increase stain resistance and shine. The film former is more common but tends to be vulnerable to moisture for



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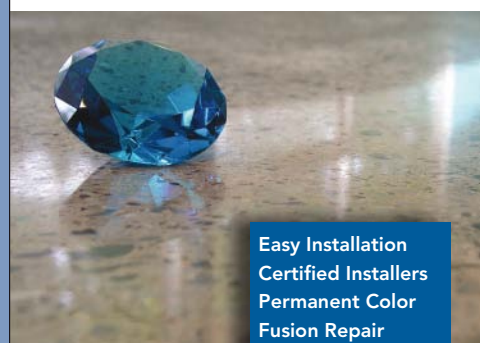
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the first 72 hours and requires reapplication as it wears off. The nonfilm-former requires burnishing and can be more labor-intensive. The advantage of a nonfilm-former is that since there is no film, no wear patterns can be created, and therefore, there is little need for reapplication.

Slurry management chemistry allows wet grinding to be a cleaner process. Gelling agents, polymers or other absorbent chemicals absorb the water and turn the grinding slurry into a semisolid waste for disposal. The process requires labor and

equipment to evenly blend the chemicals into slurry, and it yields a greater mass.

This complements "separation," in which flocculants and settling agent drop solids to the bottom of a container, allowing the water to be decanted and reused or, in accordance with regulations, pH-balanced before disposal. Once the water is siphoned off, the reduced solids are ready for appropriate disposal.

Both technologies can be used together — separate out the solids first, then pour off the water and gel the sediment for disposal.

Maintenance and slip prevention products follow job completion. Simple floor-cleaning products should be slightly alkaline (with a pH of 8-10), and must be rinsed off for the floor to maintain clarity of shine.

Slip prevention products can be either no-rinse or rinse-required. Slip prevention products increase the surface coefficient of friction — dynamic and static, wet and dry. However, they also may alter the shine and should be tested before use.

Separate articles could be written on each of these chemical technologies to fully explain their pros and cons and their usage with polished concrete. My intention is to pique your interest in the multitude of products available to assist with your installations, so that during a conversation or a production situation, you can confidently answer, "Yes, I can!"

Jennifer A. Faller is vice president of operations for The Professionals, a polished concrete contracting company in Greensboro, N.C. She is also co-chairman of the board of directors of the Concrete Polishing Association of America. Contact her at jfaller@pcpa.biz.

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Taking the Big Leap into Color Restoration

OUR world is awash in decorative concrete. That's the good news. The bad news is some of it is looking haggard or worn. This decorative trend can work in favor of those willing to tap a vast and growing market.



by Doug Carlton

Some of you recently made a World of Concrete trip to Vegas and, if you did, you probably noticed two things. One, the WOC decorative concrete presence of the past is all but gone thanks to our ever-growing Concrete Decor Show. Two, Vegas has millions of square feet of decorative concrete in desperate need of recoloring or re-staining.

Most Decor readers are searching. They're searching for fresh artistic expressions, the latest designs, and the newest tools of our trade. This is why so many make the effort to read *Concrete Decor* and attend the Concrete Decor Show. They are creative by nature and risk-takers by necessity. Unfortunately, and in part because of this, some of the aforementioned are missing out on a great opportunity. The focus of decorative concrete professionals for 2013 and beyond should be directed toward "redoing" over doing.

We are past the point of simply spraying a fresh coat of sealer in the hope of rejuvenating a tired canvas of concrete.

Many, maybe most, of today's decorative products are more universal than even manufacturers realize. Research and development within our industry focuses on new applications because up until recently this is where the decorative market was headed. But the process of recoloring or re-staining adds one more challenge: compatibility. This process is our focus today. After all, how can you re-create if the new product application is not compatible with the old one?

How, when and where

Compatibility starts with information.

Each project in hope of restoration must first be evaluated. Is the concrete surface sealed? Is there efflorescence? What are the customer's expectations, at what cost?

I can't tell you how many calls my office receives where the customer wants to do something to improve her concrete. The first question I ask: "Is your concrete sealed?" The reply, usually: "Yes, but most of the sealer is gone. Can't you just add some color back?" or "I was thinking about doing it myself but someone gave me your number."

The art of restoring previously colored or stained concrete is well beyond the capabilities of most homeowners. This is why they need your decorative knowledge and skill. At day's end it's all about you and your ability to change drab concrete into something fresh and colorful.

Recoloring unsealed concrete

The right product used over unsealed, yet previously stained or colored, concrete can produce years of outdoor and indoor enjoyment. I personally recommend nonacidic stain products that adhere to the concrete by way of a mechanical bond. These products are very user- and environmentally friendly, not to mention friendly to your customer's pocketbook.

Water-based, polymer-modified concrete color stains come in solid or translucent options as well as many color choices. Solid stains cover existing discolorations and color fading while adding the beauty of fresh color and sealer all in one application. Translucent polymer-modified stains simulate traditional reactive or acid stains.

I use solid and translucent polymer-modified stains both indoors and out. I've



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found no downside to today's polymer-modified stain products.

Recoloring sealed concrete

Sealed concrete will complicate a color restoration project. Most manufacturers recommend stripping film-type sealers before adding anything other than new sealer to the concrete's surface.

Fortunately, many products are now available to remove old sealers. These strippers are effective in removing epoxies, urethanes, paint, acrylics, grease, oil and other coatings that will hinder new color from bonding to the concrete's surface.

Don't be afraid to tackle restoration projects previously sealed. I caution contractors against locking themselves into a firm bid when the job includes the removal of a foreign coating. A time-and-material option is best, at least until the concrete canvas is void of all old coatings. Once the coating is removed, an installer should feel comfortable recoloring the fresh canvas.

Selling recoloring projects

Whoever said a picture is worth a thousand words perfectly described color restoration in our industry. It is imperative to use "before and after" photos whenever



Photos courtesy of NewLook International



This faded integral color job was restored using NewLook International's Original Solid Color Stain.

possible and permitted. A prospective customer can't visualize the colorful results like you can. They don't have the experience you have.

Prepare yourself to answer one huge question: "How long will the recolor last?" This is a great question as long as the customer is willing to at least consider throwing more money at a less-than-desirable decorative concrete surface.

For what it's worth, in five years I've never heard a customer request recoloring a polymer-modified stain job. For the record, I haven't seen a polymer-modified stain color restoration project fail. By fail I mean peel, chip or fade. Surface preparation is important, so be sure to follow the

manufacturer's recommendations to best insure a good bond. I've had customers change or dispute the color, but this is a very simple fix when using polymer-modified stain. The fix is as easy as recoating with an alternate color choice. This recoatability is open-ended, at least as long as a foreign coating is not applied to the concrete's surface, locking the stain underneath.

My recommendation is to find an area of fading concrete to prove how modern stain formulas can restore blah concrete back to a colorful surface. 🛠️

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

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Helping a Nonprofit Make a Great First Impression

by Jason Geiser

IN the fall of last year I was invited to attend the preplanning meeting for the 2013 Concrete Decor Show to look at potential sites for the decorative concrete makeover workshops. We looked at three different sites, and in the end it was clear that the Charlotte Rescue Mission had the most need of our services. In fact it had so many needs I wasn't sure which area I was going to do when I left.

After talking it over with all involved, we decided to lead a workshop that would transform the front entrance to the mission.

Anybody that knows me or has ever been to a training hosted by my company (Deco-Crete Supply, based in Ohio) knows how important I think steps are, so I had to find an area where we could pour some steps. I didn't have to look very far to find a set of wood steps leading down to the laundry room that were in bad shape. I always like to incorporate steps into my trainings because I feel steps are an easy way to separate yourself from the competition, especially with all the advancements in formliners over the years.

Next was choosing our colors. There were two red brick buildings on both sides of the entryway, and sometimes the tendency is to try to bring some of that red brick color into the stamped area. There are two reasons I don't like to do that. First, as we were surrounded by two large buildings with thousands of bricks, adding more to a horizontal surface would have been too busy. Second, it is difficult to match the brick color exactly, so it's better to do something completely different.

So for the main field color we used more



Photos by Steven Ochs


of a tan sandstone. This color accents the brick and is the natural color of how the stone would actually look.

For the border I selected a medium gray

color because I wanted the border to stand out but not take away from all the other things. The buildings are more than 100 years old and I wanted the stamping to

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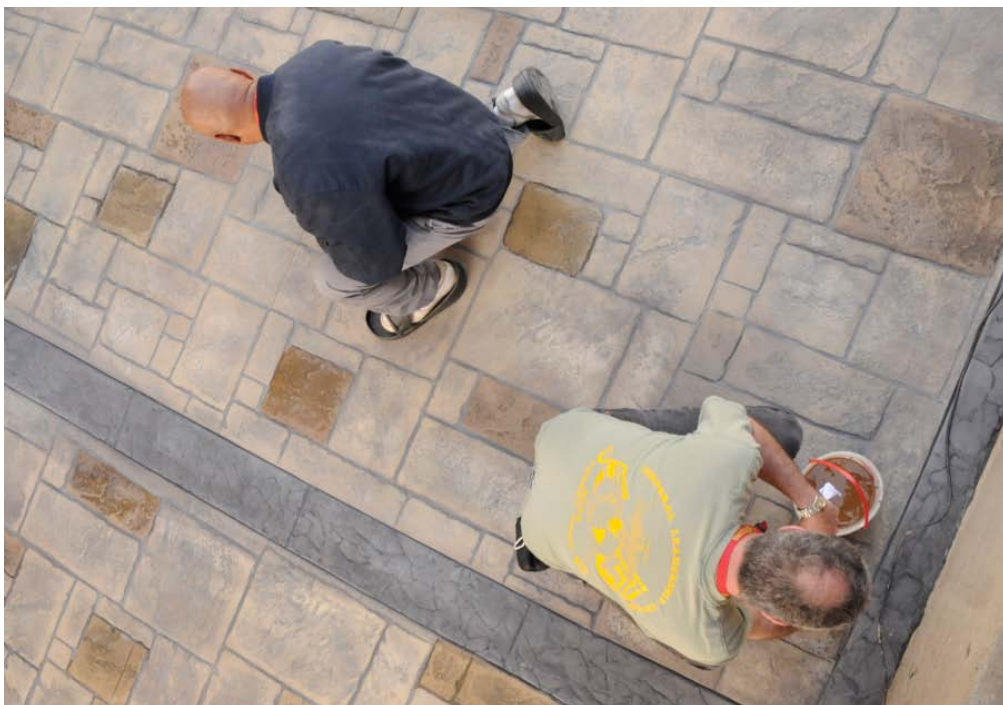
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match that age, so I picked English ashlar, a tumbled stone look with irregular grout lines. On the border we used a rough classic stone pattern.

The other thing I wanted to incorporate was the mission's logo. My original design required a two-yard smooth-troweled slab to be poured ahead of time. Then, when we got there, we could do some scoring and staining before the class started. As we all know, things out on a job site aren't always how we expect them to be and you have to be able to adjust on the fly. The slab that was poured wouldn't work.

However, I already had the stencil cut out for the logo, so I came up with a new design for a new pour — making a diamond with the same border around it as the overall project and using a seamless texture on the inside with the logo centered in the middle. Not exactly what I had in mind but it worked out and looked nice.



The first day of the training, we poured the steps and logo area in the morning and the rest of the driveway in the afternoon. Normally I would have broken this 1,000-square-foot area into two pours, stopping it at one of the bands, but we had to get it done to be able to finish the next day.

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This area was challenging. Being sandwiched between the buildings made it very hard to float and get the bands done. Plus, there was the 180 feet of border we were trying to do monolithically. Factor in the wind wiping through the area and the mix having hot water in it, and the whole class was participating, even if they didn't come prepared to.

On day two we used a water-based stain to get a subtle variation of the color between the stones. We put a light coat of sealer on the whole thing, being careful not to get any in the joints so it would be easier to clean up the grout we applied after it was dry.

I love the way stamped concrete looks grouted — there is nothing that looks more like the real thing. However, doing it really sucks.

The overall project really came out nice and the staff and the people from the mission were awesome! What a great opportunity to help this great organization! Extra special thanks to my local guys from O-H-I-O for their willingness to help on this project: the Deco-Crete Supply staff, Dave Vaughn from Vaughn Concrete (Creston, Ohio) and Matt Zook from J&H



Decorative Concrete (Uniontown, Ohio).
See you next year! 📱

Jason Geiser owns Deco-Crete Supply and Cornerstone Concrete Designs, both based in Orrville, Ohio. He can be contacted at jason@deco-cretesupply.com.

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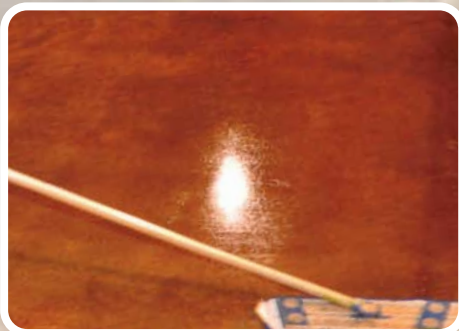
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