

## Ensuring that the Appropriate Flooring Product is Specified

Getting the right flooring product into the right place can be very challenging particularly if you don't fully understand all of the circumstances, conditions and parameters of what you want to use, where and how to use it. That said we'll look at how you go about getting the right product in the right place, regardless of what it is and having it meet all your expectations. Nothing in a commercial space gets as much abuse as the flooring material. With the right product it may never show how much traffic and use it really gets. The wrong product will make you want to pull your hair out when it fails miserably after a short period of time.

**Substrate Conditions** – without spending much time on this extremely important subject, the key here is that the substrate must be clean and dry and free of any substances or conditions that could compromise the installation of new flooring material.

Relative to just replacing existing flooring – what do you have now? What do you like about it, if anything? What don't you like about it? Why are you replacing it? Is it ugly, worn, dated? Do you want something that looks "kind of like it" to maintain a color scheme or a complete new look? If this is the case you have to look at a product that will give you the look you want and be easy to work with. Modular carpet tile for example, can replace existing flooring because it allows for systems furniture for example to remain in place and be lifted.



Categorize the traffic: light, moderate, heavy, severe or extreme are categories of traffic. Light traffic could be private offices or limited use spaces. Moderate could be administrative meeting room spaces. Heavy could be corridors, offices, call centers or entryways. Severe could be public spaces, lobbies or dining areas and also transportation service areas such as rail or bus stations or any public transportation location. Severe could also include amusement or entertainment or sports venues.

## Developing a Maintenance Program

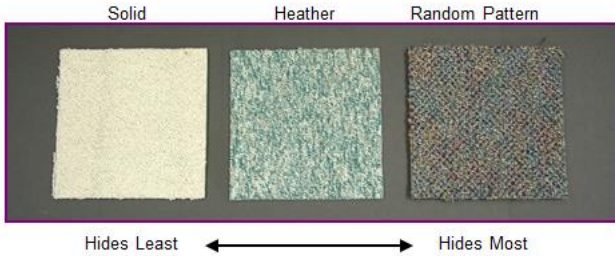
- Building layout
- Traffic flow
- Activities in building
- Proper cleaning methods
  - Preventive
  - Scheduled maintenance
  - Interim cleaning
  - Deep cleaning/hot water extraction
- Staff assessment and training plan

Traffic Level	Pile Lift	Spot Clean	Deep Cleaning
Light	As needed	Daily	Annually
Medium	Quarterly	Daily	Every 6 months
Heavy	Monthly	Daily	Quarterly

**Light Traffic** - Private offices and cubicles  
**Medium Traffic** - Shared offices, interior hallways and conference rooms  
**Heavy Traffic** - Entrances, elevators, main hallways, break rooms, work/lounge rooms & mail rooms



New build or retro: There are a multitude of flooring materials for all applications with more and more elaborate colors and styling. A primary consideration, as categorized above, is the type of traffic the space is going to get - from very heavy, such as an airport to very light such as private executive offices. This will dictate the range of colors you can use, construction of the material and style. Very dense carpet or high performance vinyl flooring, stone or terrazzo would be the product choice for very high traffic. Think of this category as a dump truck. It



is capable of extreme abuse daily, and as long as it is maintained properly, it will perform for years. Lighter use areas could be compared to a small pick up; still a truck but far less capable of being abused repeatedly. So here you have to be thinking that the denser the product the better it should perform. A further consideration is the less traffic the more comfortable a flooring material could be with the addition of a cushion or a cushioned backing.

Hard or soft surface flooring? In entry ways it might be best to use a hard surface product coupled with an entry type flooring material at the doorways. From there a soft surface product, low and dense could be used. Natural materials which are gaining favor because they are perceived as being green may not always deliver the performance that you want. Wood for example can scratch and dent. Cork can turn color as can linoleum when exposed to volumes of UV light (sunlight or artificial lighting).

Hard surface flooring in hospitals, sheet vinyl for example, especially in patient rooms with very heavy beds and very heavy patients can indent. This is a problem plaguing the health care and hard surface flooring industry. The thinner the wheel on the bed, the greater the chances of indentations that won't pop out by themselves. In these cases you have to be very careful to work with the flooring manufacturer to insure you use the right components with the floor and select exactly the product that will work.

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**Are you Interested? The New LGM Carpet Seminar For Groups or Individuals – See Page 6**

Page Layout By:  
 Anita S. Drennon



There are some new vinyl flooring products on the market that are touted to not indent.

Cut or loop pile carpet or a combination? Loop pile carpet, especially if low and dense, will always outperform cut pile carpet. However a combination of cut and loop in the right construction can also deliver high performance if designed and engineered to do so.

Life expectancy – how long do you want your new floor to last? Certainly most end users want their new flooring to last as long as possible and look good as well. Here is where you really have to grasp qualifying what type of flooring product you want and who you should listen to so that goal is achieved. It's not always the rep selling the floor or the architect. You should inquire with your contemporaries as to the projects they've had, similar to yours and what they used. A rep will be biased naturally toward their products and an architect is expected to be an expert in every material or finish written into the spec and this just isn't always the case. It is always an excellent idea to install a mock up with several flooring materials being considered to see exactly how they will perform before you pull the trigger on a flooring project.

Budget for flooring and maintenance: Everyone has a budget even if you don't have a budget. Sounds ridiculous but consider that you have a budget of twenty five dollars a yard for carpet. You may be able to find something for a bit less that will work better depending on the construction and color. This is another good reason to install mock-ups. You may also want to put together a matrix of products being considered or presented to you so you can compare the attributes of each and make a

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decision as to which is best. And it is always important to think about how the flooring material is going to be maintained. You can have the best dump truck but if you don't take care of it you'll never get the performance from it you expected.

So what should you consider in your flooring material besides price which should not be what governs the selection of the flooring? Color, style, luster or finish, ability to perform in the space it is to be used, ease of installation, inherent good and bad characteristics of the product, what you're trying to achieve or prevent relative to potential problems or problems you've experienced, appearance retention (the ability to look good for a long time), maintenance challenges, the impression it makes in the space and on the people using it, recyclability and ease of replacement.



Geographic locations will also dictate the type of flooring material for the best performance. New York City versus Chattanooga Tennessee is no contest. NYC exposes flooring materials in every type of establishment to the highest levels of traffic. Chattanooga on the other hand has far fewer people and traffic which would exert far less traffic on flooring materials.


The hottest products on the market: Two flooring materials top the list of the hottest flooring materials on the market and they deliver some of the highest performance. On the soft side is carpet tile. This is the most highly engineered flooring material on the market. It can vary greatly in construction especially when recycled materials are used. The other product, on the hard side, is LVT or Luxury Vinyl Tile.

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Get help: This article is a fifty thousand foot view of selecting and specifying flooring as each project is unique and specific. Selecting or specifying the appropriate flooring material from the thousands of products available, both hard and soft surface, can be like negotiating a mine field. There are far fewer qualified entities available to help you with the proper selection. One of the best places to get help is the local commercial flooring contractor. These guys are typically the professional big leaguers of the industry. They offer flooring products for the space not just one flooring line. They install every type of flooring product in all types of locations and applications and will have the knowledge and experience to guide you through the process. There are also firms, such as ours, that help specify and evaluate products for every application with the ability to test and evaluate the materials to insure they'll deliver as expected. And finally, when you aren't sure what to do and are confused, ask for help. We can always help answer questions for you whenever you have them.

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*Carpet Construction*  
*Industry Statistics*  
*Carpet Fibers & Their Characteristics*  
*Carpet Yarn Manufacturing*  
*Dyeing Processes*  
*Tufting Processes*  
*Carpet Finishing/Backing Systems*  
*Lab and Mill Tours*  
*Installation*  
*Adhesives*  
*Maintenance*  
*Testing Methods*  
*Chemicals and Machines*  
*Industry Overview*

#### AGENDA

**Day One**  
**8:00 AM to 5:00 PM**  
*Introduction and Opening Remarks*  
*Carpet Construction & Industry Statistics*  
*Carpet Fibers & Their Characteristics*  
*Carpet Yarn Manufacturing*  
*Pre-Dyeing*  
*Post-Dyeing*  
*Tufting*

**Day Two**  
**8:15 AM to 5:00 PM**  
*Finishing/Installation Prep*  
*Moisture and pH*  
*Lab and Mill Tours*

**Day Three**  
**8:15 AM to 1:00 PM**  
*Modular Carpet Installation*  
*Adhesives*  
*Maintenance*  
*Discussions*

#### PRACTICAL / IMPARTIAL / OBJECTIVE

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explaining the more technical aspects  
of fiber, yarn, dyeing, backing  
systems and carpet manufacturing in  
an easy to understand format. We'll  
address new state of the art technical  
developments and their effects on  
carpet as well as information on  
installation, maintenance and testing.  
The mill tours will bring to life the  
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profitable business decisions.*