

CFR The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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Carpet, the not so Forgotten Flooring

No flooring material says style, fashion, comfort and warmth like carpet. No hard surface flooring can compete in these categories no matter what you think of it or how you perceive it. Tufted or woven carpet today can be made to look like anything, and designing a pattern is only limited by one's imagination. This applies to broadloom and carpet tile, although broadloom would be the undisputed leader in unlimited pattern and design. Carpet tile styling, which was certainly on display at Neocon this year, is close but when you have to put pieces of modular flooring down the design restrictions are naturally going to be limited especially for expansive and unrepeatable patterns. It's ludicrous to hear sales pitches about vinyl plank and tile being soft and comfortable under foot. It's hard surface flooring after all, with the emphasis on hard. Hard surface flooring is never soft, warm and comfortable underfoot and it can never compete with carpet in this arena.

COURISTAN HOSPITALITY



Hand Tufted Rug

Treadneedles Hotel, London



Injection Print

Macy Herald Square, NY

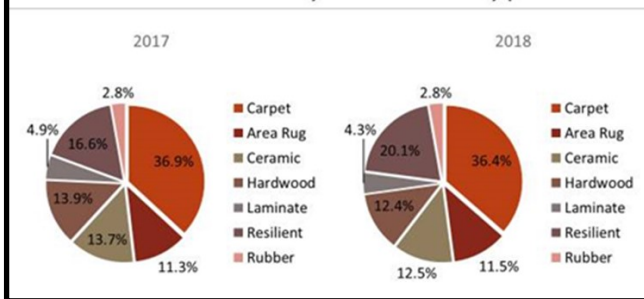


Woven Axminster

Teaneck Marriott, NJ

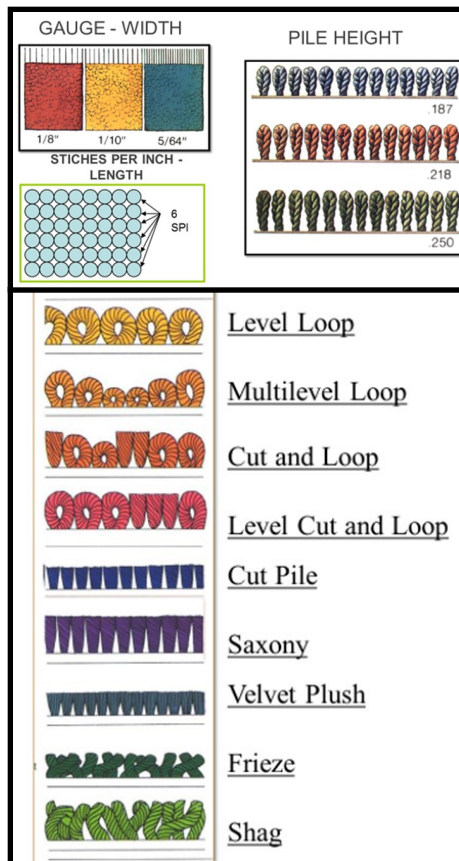
Carpet is still king and the hoopla over hard surface flooring, real as it may be, will likely allow the pendulum to swing back toward the use of carpet at some point. In the commercial market which is, as the entire flooring industry, under siege by hard surface flooring, we have to understand that this phenomenon is going to recoil at some point. I remember as a kid we had hardwood floors throughout the house and wool carpet in the "good room". By the time I moved out every room in the house, including the bathrooms and kitchen, had carpet. Now we're back to hard surface again. Carpet may not be used everywhere but it certainly should gain back some market share after hard surface has its run and commercial users tire of it. As of today, carpet is still the largest single category of flooring.

Market Share by Surface Type



With carpet you can actually qualify, quantify and determine the quality and performance relative to construction from stitch rate, to gauge, pile height, yarn twist, construction – either cut or loop or cut and loop, backing type and construction, color and fiber in either broad-

loom or carpet tile. You can determine with measurable, obvious and inherent characteristics, whether a carpet will perform well or just be fuzzy flooring. And it's easy enough to see why, if the product does fail to perform, what the cause is. Likely the wrong product in the wrong place as is most often the case. All of this is there for the knowledgeable person to see and assess. With vinyl plank or tile how can you tell how well the stuff is made or if it will perform by looking at it? What is there to measure or quantify about the product? And most of it looks pretty much the same with a wood or stone pattern. Certainly, if you understand the hard surface product you can determine the quality but most of what makes it work or not work is hiding in plain sight, unrecognizable to most. Not so with carpet. Never has been that way and never will be. Carpet gives you unlimited color, design, pattern, style, pile height variation in cut and loop, only limited by ones imagination. You can't do that with vinyl tile or plank. And the technology for tufting carpet, tile and broadloom, has never been greater allowing for styling that, again, is only limited by ones imagination. No hard surface flooring can compete with that. Hard surface flooring is one dimensional – not so with carpet.



When you talk about luxury and style, as in any product, it connotes comfort, visual appeal, individuality, warmth, sophistication and quite frankly, makes a statement about the space and can establish a reputation or atmosphere. Carpet can speak to you with style. You won't go into a high end businesses office, regardless of what type and find



THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

Lew Migliore - President

P (706) 370-5888 or Email: lgmtcs@optilink.us

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something hard and cold on the floor. And if it does make it there, I can guarantee that the execs in that space won't have it for long. Especially in the top tier of managements space. Executive offices and boardrooms are carpets forte. Hard surface vinyl flooring says austerity to the upper echelon of flooring. No matter how nice you make the stuff. You can put marble or an exquisite looking porcelain floor in the common type areas, but carpet is going to be everywhere else.

Consider the space occupied by throngs of workers in an office building toiling at their work stations or in offices, especially if they spend any time on the phone or have important meetings. Carpet is what works and is used there despite what might be trendy now. If a high end space has hard surface, it's typically covered with a high end rug and eventually the hard surface will succumb to carpet again as the pendulum swings back.

In hospitality, especially in four and five star hotels, carpet is definitely king. In the pre-function areas and ballrooms, corridors and rooms. Here is most often a bespoke product and design especially created for the hotel and the theme or décor being followed. Hotels with hard surface flooring, which is admittedly being used more and more, are, in my opinion, a trend that will recede in time. You can be as millennial as you want but when you get to your room and are looking for quiet, solitude and tranquility after a hard days work or an exhausting day of vacation, you want the comfort and quiet of the cocoon carpet will afford you.

There's a reason carpet is used in casino's as well and in particular wool/nylon blend woven products. First, as I learned from old time carpet guys decades ago, wool carpet is like a beautiful woman, it grows old gracefully. So, throngs of traffic in a casino needs to "weather the storm" of foot traffic and look good while doing it. Since casino's don't want anyone to feel uncomfortable while taking your money, most still allow smoking – not wanting to alienate anyone who wants to be in their establishment. Wool, being natural, won't melt if a cigarette gets dropped on it like a synthetic fiber will. It will char and that char can be easily brushed off with a finger nail or even when the carpet gets vacuumed. And wool won't "ugly out" like a synthetic fiber can.

Carpet can also be constructed to be just about bullet proof and look like anything the mind can conceive, as

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U.S. Patent 7,231,815, 8,047,056, 9,032,791 & 9,588,092. Additional patents pending.

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stated earlier. You can build carpet tile or broadloom carpet to perform under any conditions using a construction specification and working directly with the manufacturer's design and product development staff. We have done this on more than one occasion with great success, being able to develop and construct a carpet product that is specific to a particular application. This not only for the styling and color but for performance as well.



Carpet tile has overwhelmingly taken the lions share of the commercial market being used everywhere regardless of application. From more utilitarian spaces to hospitality where broadloom carpet was always used. Carpet tile has cut into the use of broadloom carpet in the commercial market. This product is made in varying shapes and sizes with different backings and face yarns including 100% wool. The wool carpet tiles are more appropriate for use in unique spaces such as a boardroom or executive office, not so much in a space like a corridor in a luxury condo building. Carpet tiles are also being tufted and printed with patterns and color that can rival broadloom carpet and it seems the styling, size and shapes are endless.

More and more carpet tiles are being produced without PVC backings and in lighter weights and the industry is moving back to using more recycled content. All of these changes give me pause for concern as the changes in the product can result in problems on the floor. The weight of the tile used to help hold it in place and lighter weight tiles need more help to stay put. When carpet tiles were first introduced in the US they had heft and needed virtually no adhesive at all except maybe some at the perimeters. We then moved to grid adhesion to keep tiles in place. Then full spread adhesion and now adhesive that is much more aggressive which will help compensate for what's lacking in the weight of the tile. This should be a fairly mindless product to install but we're finding with some of the newer products that they have some unique idiosyncrasies that you have to be aware of. If you read the information on these products you may also find some contradictions in their use and the adhesive being suggested to be used with them. Also, being as involved in this as we are, there is information about installing some of these products with varying backings that require special treatment to prevent them from getting hinky on the floor, such as sliding, that might not be mentioned in the installation instructions but that you can find out with a call to the field services technical team. Or you can call us, and we can find out easily enough for you.

Carpet tile is also much easier to handle and install. It doesn't require being laid out for cutting or fitting and uses almost no other tools than a knife for some trimming. The modularity of the product allows for change out when damaged or when the space is reconfigured.

A problem with carpet tile, that comes and goes and is not exclusive to any one manufacturer, is dimensional and planar stability. That is the ability of the tile to lay flat and maintain its size. Remember what we've always said, that carpet tile out of the box should be and remain flat, square and stable without question-and etched in stone. This is the only thing that is the same for carpet tile and vinyl tile and plank. There should not be any planar or dimensional changes in the product once it gets on the floor. We've talked about this in previous issues of the newsletter.

Commercial carpet fills a need that hard surface flooring products can't and it's not going away. Hard surface flooring may be the rage right now, particularly luxury vinyl tile and plank of all kinds, but with everybody and his brother in the market and products coming from who knows where, made with who knows what, and how, they offer more challenges by far than carpet.

If you need help with carpet or any flooring material or substrate or have questions, contact us. We always have the answers. We can tell you specifically what went wrong and why, who's at fault and most importantly how to fix it. Or, before you get into trouble on a project, call us so we can give you some guidance and save you some pain and suffering.

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