

CFR The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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INSTALLATION CRISIS

The lack of installers and the lack of enthusiasm to become an installer or continue as one has roots directly to the industry. This is a subject I wrote about when I had my column in Floor Covering News for over 27 years. Installation was said to be the number one problem in the industry, and it was stated as such in surveys taken and published in several industry publications. But the problem was created by the very people complaining about it now, the flooring dealers and especially retail flooring dealers. They beat the installers up. Installers were pitted against each other for jobs that they actually had to bid for to get by offering the lowest prices. This was not only unfair but shameful, degrading and dehumanizing. Dealers constantly beat the installers up for the lowest price and then expected them to do a perfect job and the dealers wanted to capitalize on the installer as well. The installers got no respect or appreciation for what they did. So this disgraceful practice set the stage for the installer exodus and the lack of interest in becoming an installer. Again, especially at the retail level. Commercial installation was better but not great either.

You have to give to get and it starts with respect and ends with fair wages and compensation and has to include ongoing training.

Any flooring product, soft or hard, is worthless until it's installed and installed properly. No installer that I have ever known starts out their day thinking about how they can screw up the installation. They want to do a good job as most trades people do. And all of them I've ever known are eager to learn and grateful for the opportunity. The installer has to know and understand the product and the flooring contractor is not going to teach them that, but they can certainly contribute to and arrange for that education and training. If you show a kindness and concern you get that back. If you show the installers or potential installation candidates that you have a program to better them and a continual program, then you give them hope of having a career.

Welcome all comers to the trade. Make them love what they do because they do make a difference. A space is not useable until the flooring goes in, no matter what it is, even if polished concrete.

The only group that has a complete bead on this issue is INSTALL. Granted they are the union and they teach a trade with education that continues throughout the installers career and they offer a career, not just a job, with benefits and a retirement plan. They also have a budget that finances the continued education of members. The only other organized group is CFI. The training and certifying is for individual commercial and residential installers and installers for firms, and they do a great job with hands on training



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and have since 1993. Other than these two groups, which are very different, there really are no other organizations that actually train installers. And INSTALL is in a different league than anyone else with training centers around the country that are dedicated to creating careers. They also work hand in hand with flooring manufacturers making sure their training complies with those of the flooring products manufacturered. I have to admit, I am a bit biased towards INSTALL because I have worked with them for years and they have, without question, a handle on flooring installation and installers. There is no reason a residential or commercial flooring dealer or contractor can't emulate their training regimen.

CFI would be a good place to start and work forward with them and their training programs. However, you, as a flooring contractor or dealer have to realize that treating the installer like a team member and helping them learn is paramount to both of your success.

I have the opportunity to work with installers all over the country on projects where we are engaged either as consultants from the beginning of a project or called in to determine why a flooring product or installation has failed. On every project, no matter what it is, the installers are like dry sponges saturating themselves with information they have never heard before. They are eager to learn, receptive to new information and grateful for having received it. If we can impart that for the short period of time we're involved with them, then you can working with and employing their services on a daily basis. No installer gets up in the morning with the thought of screwing up a job.

All trades are hurting, not just flooring installation. Why should they want to install flooring which is very hard work?

We as a society also are responsible for the lack of young people entering trades. Go to college, get a degree and then what? When you can go into a trade and start making money right away and learn a skill that will be in demand for as long as you live.

We are going to be paying a dear price for anyone who has a trade and a skill, it's the law of supply and demand – "We got it, you want it, and you pay."

ON PAGE 5 IS EXCITING INFORMATION FROM WAGNER METERS.



THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT
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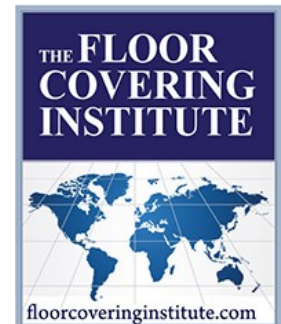
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Page Layout By: Anita S. Drennon

There are only a handful of manufacturers who have field technical installers who can come out and help with job starts. Most of the so called “manufacturers” don’t have anyone, except maybe a rep. But all manufacturers are, or should be, willing to help out with the installation of their products. However, we have to deal with, and do daily, those sellers of the product who really don’t know anything about it, much less the installation issues that go along with it.

So, how do we build the flooring installation force? We have to change the mind set of young people and particularly the curriculum at high schools to foster interest in all trades. When I was in high school we had all kinds of training from wood shops, where I was the foreman, which was a scary thing – don’t ask, auto shop, metal shot and so forth and re-introduce a debt free professional career to our youth. Not everyone has to go to college and have the burden of college loan debt. A career in the trades has to be implemented in the schools. Formal training, career long training with good pay and benefits will insure trades are populated. Unless we make the effort to get young people into careers, whatever they are, we are going to be in a sorry state of affairs.

Young people have to understand that they can get formal training so that they can get paid with benefits by getting a skill.

High school programs are best. Get them while they’re young. This is done by many companies including Caterpillar and John Deere who partner with high schools to develop young students for a career with them. Why can’t you do this in your community?

Start with the end in mind. Why would I want to be a flooring installer and why would I want to work for you? It’s not just money but that’s certainly important and a motivator, but you have to appeal to their hot button. And you have to find it. Do you want to see your work as a form of art or materialized into a finished product that you can go by and say, I did that? After high school and before college I worked with two Italian masons hauling concrete blocks, mixing mud (cement) shoveling pea gravel, pouring basements, garage floors and sidewalks for new homes. When I

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See Page 6 Regarding
Excess Inventory Offer

go back to Rochester NY, where I'm from, I can still go by those neighborhoods and say I did that with pride. I remember showing my daughters what I had done. That's the feeling you want the installers working for you to have. You have to develop a program for them or get involved in one that is capable of creating that pride and you have to be proud of them for their accomplishments. Whether its your own program that you create, CFI or INSTALL, you have to commit to it to survive because the flooring isn't going to install itself and without qualified, proud, respected and appreciated installers you don't have a business and we don't have an industry.

If you need help with an installation, a failed flooring or a flooring problem that no one has the answer to, we can help. It is our job to know and we do, always.

SEE PAGE 5—WAGNER METERS OFFERS NEW WEBINAR THAT EXPLORES THE “WHAT, WHY, AND HOW OF WOOD MOISTURE TESTING”

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“WHEN NO ONE ELSE HAS ANSWERS, WE DO”



Presented by
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Jason Spangler is the Flooring Sales Manager for Wagner Meters. He has his MBA from West Texas A&M University and has over 25 years of experience working with products in the construction, roofing, and flooring industries.

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Wagner Meters Offers New Webinar that Explores the “What, Why, and How of Wood Moisture Testing”

Rogue River, OR (May 2021) – Wagner Meters is pleased to offer an all-new training webinar that gives woodworkers, contractors, flooring installers, and building inspectors all the essential information they need for accurate, reliable testing of moisture in wood.

This free hour-long online presentation, titled *The What, Why, and How of Wood Moisture Testing*, is designed to help anyone who works with wood. Attendees will learn how to take advantage of the very latest moisture measurement technologies so they can avoid significant problems due to moisture in wood.

The new webinar covers a wide range of topics and answers many key questions, such as:

How is wood influenced by ambient conditions?

What problems can occur if wood moisture content is too high or too low?

What is equilibrium moisture content (EMC), and why is it important?

Are moisture meters accurate?

What is the best moisture meter for me—pin or pinless?

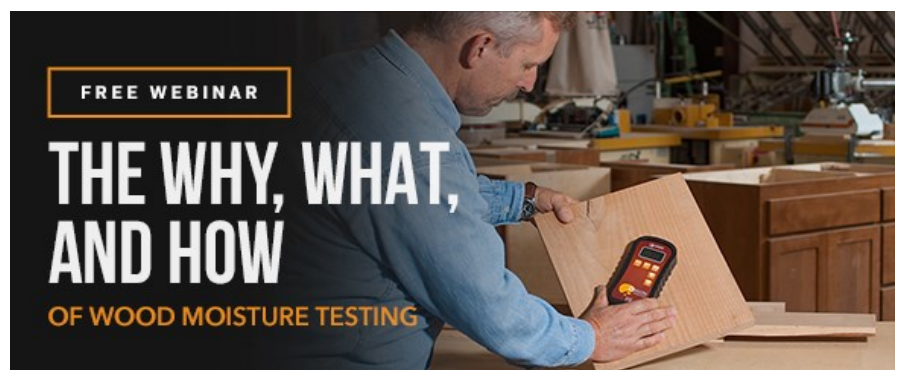
Plus much, much more!

The highly informative webinar is presented by Jason Spangler, Sales Manager for Wagner Meters. In addition to explaining the latest scientific information about wood moisture and how to test for it accurately, Jason will take time to answer each participant’s questions during a Q&A session at the conclusion of the webinar. For the first month, these Q&A sessions will happen each time the webinar is offered. After that, Q&A sessions will be available twice per quarter.

For more information, or to register for Wagner’s new educational website: <https://www.wagnermeters.com/wood-webinar/>

About Wagner Meters

Wagner Meters is a family-owned, American business that aims to provide solutions in moisture measurement technology that will enhance the quality and value of each customer’s project. With an almost 60-year legacy of innovation, Wagner continues to be a resource for both individual craftsmen and high-performance commercial endeavors.





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