

Alliance Flooring members share success stories

By Ken Ryan

Orlando, FLA. — Nearly 20 months since their last in-person meeting Alliance Flooring held a “Family Reunion” here at Rosen Shingle Creek, where members shared their experiences from the darkest days of the pandemic but mostly elaborated on their soaring successes since then.

Alliance Flooring’s previous live event was held in March 2020, just days before COVID-19 shut down the flooring industry for weeks. After a difficult April, the road to recovery began in May and has not let up. Indeed, instead of losing members during the pandemic, the group added 11; in all, 36 more stores opened between March 2020 and today.

What’s more, instead of revenue declines in 2020, Alliance Flooring retailers realized a 10% gain over 2019 on average. Many Alliance dealers are forecasting a record-breaking 2021, with some already achieving it.

“2020 was our biggest year in store history, with 12% growth over 2019,” said Josh Elder, president-owner of Gainesville CarpetsPlus ColorTile in Florida. “We’re seeing 20% growth in 2021 vs. 2020.” In the few years since Elder took over the family-run business, sales have nearly doubled to roughly \$8 million.

Similarly, CarpetsPlus Colortile of Wyoming in Thayne, and Carpet Exchange in Lockport, N.Y., have already surpassed 2020 numbers with still several weeks to pad those numbers. Still others spoke about keeping pace with the demand, which is made more difficult due to supply slowdowns at the ports and rising raw material prices.

With all that to unpack, Alliance execs thought it was high time to see each other again.

“The point of this conference was to come together, network and do some buying,” said Ron Dunn, co-CEO and founder.

Kevin Logue, executive vice president of marketing, agreed. “For us it’s been way too long to get together,” he said. “At the end of the day, it is a relationship business, and you need to talk face to face and see samples and colors. This [gathering] is difficult to replicate digitally.”

Ryan Dunn, executive vice president of sales, said the turnout exceeded expectations even though a couple dozen members were stranded at airports in the Southeast due to a snafu at Southwest Airlines.

Alliance Flooring expands vendor lineup

Alliance Flooring welcomed five new suppliers to the roster at this year’s conference. These included Interceramic and Decorative Concepts, a wool supplier. Representatives from each of the new vendors took the podium to discuss their companies. Steve Roan, chief revenue officer for Decorative Concepts, told members they are a “market disrupter,” offering a hard-to-find woven vinyl product that features water-resistant properties.

As for existing suppliers, the exclusive deal Happy Feet made in March of 2020,

in which it offered its Sidewinder SPC line exclusively to member retailers under ColorTile signage, has spurred additional interest. “I have people calling me trying to do exclusive deals,” said Kevin Logue, executive vice president of marketing, noting there are two that are in the discussion phase.

As a group, Alliance is also emphasizing Made in USA products, due in part to the massive import delays as well as the need to get products on shelves quicker.



The executive team from Alliance Flooring, from left: Kevin Logue, Jon Logue, Ron Dunn and Ryan Dunn.

The turnout included new members, including Beasley Floor Company in Charleston, S.C., which left another buying group to join Alliance Flooring. “I’m glad I made the move,” said Billy Beasley, owner. “There’s a different atmosphere here compared with some of the other groups. I have nothing but good things to say. Everybody here is welcoming; nobody is a stranger.”

Ryan Dunn said Alliance continues to receive inquiries from affiliated and non-affiliated dealers about joining the group, which currently has about 300 retailers. “I feel very strongly about our group and the need to protect our membership,” Ryan said. “When you have something special like we have you need to protect it. We are a very open group. All of us are smarter than any single one of us, and we are looking to share ideas. We are not just letting anyone in. We are looking for someone with the right heart who can come in and add to the group.”

Kevin Logue concurred, adding, “We see a huge opportunity for membership growth with second- and third-generation businesses. We’re getting a lot of interest and phone calls from retailers, in cases where the business is about to pass on to a second or third generation, and they are looking for an exciting, young vibrant leadership to join.”

As Ron Dunn noted, “This group is the light, and this light can shine for the rest of the industry.”

Show highlights

Tom Lape, former president of Mohawk residential who is winding down his tenure there, shared his thoughts on the flooring industry and where he sees potential opportunities and challenges ahead. Lape told audience members that the flooring business will continue to thrive, especially at the mid- to high-end. Specifically, he said, “Carpet is going to be one of your most profitable producers because it has to be installed. It is everybody’s interest to keep that business robust.”

However, Lape also added that demand overall will start to taper down, and then posed these questions. “How do you stimulate demand when demand starts to taper? How are you going to stand out in the marketplace when demand is shrinking? You take stare from the other guy.”

Lape predicted that moisture-resistant laminate will be the most talked about product over the next two to three years, citing a bevy of features (realistic visuals, scratch and dent superiority), and that laminate will be taking share from other flooring categories. He also called Mohawk’s signature laminate offering, RevWood, “probably our most successful product launch in the last five years.”