

FCW

F L O O R C O V E R I N G W E E K L Y



FCW sat down with Ryan Dunn and Kevin Logue to discuss the group's growth strategies moving forward.

Alliance lays groundwork for the next 25 years

By Mallory Cruise-McGrath

[Orlando, Fla.] With 24 new members in attendance, including 16 prospective members, Alliance Flooring — including the CarpetsPlus, COLORTILE and Carpetland brands — met here last month to celebrate the group's 25th Anniversary as well discuss strategies for continued growth. These strategies ranged from succession planning to new product launches as well as diversification and a move into kitchen and bath.

“The vibe has been positive; members have been looking forward to getting back together in person and this is our first full-fledged convention in two years,” co-president Kevin Logue shared with FCW during a sit down here at convention. “The product launch is amazing, and although not quite pre-pandemic levels, attendance was better than anticipated with 153 members in attendance.”

Co-president Ryan Dunn said members are experiencing record growth. “It’s been amazing; the conversations are exciting and centered on the growth everybody is experiencing with their businesses,” he said, adding, “There’s opportunities to grow.”

And the group is poised for continued growth in 2022, said Logue. “We had a great 2021 and are bullish about 2022. Despite the real challenges out in the world, everyone is looking with shared optimism for 2022.”

Profiting through product

Here at convention, Alliance Flooring unveiled an extensive private label line of COREtec. “The private labelling of COREtec WPC is something members have been asking for quite some time,” said Logue. “We’ve seen success with COREtec Pro SPC and members have done well with COREtec WPC under the open line name, but to prevent getting shopped we wanted a private label and this was an opportunity that presented itself with Shaw. Shaw did a retooling of their program and created a new program under the exclusive COLORTILE brand to bring to members.”

Logue added, “COREtec is the no.1 best-selling LVT and has been for several years. Members have been big COREtec supporters but WPC is the bread and butter of that line. It was a great opportunity to create value in terms of bringing the full mix of best sellers in addition to new styles and deliver them to members in larger samples but in a smaller footprint.”

Logue said it made sense to revitalize its WPC offering. “The last two years we had extensive SPC launches but we still sell a ton of WPC. We also see laminate having come back year in 2022.”

Laminate, noted Logue, is seeing a rebound. “It’s available and at the right price point with high definition looks and digital printing,” he said. “The realism and technology that’s being brought to the category wasn’t there in the laminates of the past. There’s a lot of value in the category plus it’s made in the U.S.A and we’re all about supporting made in U.S.A.” See text box for more on Alliance Flooring’s new product offerings.

Supporting next gen growth

Another piece of the group’s growth strategy is the engaging the second, third and fourth generation of retail owners.

“We want to build-up excitement for younger folks stepping into sales roles, leadership positions or ownership levels. It’s important, and we need to be talking about flooring installation as a potential career path,” said Logue. “Our independent retailers are the backbone of this industry and we need to help them get their businesses to a point where it can be

passed down to next generation and still maintain success — that is a big goal of ours, targeting prospective new members.”

Prospective members, noted Dunn, need to have a vision for the future. “We don’t have a cookie-cutter program — it’s a menu. I interview them as much as they interview us. There are four to six major steps to get through to become a member. We need to protect what we have.”

As well, Logue said Alliance is looking for retailers with an “entrepreneurial fire and spirit. Many times, the second and third generations inject fresh ideas, whether its technology, digital marketing or how to go to market and if we can get the first generation that’s open to those ideas and is willing to look and embrace change that’s a beautiful thing,” he said. “We’re starting to see more retailers not just selling flooring but becoming design destinations for the whole home.”

“People buy from people; this is a relationship-driven business. We use technology as tool a tool to enhance business but at the end of the day it’s about figuring out what the customer wants and giving it to them – just keep it simple.”

– Kevin Logue

Whole home service

Kitchen & bath, for instance, is the next logical area of expansion for the group. “It’s a high margin business and a logistical extension of flooring to look at countertops and cabinets,” said Logue, adding, “If the consumer can establish trust with a dealer, why not sell everything you can throughout the home and become a one-stop-design- shop for that customer.”

What’s more, Alliance has been looking into expanding into furniture and appliances. “For the past three years we’ve been speaking to furniture and appliance dealers, and we see huge opportunity for floor covering dealers to expand and advance what they’re doing — it’s a perfect next stop,” Dunn shared.

It’s also an easy jump because flooring dealers understand the installation aspect, Dunn added. “When going into high end appliances you have to have a certified installer, that model is already set up,” he said. “It’s going to be a really big expansion to what we’re doing and we believe it will grow to be a group within a group with individual shows and incentives.”

Diversifying into other home categories will help retailers service today’s customer. “Consumers used to shop four to five stores but no one has the time to do that anymore — people will shop two to three stores tops — they want to go to one retailer with good reviews,” said Logue. “The consumer is becoming more and more savvy. They’ll research online and buy from someone reputable that offers everything they want.”

Today’s consumer, Logue added, has higher expectations and is looking for a shopping experience. “They want access to more design solutions for the whole home. They want a higher level of support and they’re not going to get that at a big box,” he said, adding, “We’re seeing more retailers hiring people with design experience to offer that support.”