

Members Give Perfect Home Selling System a Thumbs Up

By Ken Ryan

Orlando—The early returns on the Alliance Flooring new Perfect Home retail merchandising system and technology platform point to a clear-cut winner that will ultimately yield higher margins for dealers and more satisfied customers.

That was the consensus among the retailers who had the selling solution (carpet only) installed in their showrooms during the initial rollout phase in October-November 2023.

“I have a feeling it’s going to be very successful,” Tom Peeters, owner of Carpetland USA in Roanoke, Va., and one of the early adopters, told Floor Covering News.

The annual Alliance Flooring convention held here at Rosen Shingle Creek Resort was all about Perfect Home, which was developed to provide a unique shopping experience for retail customers. To date, 50 Alliance members have Perfect Home, with another 50 agreeing to take on the system during the convention. The hard surface component will begin shipping to retailers in the late May/early June 2024 time frame.

Simply put, Perfect Home is a curated selection of products designed to simplify the shopping experience for the consumer. It uses a two-pronged approach to flooring sales—merchandising and technology—to bridge the gap between the digital and in-store experience.

Perfect Home allows customers to access a proprietary Interactive Design Consultant, an AI-enhanced virtual interior designer and have products selected before arriving at the store. Customers can scan QR codes on samples and return to view them in their own room or on the Perfect Home digital kiosk.

“This is a seismic shift in the way we merchandise,” said Kevin Logue, co-president and CEO of Alliance Flooring. “Consumers want to see your 10 best products, not 100 pieces of carpet. This is a boutique program designed to be a store-within-a-store, not a total store replacement. We’re going to see what works and see what doesn’t work and then make the necessary tweaks.”

Ryan Dunn, co-president and CEO, added, “We want to give our members the best opportunity to stay ahead of the curve, [but] we’re not mandating this on anyone.”

Perfect Home carpet suppliers are Shaw Floors, Anderson Tuftex, Mohawk, Engineered Floors, Tarkett Home and Phenix. The selling system is merchandised by color—light to dark and warm to cool—rather than product or by brand. As Logue explained, “Everything is about experience these days and making things Instagram-worthy. This program is about driving brick and mortar, to support small business retailers who are the lifeblood of this industry. Although consumers research online, they ultimately want to buy in-store.”

The hard surface program, which comprises WPC, SPC, laminate and mineral core, features products from Engineered Floors, Shaw, Mohawk, Karndean, Tarkett, Metroflor, Happy Feet, International Flooring Company (IFC) and The Dixie Group’s TRUCOR brand. Hardwood is not included in the initial launch, primarily because of the regional preferences of wood; however, individual retailers can choose hardwood if they’d like.

Retail response

Perfect Home has been in the market for four to five months, a bit early for any meaningful data to be gleaned. However, there is already anecdotal evidence to suggest the system is having a positive impact on business despite a general slowdown in the retail business industry-wide.

A case in point is Montgomery’s CarpetsPlus ColorTile, Venice, Fla., which was the first Alliance dealer to sign up for Perfect Home. “We’ve done well with it,” Missy Montgomery, co-owner, told FCNews. “It opens up a broader range of customer for us and gives them more ideas to work with. Another nice thing is they get to take samples home and these are large samples.”

The visual appeal of the display and color wall has resonated with customers at Lexington Paint & Flooring, Lexington, S.C. That’s according to Wayne Whiteside, owner, who described a situation where a customer walked into his store and immediately went to the display. “She wanted flooring for her master bedroom and was looking for carpet, but before she left, we ended up putting hardwood in her home, which was three times the money—so good for us,” Whiteside said. “Perfect Home is so different than what we are used to. It helps that all the people who work for me are younger. They get this, and they tell me this is what we need as far as retail merchandising is concerned. I would say most of the dealers in our group could use better organization. I know we could. This system organizes things so much better, and the customer doesn’t get overwhelmed.”

While the new system has not necessarily generated more customers yet, it has led to higher margins, dealers say. Claire McCoy, owner of Rugs, Rolls & More, Plaistow, N.H., said Perfect Home has made an immediate impact, with profit margins averaging 5%-7% higher than before the new system arrived. “It’s just very appealing and much easier for people to go through it and shop,” McCoy said.

Tom Peeters of Carpetland USA agreed the new system has been easy to shop and led to some “very nice-sized tickets” on the soft surface side. “It brightens up our showroom,” he said. “And I find that customers love the kiosk and spend a lot of their time at it, which is great for us. Now we’re looking forward to getting to the hard surface part of it.”

Several dealers at the show said they were blown away by the technology bundle offered as part of the package. “The technology included with the collection is the most exciting component,” said Eric Langan, president/owner of Carpetland USA, with nine locations in Iowa and Illinois.



Alliance Flooring's Ryan Dunn and Kevin Logue tout the benefits of Perfect Home.

“The AI RSA (Beth) is a tremendous leap forward. Overall, I think the program is very well thought out, forward thinking and gives Alliance Flooring members a new, exciting option to include in their showrooms and websites.”

Alliance welcomes IFC

In early 2023, Alliance executives Ryan Dunn and Kevin Logue met with Julian and William Dossche of International Flooring Company (IFC) about joining the group. It was mutually agreed upon that the timing wasn’t right. It is now, however, and IFC was introduced as the lone new supplier partner at this year’s show.

Of particular interest was IFC’s Canopy, which is billed as the first digital retail ecosystem connecting consumers and retailers to make flooring simple to shop. Canopy features a waterfall display of 28 luxury vinyl SKUs.

Other elements include consumer leads provided to the store; easy online ordering; being featured on the Canopy website as a local retailer; and exclusivity of the Canopy brand as a chosen retailer.

“We’re very selective, very intentional, taking it slow in the beginning,” William Dossche, executive vice president of sales, told FCNews. “The exclusivity piece is the most important thing for retailers; that’s what we are hearing.”

Alliance Flooring Supporting the FCEF

During the convention, Alliance Flooring presented the Floor Covering Education Foundation (FCEF) with a check for \$15,000, pledging its support for the association as it tackles the installation crisis.

In accepting the check, FCEF executive director Jim Aaron thanked Alliance retail members for choosing FCEF as its charity partner. “Your commitment to our cause will help us to continue making lasting impacts on the installation labor crisis that impacts the entire industry,” he said.

Ryan Dunn added, “There is no long-term success in this industry without a healthy installation labor pool and that’s why we’re excited to support FCEF.”

During breakout sessions at the convention Aaron spoke to Alliance retailers about the progress FCEF has made and the need to have industry buy-in. To date, financial support has come from the World Floor Covering Association (WFCA), Shaw, Mohawk, Engineered Floors, HMTX, AHF and Cali.