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Ryan Dunn and Kevin Logue of Alliance Flooring show the newest rendition of the company's Perfect Home display.

Community Connections

Alliance Flooring links arms with its dealer members

By Sharyn Bernard, Amy Rush-Imber

[Orlando] Messaging at the Alliance Flooring Convention here at the Rosen Shingle Creek earlier this month was clear — moving towards a better future requires community made of fellowship, mentorship and leadership.

Convention's theme, The Next Generation, aimed at shaping and empowering the next gen, Ryane Dunn, co-CEO, told FCW, "When the community is healthy, everything falls into place."

Here at The Next Generation, there was a clear focus on arming retail leadership coming up in the business with the tools needed to carry on the legacy of their family business. Kevin Logue, co-CEO, explained, "It's about education, training and providing the opportunity to network with others."

Home Run

The first 50 retailers taking on Perfect Home selling solution brought on the carpet program early October and Logue shared it has been a success. "They like the way the display is inviting and organized. The edge is the technology and the interactive design," he said, adding that the technology helps pre-qualify the customer.

Here at convention, the next 50 retailers set to adopt the program were onboarded to the displays and products. The rollout is measured to make sure that both the retailer and the vendors are able to take it on and create success.

As well, Logue noted, "Vendors look at it as a way to drive traffic to specific products. It's more curated product." To that end, there are 10 hard surface suppliers, six soft surfaces and two tile vendors. There are 144 total SKUs and everything is organized by color and a good, better, best system to make it easy on consumers. What's more, there are no manufacturers brands on displays. "It's private label and brand agnostic." He added. "This is designed to sell to consumers the way they want to be sold to. They don't care about brands, they are focused on making their homes beautiful."

Curating the assortment is crucial to reach younger consumers, Logue said. "They do not want to see 1,000 options. It's about being smart and streamlined. It is imperative to speak their language, especially when dealing with younger customers."



The Next NEXT Generation. Member Kyriah Simmons, already part of a multi-generational business shows her daughter the new Perfect Home laminate and PVC-Free display.

To that end, a key element of Perfect Home is the Interactive Design Consultant, an augmented reality technology that streamlines consumers' choices. "No one has a way to pre-qualify a customer online before they even get into the store," Dunn said. "The vendors look at it as a way to drive traffic towards specific products. The consumers are showing us they understand more complex products."

With 322 members, Alliance will slowly roll out Perfect Home to its members with a three-year plan to onboard 50 members a year. "We don't want to do it all at one time," Dunn said. "That is one thing we heard from our members. And they are our partners. We don't want to tax the vendors as well." He added that since 1998, this is the third system the organization has launched.

In addition, the company is taking a measured approach to releasing Perfect Home, assessing and evaluating along the way. For example, Logue said that feedback from the initial preview showed that they needed to remove products with PVC. "That came from the members."

Communal Strength

Dunn and Logue continually stress the importance of community for them and their members. "As I was preparing for convention, the thing that continued to come to me was community," Dunn said. "Through what we do inside of our own independent stores, in our towns and states, we can make a huge difference."

The power of community and programs is even more crucial in today's business environment, Dunn said, noting that while business has been down, members' profits are up twice as much. "This is the key message; the next generation is a commitment to everyone's health."

Logue attributed the strong growth to its members' smart business steps. "They are holding margins, putting in better selling systems and creating operational efficiencies. They are selling better products not racing to the bottom."

In addition, he told members that with a down market, "now is the time to invest in your business. Do things your competitors aren't doing."

Dunn stressed that the idea of community begins at the top. "It's about my mission versus my position. My mission is to make better independent retailers. My position is CEO."

To that end, one way members can grow is by finding mentors. "With mentorship, we turn around and teach each other. Find a mentor; we are here to help you."

"Next Generation is a commitment to everyone's health. If we are taking care of each other, we shore up our business." — Kevin Logue

"We are a community inside of a community. We are stronger together than any of us are individually." — Ryan Dunn