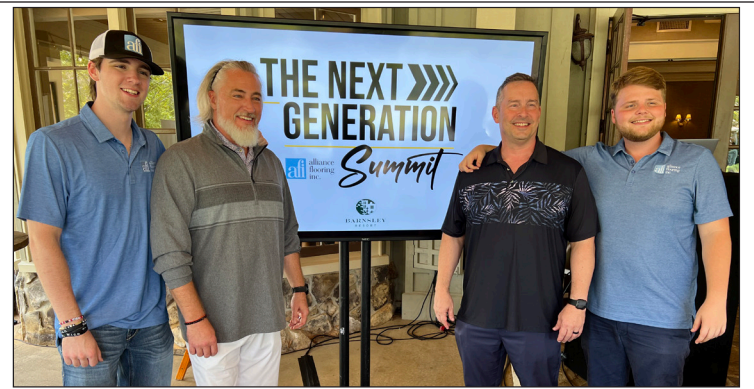


FCW

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



Pictured (L-R) RJ Dunn, Ryan Dunn, Kevin Logue and Ethan Logue. RJ and Ethan are AFI's third generation to be involved in the business.

Leading the Next Gen

Alliance Summit creates opportunity for members to share best practices

[Adairsville, Ga.] Alliance Flooring held its 19th Summit — dubbed Next Generation — here at Barnsley Gardens bringing CarpetsPlus COLORTILE and Carpetland members together to share best practices regarding what is and what isn't working in their businesses. As well, updates to the group's Perfect Home selling solution were highlighted and the announcement of the addition of new vendors to the program including Stanton and Carpenter cushion. There was also time for members and vendors to meet during exhibit hall hours to look at new product.

As of a month ago, all Perfect Home displays had shipped and been installed in the stores of those members who have committed to the program. First introduced at the 2023 convention in Austin, Perfect Home is the group's curated collection of 196 products from multiple mills designed to simplify the shopping experience for the consumer.

"2025 is going to be light in terms of new introductions," co-president & CEO Kevin Logue shared. "The main thing we're putting out as complement to Perfect Home is the Perfect Home Accents program featuring Stanton Rug Company. There are 104 products on a display available in standard sizes. They stock in 6 x 9 and 1 x 14. It's an efficient way to show a lot of SKUs."

Along with the new addition of Perfect Home Accents by Stanton Rug Company and Perfect Home Cushion by Carpenter, the Perfect Home Program will see select carpet and hard surface product updates in 2025. In 2026, Perfect Home will see new engineered hardwood and decorative carpet intros.

And so far, Perfect Home has been a success, said Logue, "Members love it. The carpet system has been out for a year, hard surface been in stores for about three months now, and the feedback has been amazing from members, RSAs as well as consumers," he said. "It makes the shopping so much easier because it gives them an instant frame of reference particularly when looking for any kind of wood plank visual flooring. It gives them context to choose the color, the design style they're looking for. And by seeing the full range, they can easily identify what they don't want."

Indeed, Logue said it makes it easy to hone in on design preferences and color preferences. "At that point the core becomes secondary. It turns into what kind of performance level are you looking for and the core whether that's WPC, SPC, laminate — what suits them and their lifestyle, their activity and their home. It's not brand driven, it's very much driven on the look, the color and the visual of the product."

Although it's too early to tell on the hard surface side which have been in stores for three months now, Logue said on the carpet side members who have committed to Perfect Home are seeing a 9 percent to 10 percent increase in sales. "70 members have committed to Perfect Home and our goal is to get to 100 by this time next year."

Dunn and Logue said the group is being strategic about placement for its manufacturers and for the next 30 retailers to take on the program. "We're being very intentional about our placements," said Logue.

"The program isn't for everyone but those that understand it and bring it, they love it. And the customers go right to it. The carpet selling system is so easy. And what's amazed me about it is their average net selling prices are going up. The bulk of the product that's being sold is over \$20 wholesale. That's awesome because I thought it would be more in the \$10-\$15 range but it's \$15 a yard wholesale and above. So we're selling better goods."

And with carpet going in fewer rooms, mostly bedrooms, customers aren't scared to make a statement with design and a pattern product, Logue shared. "Those are typically more expensive items. So Perfect Home as helped. It's given a lot of dealers a pathway to help trade up to better end goods."

The group is also helping those smaller members who may find the financial aspect of the investment to be a bit of a challenge. "We know they need it so we'll work with them to help them bring the program into their stores."

Leaning on Legacy

"Hosting a Summit has been founding factor of the group," said Dunn. While in the past the group would visit one member's store as a Summit location, this year Alliance tried something different. "The Next Gen Summit is rather than going to one store, which puts a lot of pressure on that one store, we're asking each member to speak about what they're most passionate about through member-led panels. They've been bringing some really good stuff because Summits are based on sharing stories and looking at what we can learn from someone's story — the successes and the failures, learning from both."

Networking and sharing best practices is a cornerstone of what Summit's been about for the past 25 years, said Logue. "Especially now with business being so soft we wanted to reboot what Summit is and create that venue where members come and feel that level of support and network with one another. And for the next generations (second, third) to tap into the decades of experience [within the group]," he said. "They're faced with challenges and can learn from their mistakes. We thought it was important to put those resource out there in a way for newer owners and managers to access them."

Added Dunn, "We're setting the template of them telling their stories and sharing. When your community is healthy your business is healthy. We're all in the same fight and our community is positive," said Dunn.

Logue said the group is cautiously optimistic for 2025. "The rate cut that just happened has helped spur retail traffic a little bit but we need another significant cut. If that happens, I think you'll start seeing some recovery in Q2 of next year," he said, adding, "There's just so much uncertainty right now with the election. People are worried, they're concerned, and they're holding onto their money, and that's the bottom line. Our members are having to work a lot harder to earn business."

It's times like these, he said, is when it's best to make investments. "Invest in your business with Perfect Home. Invest in coming to a Summit and networking with your peers," Logue said. "We're continuing to invest in the advertising and marketing for Perfect Home. We've already made the investment in the fixtures. Now we're turning our focus to the marketing and advertising."