

Next Gen, New Day

Ryan Dunn & Kevin Logue take lead at Alliance Flooring convention

BY AMY RUSH-IMBER AND MALLORY CRUISE-MCGRATH

[Austin, Texas] CarpetsPlus Colortile and Carpetland Colortile came together here to step into the next generation of leadership and set the path for future success at Alliance Flooring's The Future is Now convention.

The new retail selling solution Perfect Home and its corresponding digital component Perfect Home Hub were significant undertakings that co-CEOs Ryan Dunn and Kevin Logue brought to members. New soft surface and hard surface branding and merchandising will go hand in hand with a digital portfolio designed to bring a unique shopping experience, particularly to the Millennial and Gen Z consumer.

Crucial to the Perfect Home Hub is

the Interactive Design Consultant (IDC), a key proprietary digital component developed in partnership with media company Forum Film that features a room visualizer powered by Roomvo. "Think about IDC as programmable video," said Logue about the virtual consultant that has been named Beth. "Beth helps make informed decisions — it's a two-way conversation with active engagement and no one else has this. It's updatable and questions are customizable for your business."

Added Dunn, "This is the future of internet shopping and these are the tools we'll need as we move through 2023."

The industry landscape is changing, Logue acknowledged. "How do we truly

innovate and keep members ahead of the curve in terms of product, design and technology and truly give them the tools they need to succeed in an ever-changing market?"

This is where Perfect Home Flooring comes in. Logue explained, "It's a brand-new retail selling solution and marketing program that will drive interest in the products. It's an ambitious launch but one we're passionate about — we want to cast a new vision and take the group to the next level."

WHAT MAKES A PERFECT HOME?

Perfect Home is a focused curated collection of 196 products from multiple



Kevin Logue and Ryan Dunn

mills designed to simplify the shopping experience for the consumer, explained Logue. Soft surface suppliers include Shaw, Anderson Tuftex, Mohawk, Phenix, Tarkett and Engineered Floors.

"Three 48 pin displays show three distinctive collections and 144 cards total (196 products). What's great about this is it's flexible," said Logue. "The carpet warranty is intuitive — it's a star rating system and makes a lot of sense."

Hard surface suppliers include Shaw, Mohawk, Karndean, Mannington and Tarkett. Although the hard surface merchandising is still in a conceptual stage, Logue said there will be a 96 SKU waterproof SPC color wall. "We're not doing anything with a wearlayer lower than 20 mil for a good, better, best."

Waterproof laminate will be available in a winged displays with 48 SKUs on each side. "It's a curated multi mill collection grouped by color family and by price point and construction," said Logue.

Alliance will be rolling out Perfect Home to 50 members first and adjust if needed based on initial feedback. "We want to be strategic but it's not for everybody. We

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TECH AVENGERS TAKE THE STAGE

[Austin, Texas] Here at the Alliance Flooring convention, digital assets and the power of technology was a cornerstone. In fact, the group put what it called the Tech Avengers together on stage to present and field member questions about everything from visualizers to the role of the RSA with the all-new Interactive Design Consultant (IDC). Representatives included Roomvo, Mobile Marketing, Samplesapp and Forum Film which will be offering the IDC exclusively to Alliance Flooring members. For Roomvo's visualizer, pointed out to Roomvo's Reid Waxman, "The main focus is bridging the gap from the digital experience into the showroom." Roomvo is integrated with Mobile Marketing, RFMS and QFloors. "Everything speaks to one and other and makes it easier for you," she said. In addition, Samplesapp is included in membership. Its key components include the opportunity to check out samples, personalize emails and texts and it provides proactive notifications when a sample isn't returned. "It's about making it easier and how to use everything in combination," noted Carole Cross, CEO of Mobile Marketing and a co-founder of Samplesapp.



SANDLIN SPEAKS

BY AMY RUSH-IMBER

[Austin, Texas] Scott Sandlin, executive vice president residential, Shaw Industries, offered Alliance Flooring convention attendees perspective on the health of the industry putting a sharp focus on the opportunities in the marketplace for specialty retail. "We've got to shape our future together and cultivate a new legacy," Sandlin told Alliance members. "The bottom line is that we owe it to each other to improve and get better."

There are industry challenges, asserted Sandlin. "Interest rates, competitive landscape — there are always going to be headwinds. It's important to acknowledge and plan for it. The good news is, it's not going to dictate our success. The business is there."

Sandlin shared the Building Products Industry's profitability and flooring's place within it, reporting, "When you look at this data, it is inexcusable that HVAC, windows and other industries provide a better return. We need to work together to sell a better product, improve the customer experience

and ultimately improve profitability."

OPPORTUNITY CALLS

"The consumer is spending the money," Sandlin explained. Opportunities, he noted, are "focused on the repair and remodel market and the next generation, the 25-44 (year old) consumer." Each opportunity, he said, is part of a drive to cultivate a new legacy together. "The bottom line is that we owe it to each other to improve and get better."

While room additions have been cut by almost half, reported Sandlin, consumers are going outside creating kitchens and patios, for example. "We are living differently than 10 or 15 years ago. COVID has changed that forever," he shared. "You need to rethink your business model. Do you have solutions for exterior products? Do you live in a place where you can't irrigate? Turf — do you have a solution for that? The outdoors is important to the home."

And, engaging and delighting the 25-

to 44-year-old consumer is core to future growth. "During COVID, [they] formed the most households. For the first time in the history of our country, the younger generation formed households at a greater rate — almost a million households."

What are this generation's key drivers? Sandlin shared findings from Shaw's consumer research. "They want to shop local — in the communities they live and work." But, he said, "They do not know about us. They don't even know we are here. They did not grow up thinking about flooring. They grew up going to the big boxes, Walmart. They don't know what a specialty flooring store is. We have to change that. We have to engage them."

Sandlin also shared the No.1 thing that frustrates younger consumers — "You don't have pricing on your website. We are fearful of doing it. They are talking about this when they do the research. Give it to them. It's one example of things we learned during secret shopper." And, he added,



Scott Sandlin, Shaw Industries

"They value great retail sales associates."

As well, with an aging housing stock, the repair and remodel segment will benefit. "The housing stock has aged considerably. The median age is 41 years," said Sandlin. "That is great for this room. These homes are older and need to be updated and renovated. That's a great opportunity for us."

Sandlin emphasized the importance of partnership and creating a new legacy together. "Partners don't sit back and avoid these conversations and I want to keep having them and figure out how we can do better for the consumer," said Sandlin. "We know what consumers want and we will partner with you to provide it."

QUALITY TIME IN AUSTIN

Vendors & members spent meaningful time together on Alliance Flooring's Expo floor



CALI's Bob Fish and Chanel Clifford with Brent and Scott Compton of Rocky Mountain Flooring



Mohawk's Kelly Oberschlake with Kelly's Kocktails



Alliance Flooring's Ryan Dunn and Kevin Logue with Daltile's Patrick Warren



Metroflor's Russ Rogg and Jon Dauerhauer, Carpet World



Bruce Kautzman of Carpet World with Mannington's Jay Kopelson



Shaw's Welton Davison, Ann McDermott & Nicki Rayburn with Doug Bertrand of Carpetland



Alliance Flooring's Perfect Home retail selling solution features hard and soft surface displays.

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want to get with retailers that will embrace it and help us grow it with supplier partners and be collaborative," said Logue. "IDC now is version one. There will be versions two, three, four, five, etc."

Added Dunn, "This system is going to fit everyone — smaller stores to bigger stores. It eliminates clutter." Logue noted that for a smaller showroom, Perfect Home could be everything that is needed. As well, QR codes will be on the front and back of samples and be scanned to see product within the Roomvo visualizer.

Perfect Home was developed with key research findings in mind. "Millennials are forming new households; there's a massive housing shortage in multi-family and single family — that is the new reality," said Logue.

And younger consumers, he said, don't care about brands. Rather, "It's about color, style and performance attributes," Logue shared, adding, "Our passion is to create a unique and memorable user experience through technology that is seamless from online to instore — it's all about experience."

Consumers are being educated online while desiring to buy from local businesses that support the community. "At the end of the day, young consumers are seeking product that are easy to maintain and a seamless, simple shopping experience," Logue said.

LEADING A LEGACY

[Austin, Texas] When stepping into their new roles as co-CEOs of Alliance Flooring, Ryan Dunn and Kevin Logue knew they had big shoes to fill.

"During this transition people were wondering what does this look like? Are they on same page?" noted Dunn. "This last year Kevin and I made sure we were together every step of the way."

Added Logue, "Many of these relationships go back to our fathers [Ron Dunn and Jon Logue] and their legacy. And now we have second and third generation owners coming up and that's a big part of our strategy — to engage those owners. In part, we had to resell the group on the benefits of being a member and on Perfect Home and Perfect Home Hub and I think we did that. They see a ton of value."

The duo met every week for a year and half to make the leadership transition seamless and successful. "We needed to figure out a way to make this a win, win, win — it was teamwork. It was collectively laying it all there and making some tough decisions," shared Dunn.

While paying respect to the legacy created by their fathers, the duo wants to make their own mark by communicating their bold new strategic vision, namely with Perfect Home and Perfect Home Hub.

"That was Ryan and I's unique vision to make a statement. We're changing and evolving but we're still staying true to our core mission of Carpets Plus and Carpetland, and the legacy we've been founded on," he said, adding, "We will continue to add value and evolve in ways that will meet the needs of [our members] and even going beyond those."

Dunn and Logue said the group had the core foundational ideas for Perfect Home for several years but hadn't had the ability to act on them until now. "Once our dads announced their retirements, we started having conversations about how to execute this strategy," shared Logue. "I started floating ideas to our core supplier partners in July to gauge their interest and buy into Perfect Home. Once we started laying out the strategy, the response we got was overwhelmingly positive. They were ready to jump in."

Dunn and Logue said they knew they needed a "championship team" to pull off their vision. Tami Stahl, who had been with the group for 11 years prior to joining Dixie, returned to Alliance, and Megan Simmons, previously with Tarkett, recently came on board to head up member services. And, added Logue, part of being on the championship team was bringing in the right suppliers.

After that initial buy-in and support from vendors, the group started working on branding and introducing it to the Carpets Plus and Carpetland buying committees. "The response we got from those initial meetings with the committees was positive," said Logue.

Also from these meetings with the buying committees came the unifying of Carpets Plus and Carpetland under the Alliance Flooring umbrella. "Why separate the program for Carpets Plus and Carpetland?" Logue said. "The thought was, well that's what we've always done. But this is a great way to unify the two divisions and members love being unified as Alliance Flooring."

Prior to unifying the two memberships, noted Dunn, "We wanted to hear feedback from both groups and now there be unity throughout. People want to be part of groups and not be stuck on an island."