



THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

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Finding a Professional Flooring Contractor

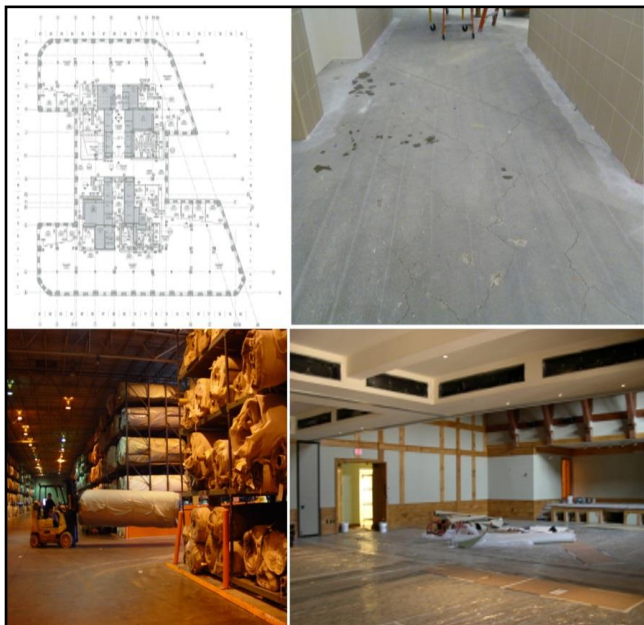


To successfully install commercial floor covering it is important to engage the services of a firm that specializes in this area of the market. Professional flooring contractors are not the same as flooring installers and this is a significant distinction when considering a commercial flooring installation. The more difficult and challenging the installation, logistically complex and demanding a project is, the more you need a professional flooring contractor. The difference between a professional commercial flooring contractor and a flooring installer is like the major leagues versus the minor leagues in sports. While it is possible to find a very qualified individual installer or installation firm, in fact professional commercial flooring contractors employ many of these installers; it takes a professional flooring contractor operating a full service business to successfully run a project in a true commercial environment. The more difficult the logistics of a commercial installation and the more complex the product being installed, the more imperative it is to find a firm that has the experience, knowledge, ability, financial stability and qualified installers to

successfully complete the job. Since the demands of a commercial flooring installation often mean the schedule for installing the flooring almost always gets shortened from the original schedule, you need a firm that knows how to and can work under these demanding and stressful conditions. Almost every major metropolitan marketing area in the country has several professional commercial flooring contractors that can function under the stress of a commercial flooring project, from New York City, which arguably is the most difficult and demanding market to work in to smaller cities such as Portland, Oregon, these firms are more experienced and capable. Furthermore, in major markets there is likely to be representation from INSTALL which are the most highly trained flooring installers in the country. Just like in the major leagues these guys are trained to work under greater pressure and operate as a well-functioning team.



Rubenstein's Seattle, WA - Swinomish Lodge Hotel



Professional flooring contractors can also handle the whole flooring project from planning to management, logistics, storage and transportation of the material, working around the clock and on weekends, any type of substrate preparation and specialty work that may be required can be performed.

They are used to working with project managers and general contractors and very often have working relationships with them from years of operating in a particular

market. They can also look at a project and suggest a better way to do things making the job easier for everyone involved. A company that just does installation, no matter how good they may be at installation, can't provide these services on a true commercial flooring installation. It's not that the smaller firm can't do a good job of installing the material but they just don't have the ability to do all the other very important aspects of the project. Professional flooring contractors are also adept at working with most every type of flooring material and new flooring technology and utilize the services of installers who maintain a constant education of these materials. Professional flooring contractors are also financially sound and in a position to afford all the appropriate insurance required, offer warranties on their installations provided they are supplied with a suitable condition to start with and not asked to ignore compromising conditions at gun point and their installers are compensated at the prevailing rate for the market place with benefits and oversight. Oversight means a job foreman on the job making sure everything is done right to benefit the end user.

In many cases a professional flooring contractor knows more about installing a flooring material than the manufacturers that produce them. This is particularly true when it comes to the installation of woven Axminster carpet in the high end hospitality market. If the professional flooring contractor is the pro in the big leagues of commercial flooring then the firms that install woven hospitality flooring and especially intricate and detailed woven carpet in five star hotels and casinos around the world, are the special forces of the industry. This type of work is like constructing art on the floor while the canvas is moving. There a very few of these types of firms and they typically will travel the world to work on high end projects. They possess a very



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special skill set and generally the manufacturers of the products they install rely on them to set the installation standards and guidelines. One manufacturer made the comment several years ago that, "whatever this particular installation firms says about how the carpet has to be installed is our installation instructions." The company he was talking about is one of the top installation firms in the world, they've never met a flooring product they couldn't install correctly but there are a few others that operate in the same stratosphere they do.



Speaking of knowing how to handle a commercial flooring project, many of them are fraught with danger from conditions that can cause an installation to fail. One in particular that looms like Godzilla is substrate conditions. So many flooring failures are the result of substrate conditions that often times are brought to the attention of the GC and passed off as not being a significant issue; so the project slow down and costs to mitigate the slab are outweighed by the deadline. It is always wise to listen to a professional flooring contractor who has the knowledge to determine what can make an installation fail and what should be done about it. It will always cost money to mitigate the condition that can make a flooring installation fail but nowhere near the costs of trying to fix it when the business is up and running. I can't tell you how many lawsuits and problems we get involved in where this is the case. If your doctor tells you to lay off something that will cause your health to fail you'd do it, wouldn't you? Well think of this nugget of information as the same. These guys very often know if a problem exists and that it will create havoc later so it's a good idea to listen to them and not blame them afterwards for something they warned you about.

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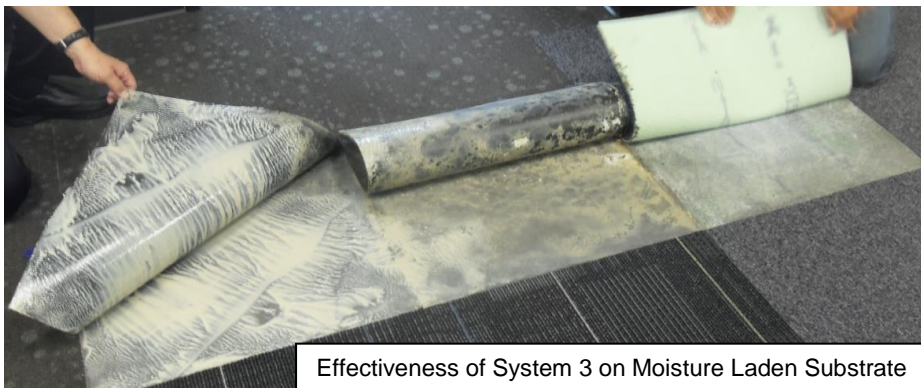


So how do you find a professional flooring contractor and who are these guys? The largest group is Starnet, with over 170 locally owned full service flooring contractors in more than 300 locations throughout North America, and a few sprinkled outside that area; they are the biggest of the big doing over two billion dollars in business annually. Starnet is the single most influential force in the contract flooring industry. The second largest group is the Fuse Alliance with about 120 members

throughout the country and the next largest group is Spectra covering about 26 locations in the US.



These flooring contractors practice their craft daily on the large stage of the commercial flooring market and avail themselves of the latest information for working with, installing and often maintaining every type of commercial flooring product on the market. They can also offer insight into what is the better product to use having knowledge of what materials may be problematic or not. When you have a large network of flooring contractors across the country they have the ability to query one another on problems that may occur and what to avoid and why. There are also a number of independent professional flooring contractors that can provide most or all of the services you need on a big project. Also consider that the groups mentioned have access to products they can offer you that are unique to a particular application that a flooring manufacturer may not have and the ability to work with the technology special systems require, such as technology we've developed for moisture sensitive substrates.



In the commercial market flooring manufacturers want to sell direct to the end user but they can't service the product and often have no control over installation or logistics. They may also be selling you the wrong product. A professional flooring contractor's involvement will prevent this. The ability the professional flooring contractor has to provide a product

that they know will work better or have access to that will prevent a failure or correct a failure that has occurred is invaluable. In most locations there's a professional flooring contractor to do the job and if they aren't in a location they'll travel to it. Whatever the application of flooring may be, retail space, class A office space, high end hospitality, medical facilities or any large commercial project, a professional flooring contractors service should be employed.