



The Commercial FLOORING REPORT

THE MOST SUSTAINABLE CARPET FIBER - WOOL

Including a special article from Dave Stafford.



In this issue we'll cover a couple of subjects. Since sustainability is one of the hottest buzz words lately and being green the ultimate objective of every manufacturer for every product known to man, we'll talk about the most sustainable carpet fiber. We'll also take a look at the absurdity of bidding a commercial

flooring installation without knowing the product specified and to be installed. How this can be an acceptable practice and why it's done is, in my opinion, insane.

THE MOST SUSTAINABLE CARPET FIBER - WOOL

The beauty of wood flooring is that the trees it comes from are replaceable and will grow to furnish more of

this beautiful resource. But the tree has to be cut down and harvested and years pass before the replacement is ready. Wool comes from sheep and because it is their fleece (coat) it can be shorn every 6 to 12 months.



Arrested for Public Nuisance, Again ... Poor Charlie - every sheep shearing season he gets himself in trouble!

Wool is sustainable, renewable and biodegradable, the only carpet fiber that is. When it comes to regeneration, sheep are the

best way to get fiber for carpet. An executive of one of the leading woven carpet manufacturers in the world told me recently that a young designer asked him in a meeting how many sheep do you have to kill to make a bail of wool? She thought sheep were slaughtered to get their wool! No sheep have ever given their lives for a yard of carpet in fact sheep live long productive lives and unless you're eating chops; they produce wool as long as they live. There is less energy used to produce wool by a fractional amount compared to making synthetic carpet fiber.

One sheep produces anywhere from 2 to 30 lbs. of wool annually. The average fleece weight in the United States is 8.2 lbs. per sheep (per year). The amount and type of wool that a sheep produces is dependent upon its breed (and genetics) and shearing interval. Some sheep produce very coarse fibers. This type of wool is called "carpet" wool, and as the name suggests is used to make carpets (and tapestries). <http://www.sheep101.info/wool.html>

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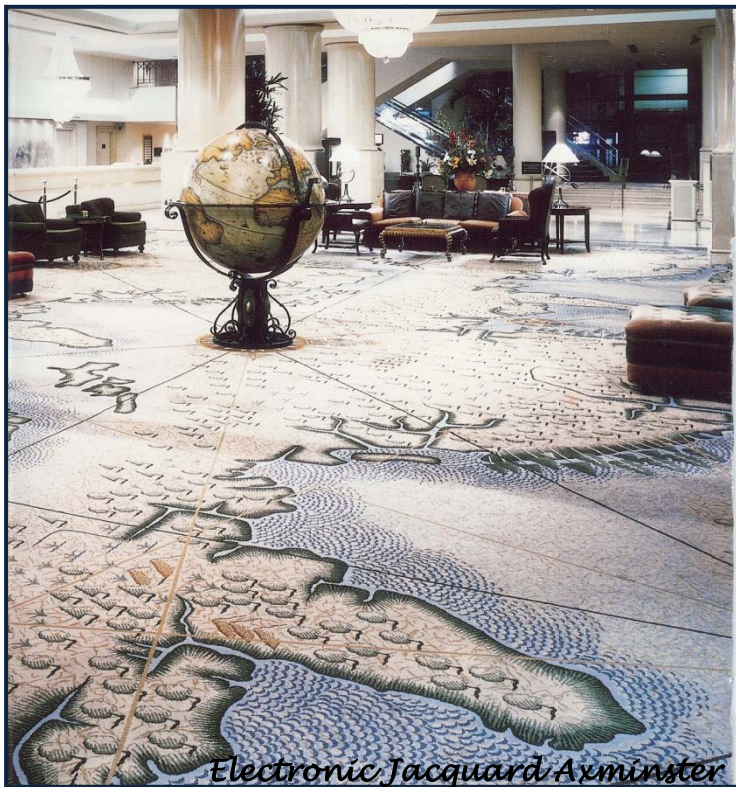
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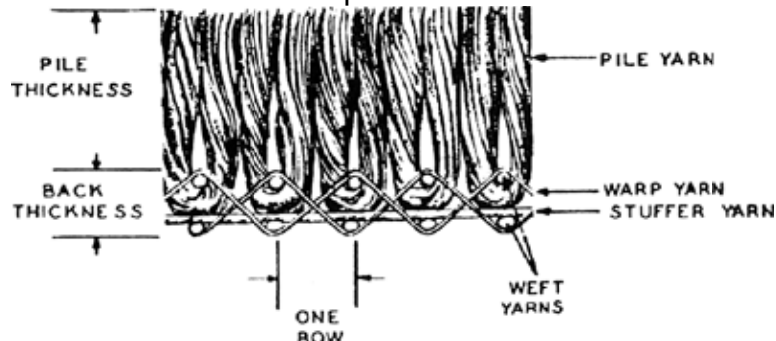


Breed - Carpet Wool Sheep

In commercial application an 80/20 wool nylon blend woven Axminster carpet can deliver heroic feats of performance. It will last 10 to 12 years under the



heaviest foot traffic of a casino and still look good. There's a saying about wool carpet I learned early in my career, "Wool is like a beautiful woman, it grows old gracefully." Properly cared for wool can and does perform without uglying out for many years. It is naturally resilient, stain resistant, abrasion resistant warm, comfortable and luxurious. It will aid in the control of indoor humidity and thus assist in controlling static discharge. In a 12 row construction it will deliver Herculean performance. When a wool



carpet is replaced the wool from it can actually be used for fertilizer, aiding the growth of plants and grass and decomposing naturally without using any energy. This is a carpet fiber that keeps giving from the inception of its existence.



And the sheep from which it was shorn would have yielded repeated bails of wool. Wool is the fiber by which all other carpet fibers are judged and no

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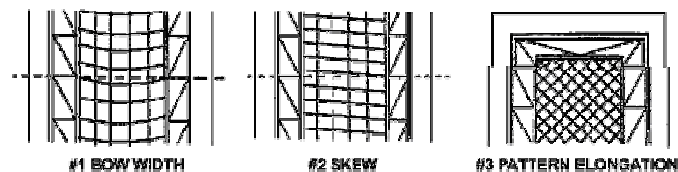
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synthetic carpet fiber will ever have the natural and inherent qualities and attributes of wool. Though wool occupies a small and special part of the carpet market it is the industries highest end product. Made and specified correctly woven wool carpet is in a league with Rolls Royce, Bentley and Rolex.

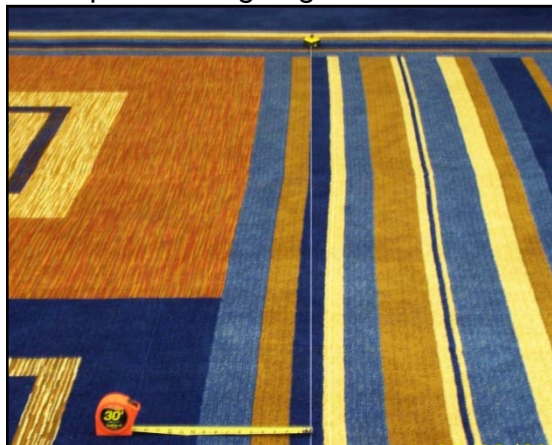
THE LUNACY OF BIDDING BLIND

The practice in the commercial flooring installation community of bidding on the installation of materials without knowing exactly what they are is, in my opinion, insane. Most often, particularly with patterned carpet, the installation requirements are more stringent and demanding. This being the case it takes more time to install these products and therefore it costs more. The same can be



said of luxury vinyl tile and high gloss, non-permeable sheet vinyl. If a flooring contractor bids

a job and doesn't know what the product looks like or only has a generic idea of what the product is, it is highly likely they would have bid the job too low. In that case they either have to fight for more money for the installation or make do with the price they bid and compromise the integrity of the installation. This means less time spent on aligning seams to make



the carpet look perfect, rushing, not being concerned about how much adhesive is applied and the conditions under which the installation is being made. When a problem occurs, which is highly likely, everyone wants to blame the installation firm. Wouldn't it be smarter to find out what exactly is going to be installed before bidding on the job? Not doing so is like putting the cart before the horse.

Other trades on a construction project know what they are going to be working with and how the job has to be done. There are plans to follow and the materials to be used are known. How is it that the floor covering can't be or isn't known? It should be incumbent upon the installation contractor to find out what exactly they are going to be working with, how the job lays out and any other important details. The architect and designer should be required to provide this information on every job and there should be an open line of communication between the parties.

Properly installing any commercial flooring material is not a project where you should fly by the seat of your pants. There are a multitude of things which have to be known ahead of time such as the type of substrate, its condition, if it is to be tested and who is to do it, the layout of the space, location of walls, doors, fixtures, supports, expansion joints, type of concrete, whether the HVAC system is going to be operational (which it must be to properly install any flooring material and to properly test a concrete substrate), where the



product is to be stored, the working conditions, the time allotted (usually never enough) whether other trades are going to be using the flooring material as a "drop cloth," how it is to be protected and whose responsible when the flooring material gets damaged when its not the last thing installed on the job, after all other trades are finished. This may be dreaming and smack of Utopia but it is the way things should be to successfully and properly install flooring material. Maybe after the economy finds bottom everyone will get back to reality and take the time necessary to successfully complete a project instead of trying to beat the land speed record for finishing and meeting the deadline.

Upcoming LGM Seminars
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Concrete, Moisture, and
Flooring Failures
 March 18, 19, 2009

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**Totally Green
 Publication**

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Reality in a Tough Job Market

By: Dave Stafford

Having interviewed, hired, or declined to hire numerous people for sales and related support positions, I have been amazed at the hopes, requests, and outright demands from job applicants. It often fell to me to give them a dose of reality about what an employer will and will not do in hiring them.

An attractive young woman named Karen, with the right background and experience in retail and light commercial sales, applied for a position, stating that, "I'm looking for more opportunity than what I have in my current position and I want to make more money." At this point, I was impressed...just what I was looking for in a commercial salesperson. Then I asked about how much time she was willing to commit to a new position with us. I went on to explain that to have a chance at the six-figure income she mentioned, I estimated that she would need to spend a minimum of 50 hours a week pursuing her dream.

She said that seemed like a lot for a five-day a week job. Then she explained that putting in that much time would interfere with her part-time real estate job (which she had not previously mentioned). When asked about how much time she devoted to this, she said it varied because she didn't have many listings. "Well, since you live nearby. Karen, what would *you* expect as a schedule if you came to work with us?" She replied, "Well, not before 9:00 am, and I would need to leave in time to pick up my son at daycare no later than 4:30 pm." "What about the real estate work," I asked? She said she would do that at night or on the weekends. At this point, I explained, "Karen, if I was to hire you, and for you to have a chance at success, I'd need your full energy and enthusiasm directed toward *our* business. Will you commit to that?" After thinking it over, Karen said she was willing to commit to the position, but only at a guaranteed salary much higher than her limited commercial experience dictated. Unfortunately, in spite of her talent and potential, Karen was unrealistic about her current value, so was not hired.

Sharon was working at a local commercial flooring company as a designer's aide. She liked interior design and had completed her college degree in that field. When she heard about an opening in the retail sales group, she applied, even though she had no sales experience. Sharon was poised, articulate, impressive and willing to start on a small salary and then work on a commission. After looking at her application, checking

references, and aptitude profiles, she was young and I still had some doubt about her commitment. But she did have an aggressive, “in your face” attitude and my salary commitment to her would be less than I had expected. Sharon told me in the final interview, “I need someone to give me a chance, and I’ll work hard and learn. You give me that chance, okay?” How could I say no? So, I hired Sharon and she became a star salesperson. I’m glad I listened to her.

Part of retail sales is weekend work. In many cases, over 40% of those sales occur on Saturday and Sunday. That is reality. I believed Ray understood this when he applied for a position, at least logically. He liked the idea of the money he could earn, the opportunity for advancement, and he had been very successful in a related field. After several interviews, we made Ray an offer, and were willing to put him on the fast-track to store management. Everything was going well (and I was breathing a sigh of relief) when Ray casually mentioned that, “You know, I might not be able to work *every* weekend due to family commitments and I play in the symphony and we have practice at 5:00 p.m every Monday and Thursday.” I gritted my teeth and asked if there were any other concerns or conditions, and said, “Ray, you do understand this is a retail sales position, right?” Well, I wish the story had a happy ending, but it was not to be. We decided that our objectives were not a good match.

In trying to hire the right commercial project coordinator, I interviewed a number of different people including a current employee who saw the newly posted position and applied. The first sticking point was that Tim wanted to start at the top of the advertised salary range for the position and he mentioned that he already had another job offer. However, I was impressed with Tim because he was a “people person” and seemed able to deal with the stress of a fast-paced office environment. After putting Tim through a full interview process, we talked candidly about his talent, interest in the position, and the training he would need to master this new position. Finally, he understood *why* he could not start at the top salary range; he accepted this and seemed willing to agree to a 90-day review with a possible salary increase based on performance. To make this even more attractive, I offered a full review for successful completion of nine additional months and change to incentive based compensation. He was thrilled and accepted the position, saying, “It wasn’t about the money as much as being valued by the company for what I can do; I’ll accept the offer and



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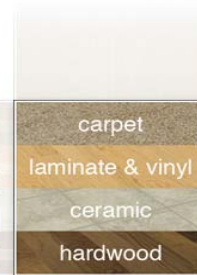
hold you to the performance incentives.” Tim was above average in his previous company position, but became a standout performer in his new position. And we came close to losing him because he was so focused on salary.

And so it goes, frequently. The defining factor with most is not raw talent or even experience; rather, it is matching the reality of what they want versus their worth to a prospective employer. Fortunately, some catch on more quickly than others and realize their dreams.

(Dave Stafford is an industry consultant and who spent 22 years as a flooring contractor, dealing with residential, government, and commercial clients and their problems. He has established hiring protocols and designed compensation plans for a variety of marketing, support, and installation personnel. He is an Honorary Lifetime Member of the FCICA and former chairman of the Floor Covering Installation Board. He may be reached at dave@dsainfo.com or 703/926-1288)

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