

TileLetter

RESIDENTIAL
INSTALLATIONS

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AND PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR
WATERFRONT HOMES

Remembering
JIM ISAMINGER

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CONTRACTOR GIVES
NEW LIFE
to 71-year-old
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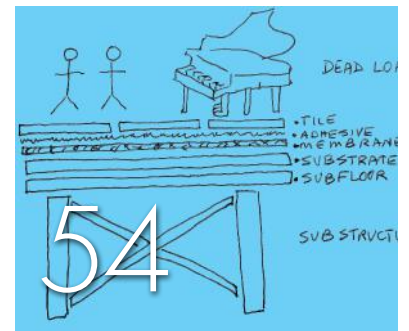
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TileLetter

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NTCA would not be possible without the dedicated service of our volunteer board and committee members, and regional and state directors. You can find information and a continually-updated list of NTCA Five-Star Accredited Contractors and NTCA Members at www.tile-assn.com – click on Find a Tile Contractor, a Five-Star Accredited Contractor or a Tile Consultant.

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STRENGTHENING THE TRADES



Ben Garelick

— Blue Shirt Benny —



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Tom Mandanat - TMJ Flooring

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BOE Website



OMNI Calculator





Meet the 2026 NTCA Training Team



Matt Weiner
Training Department
Manager



Randy Fleming



Chad Jones



Kate Koerber



Bill O'Connor



Amber Fox
Director of Strategic
Initiatives



Anthony Oliver



Robb Roderick



Alex Smith

2026 NTCA Workshop Programs *

To confirm dates and for more information visit NTCATraining.com

OCTOBER

- 1 **Louisville Tile** – Evansville, IN
- 5 **Daltile** – Wichita, KS
- 5 **Daltile** – Hartford, CT
- 6 **The Tile Shop** – Sterling Heights, MI
- 6 **Floor & Decor** – Syracuse, NY
- 7 **Daltile** – Denver, CO
- 7 **Louisville Tile** – Grand Rapids, MI
- 8 **Louisville Tile** – South Bend, IN
- 8 **Floor & Decor** – Timnath, CO
- 12 **Hanks Specialties** – Eau Claire, WI
- 13 **MSI** – Maple Grove, MN
- 13 **Floor & Decor** – Lexington, KY
- 13 **Floor & Decor** – Reno, NV

- 14 **Louisville Tile** – Fort Wayne, IN

- 14 **Daltile** – Livermore, CA
- 15 **Louisville Tile** – Fishers, IN
- 15 **Daltile** – Butler, WI
- 20 **Floor & Decor** – Manassas, VA
- 21 **Floor & Decor** – Fredericksburg, VA
- 21 **Floor & Decor** – Murfreesboro, TN
- 27 **Floor & Decor** – Concord, NC
- 29 **Floor & Decor** – Fort Myers, FL

NOVEMBER

- 3 **Floor & Decor** – Buford, GA
- 3 **Floor & Decor** – Cumming, GA
- 4 **MSI** – Austell, GA

- 5 **Daltile** – West Columbia, SC
- 5 **The Tile Shop** – Tampa, FL
- 10 **Daltile** – Duluth, GA
- 10 **Daltile** – Fresno, CA
- 10 **Floor & Decor** – Madison, AL
- 10 **Arizona Tile** – Anaheim, CA
- 11 **Daltile** – Anaheim, CA
- 11 **Daltile** – Bakersfield, CA
- 12 **Floor & Decor** – Chula Vista, CA
- 12 **James Hardie** – Los Angeles, CA
- 17 **Daltile** – Sacramento, CA
- 17 **Floor & Decor** – Brentwood, TN
- 18 **Emser Tile** – San Jose, CA
- 19 **Daltile** – Salinas, CA

2026 NTCA Regional Programs *

Register online at NTCATraining.com

OCTOBER

- 1 **BPI** – Georgetown, TX
- 8 **Architessa** – Baltimore, MD
- 8 **Floor & Decor** – Houston, TX
- 13 **Floor & Decor** – Elizabeth, NJ
- 15 **BPI** – Fort Worth, TX
- 22 **Daltile** – Philadelphia, PA
- 27 **Floor & Decor** – Boynton Beach, FL
- 29 **Floor & Decor** – North Charleston, SC

NOVEMBER

- 5 **Floor & Decor** – Sharpsburg, GA
- 12 **BPI** – Nashville, TN
- 12 **Floor & Decor** – Homewood, AL
- 19 **BPI** – Huntsville, AL
- 19 **Southeastern Tile Connection** – Mills River, NC



NTCA maintains an ongoing list of training events through an interactive map on its website. Check it out by scanning.



**Dates are subject to change*

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- October 1 - Mesa, AZ MUD
- October 6 - Glendale, AZ
- October 9 - Grand Junction, CO
- October 9- Gatlinburg, TN
- October 16 - Las Vegas, NV
- October 16 - Portland, OR
- October 29 - Hialeah, FL
- November 7 - Butler, WI
- November 20 - King of Prussia, PA
- November 20 - Orlando, FL
- November 20 - Tigard, OR
- December 3 - Louisville, KY

...and more to come throughout the year. Check our calendar often for new dates and locations added!



Scan the
Code to
Register!



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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cathey@tilecareer.com

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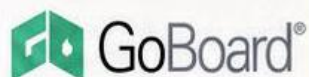
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PUMPKINS, GHOSTS, AND CONFERENCES...

OH MY!



Lesley Goddin

- "Don't do business with people who yell, scream, and curse. Life is too short for that."
- "Training and education is not an expense; it is an investment."
- "Thank your mentors on a regular basis. They were willing to share their knowledge."
- "Picture it in your mind before you tile it with your hands."

— From *Point Up: Points To Ponder For The Tile Contractor Volume I* by Jim Isaminger

Welcome to the month of pumpkin spice, ghosts and goblins...and Tile Solutions Plus (TSP)! NTCA President Rod Owen's letter gives a brief overview of this all-industry event taking place in Miami, Fla., Nov. 1-3 this year. Check it out, scan the QR code for more information and sign up. We want to see you there!

TSP gives you a great opportunity to learn and enhance your technical and business skills. And so does *TileLetter*! This month, former NTCA Training Director Mark Heinlein shares wisdom about substrates and substructures in a residential remodel where a bedroom was demo'd and replaced with a bathroom and shower. And in Ask the Experts, discover the do's and don'ts of installing tile over existing tile.

Joy Gomez, Founder of Field Promax, has authored our business story about how focusing on scheduling efficiency—before marketing your company—can boost your productivity instead of promising and not having the crew or schedule to deliver results.

Our Artisan story this month is an epic tale of restoration, innovation, and collaboration in Lincoln, Neb. Luke Holle and his company, Superboy Construction, took on the relocation and reinstallation of a beloved mural, and invented two machines to help orient the 80,000 original tiles and prepare them for their new home.

In this issue, you'll also meet Harry Burgos, Owner of CNB Renovations in Ladson, S.C. Get inspired by his love for learning—and for sharing what he knows. He does this with and for fellow contractors, homeowners, and next month, he'll take it up another level by serving as a Regional Director for NTCA. He's also part of the Comunidad Latino team of Spanish-language contractors working with NTCA to make materials relevant for this population and help them

advance from craftspeople to business owners.

Want to learn more about this effort? Check out *TileLetter* Publisher Elena Grant's story about this initiative, which she has been heading up, to support education, mentorship, representation, connection, and growth for Hispanic contractors, who make up a third of the contractor universe.

In August, the industry lost one of its greats: Jim Isaminger, former NTCA President and Owner of DMI Tile and Marble in Birmingham, Ala. He made many significant inroads in the industry, and the work he and his wife Marilyn did in their business became the model for various NTCA programs, including the Five-Star Accredited Contractor Program and the NTCA Apprenticeship Program. We include a tribute to this well-loved pillar of the industry in this issue.

Putting something or someone on a pedestal can be folly—unless it's the luxury outdoor spaces of a new premier waterfront residential community in North Carolina and you're using LATICRETE's NXT® Pedestal System to support porcelain tiles to enhance exterior spaces while water flows below. Learn how this system simplified installation and achieved architectural goals for this outdoor oasis.

Wishing you a wonderful beginning of fall, and reminding you to do your civic duty and vote in the midterm elections this November 3. Your choice and your voice help shape the country. Use them wisely.

God bless,

Lesley
lesley@tile-assn.com

CORRECTION

In our September cover feature, Todd McDougal was incorrectly identified as MAPEI's Vice President of New Business Development. His correct title is Director.

WHAT THEY SAY...



I tell every prospective member the same three things: If you are a business owner, you get your investment back with the vouchers. If you are a manager, you get your investment back through training and education events. If you are an installer, you get the knowledge, insight, and camaraderie of all those in this association that you would not get on your own. The ROI is a no-brainer.

*Nathan Parsons, CEO
The Porcelain Slab Company
Rocky Mount, NC*

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN!

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- Connect with industry leaders, peers, and potential clients.
- Benefit from business advice, and discounts on essential products and services.
- Get support on complex projects and industry best practices.



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and take your
tile business to the
to the **NEXT LEVEL!**



JOIN NOW



Rod Owen

Building more than a house;

TILE SOLUTIONS PLUS

This month's *TileLetter* theme is Residential, and there's something unique about this side of our industry. Whether you're installing tile in a new home under construction or remodeling a space where a family already lives, you're doing more than completing an installation. You're helping create a personal place where people will live, gather, and make memories for years to come.

Don't get me wrong, tile is still tile. The fundamentals of what we do don't change. Proper preparation, following industry standards, understanding products, and taking pride in workmanship are just as important in residential work as they are in commercial projects.

But residential work does bring a different level of connection. Many times, the person receiving our finished product is not a contractor, architect, or superintendent; it's the homeowner. They may not understand all the technical details behind what we do, but they will experience the results every day. They may never see the waterproofing behind a shower, the preparation beneath the tile, or the time spent ensuring a proper installation, but those details determine whether the project performs as expected for years to come.

That's why craftsmanship matters.

And craftsmanship is about more than the finished product. It's also about professionalism. It's how we communicate, how we handle challenges, how we respect the project, and how we represent ourselves and our companies. Those things become part of the experience we provide.

The best residential contractors understand that quality installation and quality service go hand in hand. One without the other leaves something missing. So, whether your next project is residential or commercial, remember this: we are not just installing tile. We are helping build the spaces where life happens.

This month also brings Tile Solutions Plus (TSP) 2026, taking place November 1–3 at the Loews Miami Beach Hotel. I encourage you to register and make plans to attend. TSP continues to be one of the premier educational and networking events in our industry. Every year brings new opportunities to learn, build relationships, and strengthen our profession.

As part of the many events taking place around TSP, I also invite you to attend the NTCA Technical Committee Meeting on October 31 from 1:00–5:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome to sit in and see firsthand how technical guidance and industry standards are developed. The NTCA Board Meeting will follow on November 1 from 2:00–5:00 p.m., and the NTCA Annual Meeting will take place on November 3, where we will recognize the contributions of our outgoing Board and Executive Committee members, welcome our newly elected leaders, and introduce our incoming Executive Director as we continue moving the Association forward.

Scan the QR code to learn more about TSP. There is plenty to learn and share at roundtables, forums, breakout groups, panel discussions, and from keynote speakers. And there are opportunities to champion industry excellence and connect with new friends at receptions, award lunches, and the highly celebrated closing party and dinner. Don't miss it!

As always,
Educate for Excellence.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Rod".

Rod Owen
NTCA President
rod.owen@ccowen.us



2027 CID

COVERINGS INSTALLATION & DESIGN

AWARDS

Celebrate Industry Excellence at the 2027 Coverings Installation & Design Awards

The 2027 Coverings Installation & Design (CID) Awards are now open for entry! The CID Awards recognize exemplary projects featuring tile and stone that showcase beautiful design and impeccable installation. All projects must have been completed between January 2025 - December 2026. Multiple entries are accepted and there is no cost to enter.

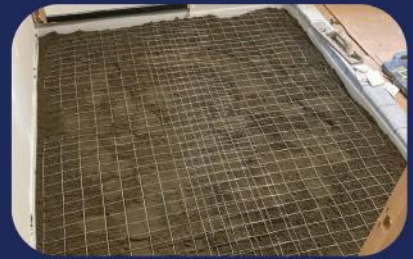
Submit projects at Coverings.com/CID-awards by December 3.



COMMERCIAL



TILE



INSTALLATION



RESIDENTIAL



STONE



DESIGN

CID Awards
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TileLetter

COMUNIDAD LATINO:

building a COMMUNITY where EVERYONE BELONGS

By Elena Grant, TileLetter Publisher

At NTCA, we believe our industry is stronger when everyone has a place at the table and the opportunity to learn, connect, contribute, and lead. That belief is at the heart of Comunidad Latino, a growing initiative dedicated to supporting and connecting Spanish-speaking professionals throughout the tile industry.

What began as a conversation about how we could better serve Spanish-speaking contractors has quickly grown into something much more meaningful. We have seen tremendous momentum over the past two years. Perhaps the most rewarding part has been watching members of this community step forward to help shape its future.

The effort gained momentum at Coverings 2025, when Angie Gonzalez helped initiate conversations and engagement with the Spanish-speaking tile community, pictured above. NTCA proudly continued building on that momentum at Coverings 2026 with Spanish-language educational sessions and a Spanish Contractor Tour. The response reinforced what we already knew: there is a strong and growing Spanish-speaking community that wants to be more connected to NTCA and to the broader tile industry.

And we are just getting started. Our goal is to do even more in 2027 by expanding educational opportunities, strengthening connections, and finding new ways to ensure Spanish-speaking contractors have access to the resources they need to succeed.

Leading the way

One of the most exciting developments has been seeing members of this community step forward as leaders. Harry Burgos of CNB Renovations will soon be appointed to the NTCA Board of Directors, which represents a significant milestone (see the Member story in this issue). Having Burgos at the board table provides an important voice for the Spanish-speaking community and sends a powerful message that there is a place for everyone in the leadership of this association.

We are also proud to have formally established the Comunidad Latino Committee, with Mauricio Rapalo of Prominent Tile serving as chair. Rapalo has embraced this role with enthusiasm and a genuine commitment to building something that will benefit Spanish-speaking contractors for years to come. The committee creates a dedicated space to identify needs, share ideas, and help shape NTCA's future efforts.

Translation and connection

Language is another critical part of this work. Through our collaboration with Jose Romero of Star Tile and Surfaces LLC, we have continued translating important NTCA materials and resources into Spanish. We have also translated the TileLetter.com website into Spanish, making industry news, education, technical information, and other resources more accessible to Spanish-speaking professionals. NTCA is also providing real-time Spanish language translation during NTCA Regional Training and Workshop events.

But inclusion is about more than translation; it is also about connection. During our Comunidad Latino meetings, we speak both English and Spanish. We don't expect everyone to communicate in one particular language. Instead, we meet people where they are most comfortable. Sometimes that means a conversation in Spanish, sometimes English, and often a combination

NTCA Total Health & Wellness Benefits Program

The National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) provides exclusive, cost-saving programs designed to support the success and growth of tile professionals nationwide. Among the many valuable benefits available to NTCA members is the NTCA Total Health & Wellness Benefits Program. This comprehensive program is dedicated to promoting the well-being of our members and their teams. Discover how NTCA can enhance your business and help you thrive!

LEARN MORE! ➤

Meridio



Spanish Contractor Tour at Coverings 2026.



Coverings 2026 Spanish Session with (L to R) Oswaldo Rossi, Gracie Barboza, Eduardo Guillén, and Harry Burgos, Moderator.

of both. What matters is that everyone feels welcome, heard, and valued.

Our presence at ExpoContratista in Phoenix in September, where NTCA had a booth and conducted demonstrations, was another important opportunity to meet contractors where they are, listen to their experiences, and introduce them to the resources available through NTCA.

We know there is still much work to do, but we are committed to doing it together. Comunidad Latino is not simply a program or a committee; it is an investment in people, relationships, and the future of our industry.

“The leadership of NTCA—staff and board—are united on this as a key strategic initiative moving forward,” said Bart Bettiga, NTCA Executive Director. “And if members speak other languages and want to reach out to us, we are more than open to discussing how we can support them.”

We are grateful to Burgos, Rapalo, Romero, and everyone who has contributed their time, ideas, and passion along the way. Their dedication reminds us that when we listen, create opportunities, and make room for everyone, our entire industry becomes stronger. If you are interested in joining us, please email Elena Grant at elena@tile-assn.com. **TL**



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WHY THE MOST PROFITABLE TILE CONTRACTORS FOCUS on SCHEDULING before MARKETING

Installers who concentrate on accurate estimating and efficient scheduling tend to earn healthier profits over time than those who compete on price or lead volume.

By Joy Gomez,
Founder of Field Promax



Last month, a tile contractor I was talking with in the Midwest told me he'd spent about \$18,000 on Google Ads over the previous two quarters, but he lost roughly a third of those leads because his estimator couldn't get back to homeowners inside 48 hours. His crews were booked, his phone was ringing, and he was still bleeding money.

That gap between demand generated and demand converted is the quiet killer in this trade, and it shows up in the data. One tile marketing analysis found that without prompt follow-up, 50% to 60% of warm leads go cold, turning marketing spend into a sunk cost.

I've spent a decade building software for service contractors, and the pattern I see in tile is consistent with what I see in HVAC, electrical, and landscape: the shops that grow profitably fix operations first, then pour fuel on marketing. Not the other way around.

The math nobody wants to run

Wexford Insurance's 2024 guidance for tile contractors puts it plainly: installers who concentrate on accurate estimating and efficient scheduling tend to earn healthier profits over time than those who compete on price or lead volume. The reason is arithmetic. If your crew utilization

is 60% and your close rate on estimates is 25%, doubling your ad spend only doubles the number of estimates you can achieve. It doesn't touch the two variables that actually determine take-home: how many billable hours your crews put on the wall, and how many of your bids turn into signed contracts.

Faster Estimates Lead to Higher Profits

**Slow Estimate
Delivery**

Homeowner
enthusiasm decays
quickly



**Prioritize Bid
Preparation**



**Higher
Conversion Rates**

More estimates convert
to jobs

Treat bid prep as sacred

Deliver estimates the
same day



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Keraflex Membrane Mortar is designed for use as a mortar over and, when appropriate, under uncoupling, crack-isolation, sound-reduction and waterproofing membranes. Scan or more information:



A profit-focused tile business guide recommends treating profit margin as a line item, targeting 20% to 30% net per project. You cannot hit that with a schedule that has holes in it, and you certainly cannot hit it if your estimator is chasing hot leads three days after the site visit.

Speed to estimate is a profitability lever

Here's where I want to point to first-party evidence. We've observed across the contractors using our platform that residential service operators convert estimates to signed jobs at meaningfully higher rates when the estimate reaches the customer the same day as the site visit, versus 24 to 48 hours later. The vertical I have the cleanest data on is electrical residential service, but the behavioral pattern (homeowner enthusiasm decays fast) applies just as forcefully to a bathroom tile remodel or a backsplash job.

If you want to compete for the higher-margin residential remodel work, the estimator's turnaround time is a schedule problem, not a sales problem. Blocking two hours a day for bid preparation, and treating that block as sacred, will move your close rate more than another SEO retainer will.

The dispatch board is your P&L

Tile jobs are inherently multi-visit: substrate prep, install, grout, seal, punch. A 2025 scheduling guide recommends adding 15% to 20% contingency time to each phase and building standardized templates by job type (residential bath, commercial kitchen, exterior patio, etc.). The PocketBoss's field scheduling formula (job time × 1.3, plus drive time, plus a 30-minute buffer) is a decent starting point, and their data suggests geographic clustering of jobs can save two or more hours of drive time per day.

A few years ago, Jeff Occhipinti of Columbia River Tile & Stone and Dirk Sullivan of Hawthorne Tile, both NTCA Five-Star Accredited Contractors in Portland, Ore., were quoted in *TileLetter* revealing that unforeseen scheduling delays were a top source of stress. Sullivan described jobs pushed by three or four weeks as leaving "holes" nobody can fill on short notice. That hole is pure margin evaporation. A dispatch board with a live standby list and a foreman empowered to shuffle crews without waiting for the owner's call is what closes the hole.

Job costing turns hunches into decisions

You cannot manage what you do not measure, and tile crews rarely measure labor at the resolution that matters. From contractors I work with directly in landscape design-build, project profitability swings hardest on labor-capture accuracy: crews that clock in and out by job code rather

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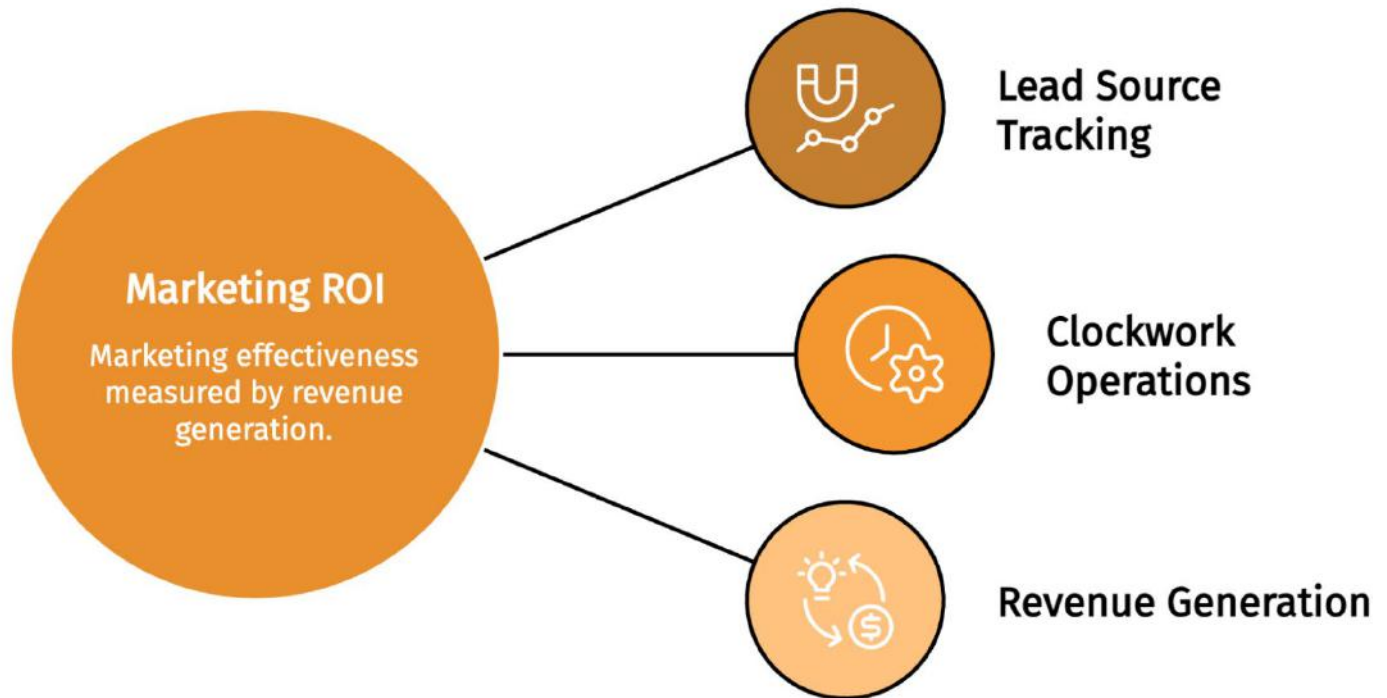


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Unveiling the Power of Marketing ROI



than by day consistently surface margin issues earlier in the season. Tile crews face the same physics. If a bathroom job books 32 labor hours and you find out in April that it actually took 47, you have three more months to fix the estimating template before summer eats you alive.

Deelo's 2026 operations guide for tile installers recommends bidding to a 30% to 40% gross margin with explicit waste factors and complexity multipliers. That target is unreachable without job-level labor and material tracking. It is reachable, boringly and repeatedly, with it.

When marketing finally earns its keep

Once your close rate is climbing and your crews are running clockwork weeks, marketing dollars start to compound. From contractors I work with directly, the operators who get the most out of lead management aren't necessarily those with the most leads. They're the ones who consistently log lead sources, so within a season they actually know which marketing channel is funding their growth. Without that, you're guessing which half of your ad budget works—and the guess is usually wrong.

JobCloser's 2025 seasonal guidance recommends

running installation schedules "like clockwork" during peak months. Clockwork operations are what let a marketing campaign convert into revenue instead of chaos.

The operator takeaway

Look at your last 12 completed jobs before you look at your next 12 marketing dollars. If your average estimate turnaround was longer than a business day, or if you cannot tell me the gross margin on any three of those jobs without opening a spreadsheet, marketing is the wrong problem to solve this quarter. Fix the plumbing before you turn up the water. **TL**

Joy Gomez is an engineer, process automation expert, and the Founder of Field Promax. Known for his technical expertise and commitment to field service innovation, Gomez writes about transforming traditional business models into paperless, efficient operations. He is a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt based in Rochester, Minn., dedicated to helping field professionals work smarter through better technology. Connect with him on LinkedIn.



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2026/2027

National Tile Contractors Association

REFERENCE MANUAL



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NEBRASKA TILE CONTRACTOR GIVES

NEW LIFE to 71-year-old MOSAIC MURAL

By Lesley Goddin, Editorial Director and Senior Writer

Finished mural, though landscaping, edging, and drip wedge are yet to be installed.

This month's Artisan story is an epic tale—dare I say odyssey?—of a monumental mosaic mural restoration in Lincoln, Neb.

In 1955, Omaha artist Leonard Thiessen, together with Bill J. Hammon, designed and installed a mural on the Pershing Center Auditorium in Lincoln. The venue was the site of concerts, sporting events, graduations, theater events, and more over the years, and the mural depicted an array of those special moments. When the Pinnacle Bank Arena replaced the auditorium, the building was slated for demolition.

But there was great love for the mural. The Pershing Mural Reinstallation Board was formed to preserve it, headed by Liz Shea-McCoy, a mover and shaker in the arts in Nebraska and a fundraising wizard.

The first step was to remove all the tile. This effort was funded purely from public donations. Contractor Michael McCollough joined the board, and his company removed the tiles, taping the front surface of the tile in 1-sq.-ft. sections and chipping it off the wall with a hammer drill equipped with a spade bit. These sections were transferred to 4' x 8' sheets of plywood for storage.

The next phase was cleaning the adhesive off the back of the tiles and preserving them. Women to the rescue! Angie Hernandez and Elizabeth Meza, the wives of two of McCollough's concrete workers, spent two years mechanically removing grout and adhesive off the tiles with nippers and a bench grinder outfitted with a stone wheel—while keeping the tile's cherished layout intact.

A local warehouse owner, Steve Meyer, donated 10,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space to house the mural.

Enter Superboy Construction

Meanwhile, the search for an installer to commit to the project rolled on. The project needed someone willing to



The Superboy Construction full-time crew: (L to R) Luke Holle, Hunter Cole, Tyler Vanderslice, Ethan Radenslaben, Dan Holle, Bentley Johnson, Bryan Bernard.

accept the risk and have a large enough crew to complete the work relatively quickly.

Around August 2025, McCollough reached out to Luke Holle, owner of Superboy Construction in Lincoln. Though Superboy almost exclusively did tile work for big high-end homes and commercial projects, Holle had never tackled anything like this before.

"But I have a strong crew, with between four and seven subs available; some talented installers and great helpers," Holle said. "We were young and had energy and ambition," he added. He believed if his crew could arrange the project into a form they were used to, installation wouldn't be that complicated.



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Innovation to desheet and resheet the tiles

The first breakthrough came when Holle realized that all the tiles needed to be desheeted since they couldn't get the mural pieces to run square. So, six workers started peeling tiles off the existing sheets, one by one. "We didn't even do a single board in a day," he said.

Holle and his cousin Dan then developed a table system with a "track as wide as a sheet and a hand crank that would roll the existing plastic up, pull sheets of tile through, and spit out free-floating tile at the end of the machine." This innovation allowed them to desheet the entire mural in less than four weeks—leaving 800,000 sq. ft. of free-floating individual 1" x 1" tile lying on the warehouse floor on 4' x 8' pieces of plywood.

Then came the resheeting process. Using a method that Hernandez and Meza developed, the crew created more precise fixtures milled of aluminum that would fit 144 tiles in a square to create installable sheets. These were remilled several times to account for slight discrepancies in tile sizes.

This new machine allowed workers to scoop 144 tiles, drop them into the fixture, and affix them into sheets with LDPE Mosaic Tile Tape. This efficient process enabled the entire mural to be resheeted in about a month, and cut into 4' x 8' sections.

The original tile used for the border included almost every color in the mural, Holle said. The decision was made to shrink the border slightly, both to better fit the new

concrete wall where the mural would be installed and to fill in missing tiles needed to maintain the integrity of the design. This original tile was a mix of porcelain and ceramic tile from Nebraska-based Cambridge Tile, which eventually moved to Cincinnati but is now defunct. Thanks to the decision to shrink the border ever so slightly, only about 2% of tile needed to be replaced with a mixture of tile sourced from Maven Tile and Stone LLC in Lincoln.

The crew took the taped sheets off the plywood and laid them out on the floor to see how the mural would fit together and how big it would be. They determined the center of the mural, then labeled the tile with a letter and number system in 14' to 15' sections, bottom to top, to accommodate the 16' width of the lift. The process was: label, move the lift, repeat.

The top sheet of each stack of tile was labeled, and care was taken that all stacks were facing the same direction. Every nine courses went into a shipping box and then were loaded on a trailer to transport to the site and start the installation.

The installation

In April 2026, the crew commenced installing the 38' x 140' mural on a south-facing concrete wall at Wayuka Park, a section of the state cemetery that was being developed as a festival space for the arts, complete with stage and landscaping.

The restored mural would be slightly smaller than the original due to the streamlined border and tightened



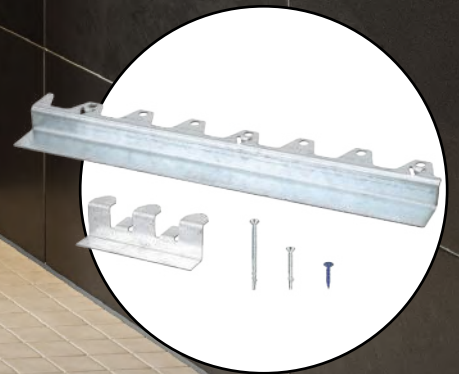
Desheeting and resheeting the tiles.



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Luke Holle sets the last section of tile for the media.



Returning desheathed tile to its plywood staging sheet.



Prepping a section for grout. Removing tape and draping squeeze through.

grout joints. The crew used a massive scissor lift provided by McCullough, which was adapted with a railing so the crew could work between the railing and the wall. The crew screwed a laser mount into the concrete wall every three courses, which allowed the crew to level to the top of the third course by pulling the laser mount off and adhering to the next sheet where the laser had been.

Eventually, the crew found it cooler to work at night, and chose nightwork for four courses. This also helped them more easily manipulate the fast-setting materials.

One curious problem the crew noted was that joints tended to grow or shrink during installation. It was discovered that the 50' wall was slightly convex. Staying horizontally level was easier, but finding the vertical level was trickier. But the crew made it work, and the mural came together beautifully.

In the midst of the installation, the warehouse flooded, and an 8' section to the left of the mural got wet. This

affected the adhesion of the tape, and in an effort to keep it together, the crew baked the tape on with a heat gun. "We handled it like a bomb," Holle said. "We prayed when we handled [the sections]."

Jake Swoboda, ARDEX's Midwest Technical Rep, was a huge help to Superboy Construction. The crew used all ARDEX products for the project: ARDEX 8+9™ Rapid Waterproofing and Crack Isolation Compound; ARDEX X90 OUTDOOR™ MicroteC3 Rapid-Set, Flexible Tile and Stone Mortar; and ARDEX FL™ Rapid Set, Flexible, Sanded Grout.

The Superboy workers who recreated the mural in its new home included: Luke Holle, Dan Holle, Hunter Cole, Ethan Radenslaben, Tyler Vanderslice, Bentley Johnson, Bryan Bernard, and Eli Bryan.

The local media was on hand on July 17 when Luke Holle set the last section of the mural. It was a giant celebration with families attending the event and the community enjoying a beloved mural that had been given new life. **TL**



Working at night.



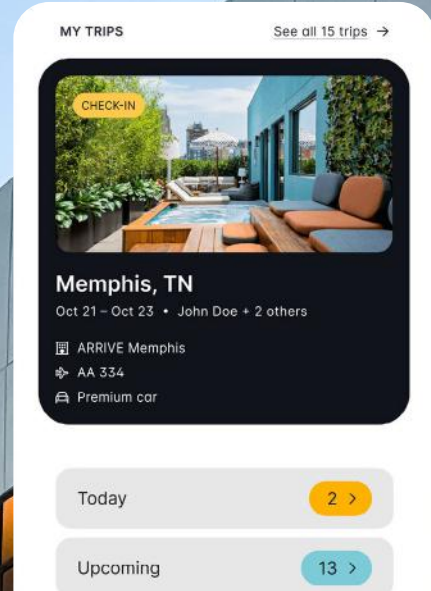
Progress photo with lift.



Mural laid out on the warehouse floor during the organizing phase, making sure every tile is where it belongs.

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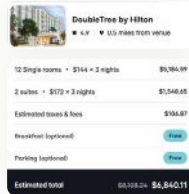
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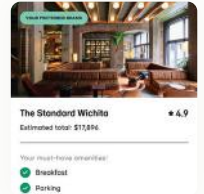
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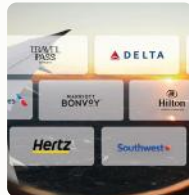
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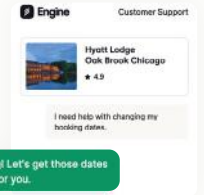
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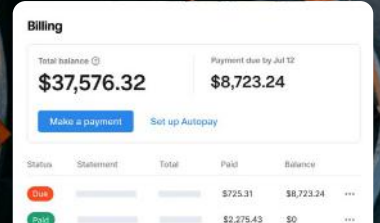
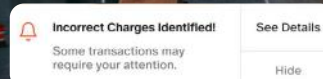
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Set along the shores of Lake Norman, this custom terrace was designed to extend the home's living space to the outdoors.



On the shores of Lake Norman in Cornelius, N.C., sits Peninsula Cove, a premier residential community built by Augusta Homes, a family-owned, luxury custom homebuilder with deep roots in the neighborhood. For the builder's fifth project within Peninsula Cove, Augusta Homes had a clear directive from the homeowner: develop a one-of-a-kind outdoor living space made of porcelain tile that was a true extension of the home—one that allowed it to take full advantage of the property's breathtaking waterfront setting.

The project centered around expanding the outdoor living experience with a series of custom features, including an 18-ft. outdoor grilling space, a fireplace, multiple seating areas, and a striking exposed steel beam spanning the rear terrace as a key architectural detail.

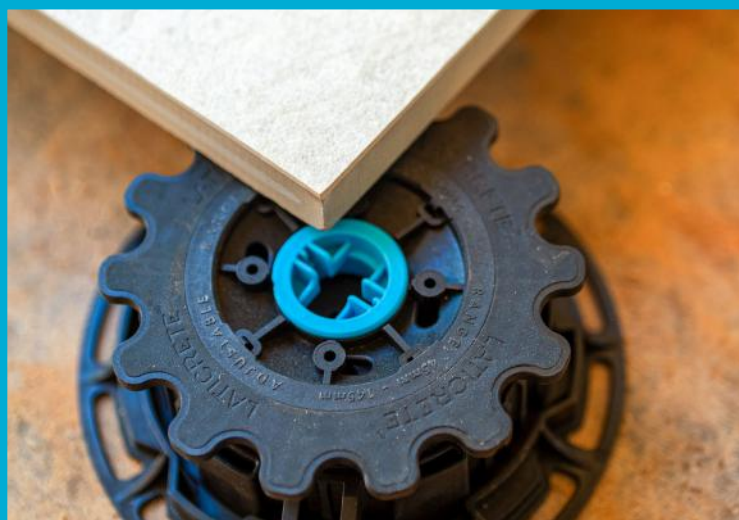
From the earliest stages of design, Augusta Homes worked closely with Charlotte-based flooring contractor C.S. Brown Tile & Stone—an NTCA Member Contractor—and LATICRETE to determine an installation approach that would support both the architectural vision and long-term performance goals of an outdoor installation in the humid subtropical Carolina climate.

Achieving both drainage and a flat surface

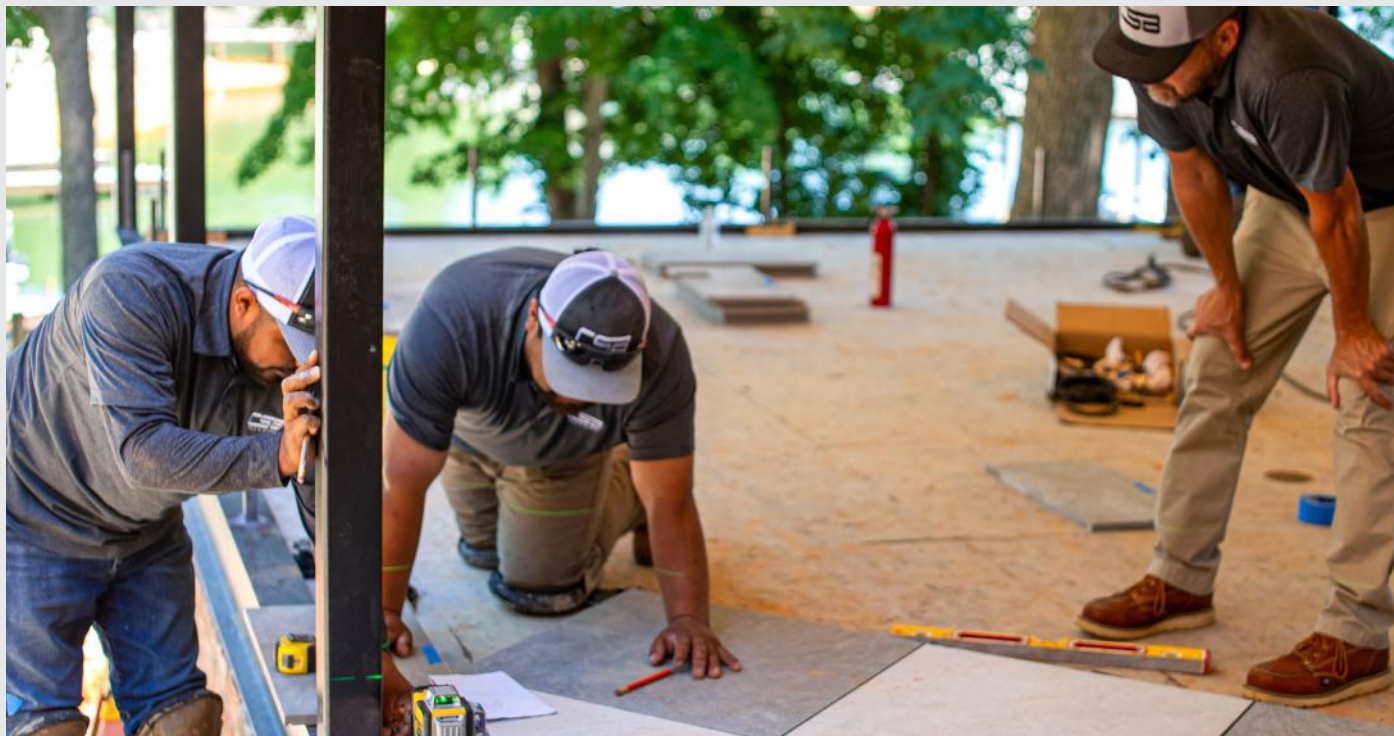
The homeowner had two critical design priorities: an 18-ft. outdoor grilling space and a designated seating area to run alongside the fireplace. A modern, linear steel beam ties the spaces together, creating a distinctive architectural element that required an installation system capable of preserving the exposed steel while maintaining proper drainage.

Together, these elements would create a sophisticated, modern gathering space—but they also introduced a design challenge: balancing proper drainage with the homeowner's desire for a flat finished surface.

Traditionally, exterior tile installations rely on a pitched finished surface to direct water away from the structure. However, incorporating a slope would have created visible changes in elevation and disrupted the



The LATICRETE NXT® Pedestal System creates a level porcelain tile surface while allowing water to drain beneath the installation.



Designed for projects requiring elevated porcelain pavers, the NXT® Pedestal System combines performance, durability, and ease of installation.

seamless aesthetic the design team was working to achieve. Maintaining a flat, continuous surface was especially important across the large entertainment areas where the outdoor kitchen, seating zones, and architectural features intersect. Installers needed a solution that could effectively manage water drainage beneath the terrace while allowing the area above to function as intended.

LATICRETE® NXT® Pedestal System to the rescue

To address this challenge, the project team selected the LATICRETE NXT Pedestal System, an elevated pedestal assembly that allowed the finished porcelain tile surface to remain level while allowing water to pass to a drainage plane below.

Unlike traditional bonded tile assemblies, which rely on the finished surface to manage drainage, the NXT Pedestal System elevates porcelain pavers above a sloped, waterproofed substrate. Supported by adjustable pedestals capable of bearing up to 2,000 pounds each, the system allows water to pass through the open joints and drain beneath the finished surface to designated drainage points. By separating the walking surface from the drainage plane, the system provides effective water management while

protecting the finished tile surface from standing water.

This approach eliminated the need for visible drainage gutters or perceptible elevation changes, creating a continuous, level surface that allows guests to move seamlessly between the outdoor kitchen, dining area, and fireplace seating.

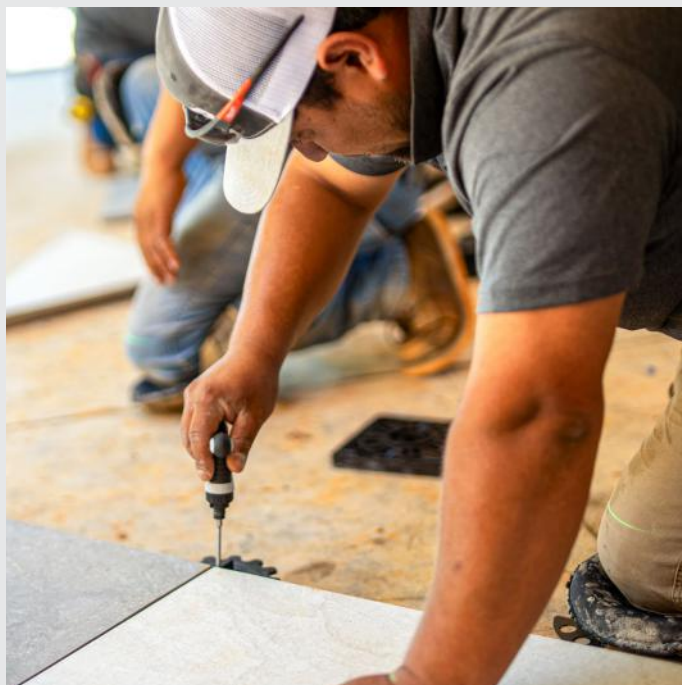
The adjustable design of the NXT Pedestal System also simplified installation by allowing precise height adjustments with minimal components and accessories. The NXT Pedestal Max served as the primary support solution, giving installers a wide range of options.

“The NXT Pedestal Max starts at 1-3/4” and is fully adjustable with a simple screw mechanism up to 5-3/4”, eliminating the need to stack multiple pieces to achieve small height changes,” said Scotland Riley, Product Manager at LATICRETE. “For anything above this, we offer a stackable 4” extension, which is a big help for installers. Before we brought this system to market, installers had to use multiple pedestal sizes. With the NXT Pedestal System, we’ve simplified installation to where three core components will cover installations from 3/4” up to over 40”.”

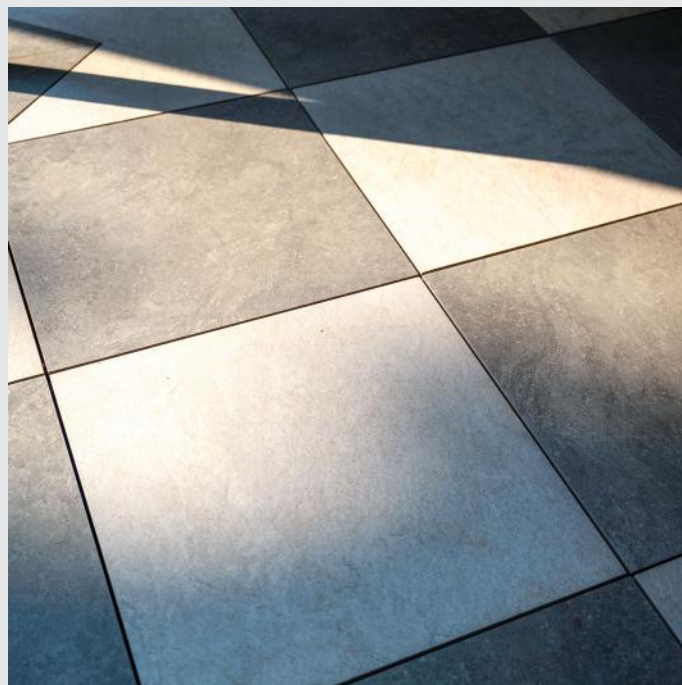
For areas with lower elevations, the NXT Pedestal Mini was used. With an adjustable range of 3/4” up to 1-3/4”,



With concealed drainage beneath the surface, the terrace delivers uninterrupted sightlines and a more functional outdoor living experience.



The NXT® Pedestal System gave installers the flexibility to accommodate changing elevations with precision.



Supported by the LATICRETE® NXT® Pedestal System, the finished tile surface combines lasting performance with contemporary design.

installers were able to maintain a flat, level surface while seamlessly covering elevation changes in the substrate.

As the pavers were laid in a stunning diamond pattern, the team had to find a solution for the complex angles where the pavers meet the borders. For this, the NXT Pedestal Multiplate was used to provide a stable base and consistent joint lines. Compatible with both the Mini and Max pedestals, the Multiplate solves a wide range of installation problems, including live edge, stairs, and more. Once all the tiles were installed, NXT Pedestal Rubber Shims were added to correct any imperfections in the tiles, achieving the precise leveling, support, and flexibility needed for the finished installation.

Beyond addressing the immediate design challenge, the system eliminates the need for mortar beds and grouted joints, helping reduce the potential for efflorescence while easing the burden for future maintenance. In addition, individual pavers can be removed to provide access to drainage or utilities beneath the terrace without disrupting the surrounding installation.

“Traditional pitched terraces make large-scale outdoor living elements, like this one, incredibly tough to design,” said Austin Wrench, President at Augusta

Homes. “By utilizing the NXT Pedestal System, we kept our modern terrace lines completely flat, concealed the drainage beneath the surface, and created a perfectly level entertaining space where multiple seating areas intersect beautifully.”

An innovative solution for an outdoor oasis

The completed terrace at this Peninsula Cove home demonstrates how innovative installation systems can help overcome complex outdoor design challenges. By incorporating the LATICRETE NXT Pedestal System, the project team achieved the clean, level aesthetic the homeowner envisioned while simplifying the installation—saving time and money in the process. The result is an expansive porcelain-tiled terrace that unifies the outdoor kitchen, fireplace, and gathering areas into a cohesive waterfront experience.

Completed in the summer of 2026, this outdoor oasis now serves as a signature feature of the residence. It transformed the exterior environment into a dedicated extension of the home, tailor-made for entertaining and relaxation. **TL**



Innovative pedestal technology helped bring the homeowner's vision of a flat, uninterrupted outdoor living space to life.



Adjustable pedestal supports gave installers the flexibility to achieve the precise heights required across the terrace.



The NXT® Pedestal System eliminated the need for visible drainage gutters, preserving the modern aesthetic envisioned for the project.



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*In the One-to-One column, NTCA
Executive Director Bart Bettiga interviews
industry leaders about pertinent topics.*



The commercial flooring industry is experiencing a significant shift as major manufacturers expand their product portfolios to meet evolving market demands. Shaw Contract, a division of Shaw Industries, is making bold moves in the tile and stone category, and its approach could reshape how commercial contractors source materials for their projects.

In our recent conversation, Quinn Spiech, Senior Marketing Manager for Tile and Stone at Shaw Contract, outlined the company's strategic entry into this growing market segment and explained how commercial tile contractors can leverage Shaw Contract's resources to enhance their competitive advantage.



The comprehensive Cult Classics collection is paired with carpet tile and resilient, with design-forward aesthetics and diverse color and finish options for corporate workplace, education, and retail environments.

A new player in commercial tile

While Shaw Industries has been in the tile business for approximately 15 years through its residential divisions, Shaw Contract's foray into commercial tile is relatively recent, beginning in 2024. However, the company isn't approaching this expansion timidly. With the backing of Shaw Industries and its parent company Berkshire Hathaway, Shaw Contract is investing heavily in inventory, distribution, and product

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■ ONE-TO-ONE

development to establish itself as a design-forward leader in commercial interiors.

“What sets Shaw Contract apart is its integrated approach,” said Spiech. “Rather than operating as a standalone tile supplier, Shaw Contract positions tile within a broader ecosystem that includes carpet, resilient flooring, and vinyl tile. This multi-category strategy allows designers and contractors to specify complementary products from a single source, streamlining project management and creating a cohesive design vision.”

The NeoCon showcase and product innovation

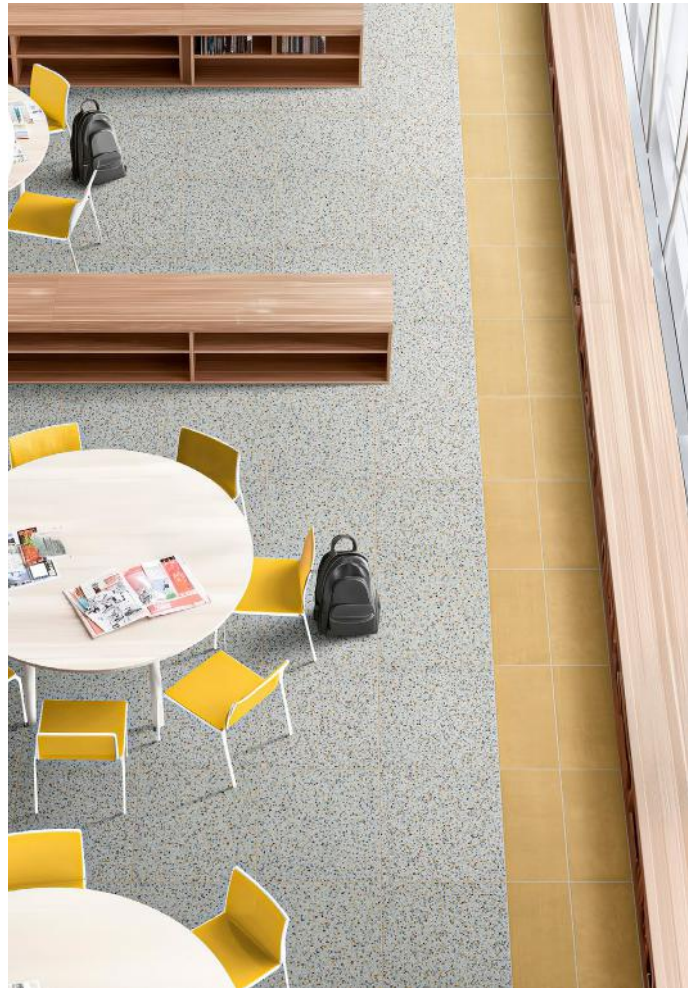
Shaw Contract made a significant splash at NeoCon, the industry’s premier commercial trade show, where the division unveiled several new collections that garnered substantial attention. The Cult Classics collection, a comprehensive porcelain offering paired with other categories like carpet tile and resilient, emerged as a standout. With its design-forward aesthetic and diverse color and finish options, the Cult Classics collection targets corporate workplace environments, and also appeals to education and retail sectors.

“Our approach to product display at NeoCon reflected our design-focused philosophy,” said Spiech. “Rather than traditional showroom arrangements, we presented products on pedestals and in various wall installations, emphasizing the artistic and aesthetic qualities of the tile. This presentation strategy resonated with designers and specifiers seeking products that elevate commercial spaces beyond utilitarian functionality.”

Beyond Cult Classics, Shaw Contract introduced the Format + Fragmented collection, a standalone porcelain collection featuring colored concrete and terrazzo visuals that can be mixed and matched for bold, expressive installations.

Perhaps most notably, the company developed a new finish called StrideGuard™, which achieves slip resistance levels exceeding 0.60—among the highest in the industry—while maintaining aesthetic appeal. “This innovation addresses a persistent market challenge: the need for high-slip-resistance flooring without the maintenance headaches associated with traditional small-format mosaics,” said Spiech.

Additionally, Shaw Contract is launching the Monumental collection, a marble-inspired porcelain that moves beyond tired Carrara aesthetics. With earthy tones, blues, greens, and gold accents paired with a lappato honed finish, the collection offers designers the elevated look of natural marble with the superior performance and durability of porcelain.



Format + Fragmented is a standalone porcelain collection featuring colored concrete and terrazzo visuals that can be mixed and matched for bold, expressive installations.



The Monumental collection is a marble-inspired porcelain that offers inspired hues like earthy tones, blues, greens, and gold accents paired with a lappato honed finish.

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Stellar brings a bold, sculptural, otherworldly presence to any space, reimagining textures of concrete aggregate in four colorways. The porcelain 12" x 24" and 24" x 48" floor/wall field tiles are joined by a 2" x 2" and stacked mosaic, chevron subway tile, and ceramic 18" x 48" wall panel.

Strategic sourcing and logistics

Spiech noted that Shaw Contract's sourcing strategy reflects a commitment to reliability and American manufacturing. The majority of the division's tile is manufactured domestically, ensuring more predictable lead times and reducing supply chain vulnerabilities. The remaining product is sourced globally from trusted manufacturers in Europe and Brazil, typically when specific design requirements or technical limitations necessitate international production.

"This emphasis on domestic sourcing directly addresses one of the commercial tile industry's most persistent pain points: availability," said Spiech. "Contractors frequently encounter situations where specified materials aren't readily available when projects are ready to move forward. Our deep inventory strategy, leveraging Shaw Industries' extensive regional distribution center network in Georgia, aims to mitigate these delays."

The company's freight model further simplifies the procurement process. Rather than negotiating landed costs, Shaw Contract builds freight into product pricing, offering delivered pricing with a fixed \$150 drop fee per bill of lading. This approach eliminates ambiguity around total project costs and allows contractors and designers to budget more accurately, regardless of project size or geographic location.

Supporting the contractor community

Shaw Contract maintains a sales force of approximately 220 account executives across the country, ensuring regional support and personalized service. While the company has a few tile specialists in strategic markets, most account executives are trained to support all product categories—carpet, resilient, and tile—furthering Shaw Contract's goal of simplifying the specification and procurement process for designers and contractors.

This multi-category training approach offers distinct advantages. Contractors working with a single Shaw Contract representative can coordinate all flooring specifications, installation timelines, and delivery logistics through one point of contact, reducing friction and enhancing project efficiency.

Beyond sales support, Shaw Contract has assembled a comprehensive technical team including installation specialists, sustainability advisors, and technical support personnel. All products carry Shaw Contract warranties and include extensive testing data and installation guidelines aligned with Tile Council of North America (TCNA) standards—a critical consideration for commercial contractors who must ensure specifications meet industry best practices.



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The sensory experience of the Tempo and Pulse collections is inspired by the changing rhythm of music's dynamic flow. Tempo accentuates and pops with color while Pulse captures the fluid nature of ancient limestone, working together to form a visual soundtrack.

Custom capabilities and future expansion

Shaw Contract's relationships with its manufacturing partners afford it the ability to develop custom products. "With approximately 500 to 550 SKUs by year-end, our running line is substantial, but custom capabilities provide solutions for unique project requirements," said Spiech. "This flexibility is particularly valuable for high-profile projects where designers seek proprietary or bespoke finishes."

Looking ahead, Shaw Contract is expanding its installation materials offerings. Currently offering basic grouts, thinsets, mortars, trims, and transitions, the division plans to announce a comprehensive new installation materials program in the coming months. This expansion ensures that contractors can source not just tile but all complementary products needed for proper installation, further simplifying the specification and procurement process.

Shaw Contract is also evaluating expansion into 2-centimeter pavers and natural stone, though these additions remain under development. As Spiech noted, the company wants to "ensure that our sales force is thoroughly trained on foundational products before expanding into more technically complex categories."

Building partnerships with NTCA members

For National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) members, Shaw Contract represents both opportunity and partnership potential. The division is actively seeking

to connect with commercial tile contractors and has proposed collaborative initiatives, including joint training events and educational webinars. By leveraging NTCA's expertise in installation best practices and industry standards, Shaw Contract aims to strengthen its market position while elevating the capabilities of its sales team.

The division recognizes that success in commercial tile requires a deep understanding of installation requirements, maintenance considerations, and the nuanced demands of different market segments. Partnering with qualified, knowledgeable contractors amplifies Shaw Contract's ability to serve designers and end users effectively.

Meaningful collaboration for mutual benefit

Shaw Contract's entry into commercial tile represents a meaningful development for the industry. With substantial corporate backing, a commitment to domestic sourcing, design-forward products, and a support infrastructure built for contractor success, the division is well-positioned to capture market share and influence how commercial projects specify and install tile.

For contractors seeking reliable supply chains, comprehensive product ecosystems, and partnership opportunities, Shaw Contract merits serious consideration. As the division continues expanding its product lines and deepening its market presence, the potential for meaningful collaboration with the commercial tile contracting community appears substantial and mutually beneficial. **TL**

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LEARNING and SHARING: THE LIFEBLOOD OF CNB RENOVATIONS' HARRY BURGOS

By Lesley Goddin, Editorial Director and Senior Writer



Harry Burgos

Harry Burgos, Owner of CNB Renovations in Ladson, S.C., has been in the tile industry for about four years. But already, he is staking a claim to excellence through education, choosing to be a humble leader for fellow tradespeople, a source of reliable information for consumers and contractors, and helping to forge a clearer path for Spanish-speaking contractors through initiatives underway at NTCA.

Operating boom trucks led to work as a handyman and remodeler for Burgos. The latter introduced him to tile, where he became “fascinated with the combination of craftsmanship, precision, creativity, and technical knowledge involved,” he shared.

Hungry for knowledge, Burgos has taken a deep dive into learning. “One thing this industry has taught me is how much more there always is to learn,” he said. That mindset is part of what separates CNB Renovations. “I don’t ever want to reach a point where I think I know everything. We invest heavily in education, training, industry standards, and improving our installation methods,” he said, adding, “The more I learn, the more I realize how deep this trade really goes.”

And he is willing to share this information, “using social media to educate homeowners and other contractors about proper installation methods and the reasoning behind them,” he noted.



Before this project came to CNB Renovations, a previous tile installation had failed and required extensive repairs. Rather than simply address the visible damage, CNB determined the underlying problems, removed the compromised portions of the installation, and properly rebuilt the affected areas before moving forward with the new finishes. The remodel included large-format wall tile, a tiled shower, herringbone-pattern floor tile, and extensive work around the existing tub and architectural features of the bathroom. This project illustrates a vital lesson for Burgos: what you can’t see when a tile installation is finished is often just as important as what you can. Proper substrate prep, waterproofing, movement accommodation, and installation methods are ultimately what determine whether a beautiful installation will perform for years to come.

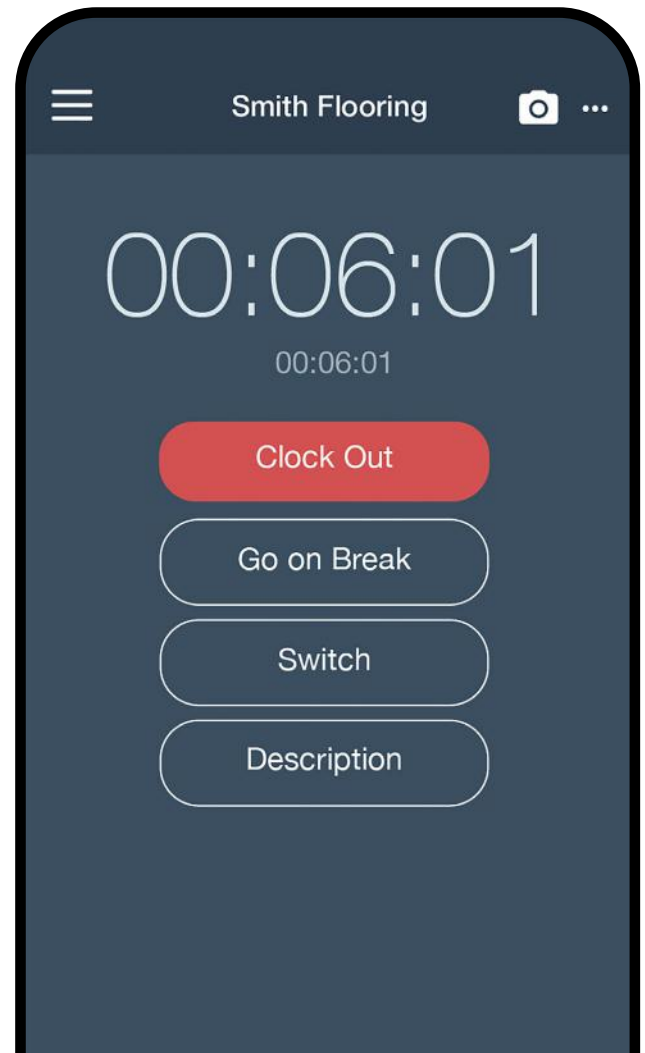
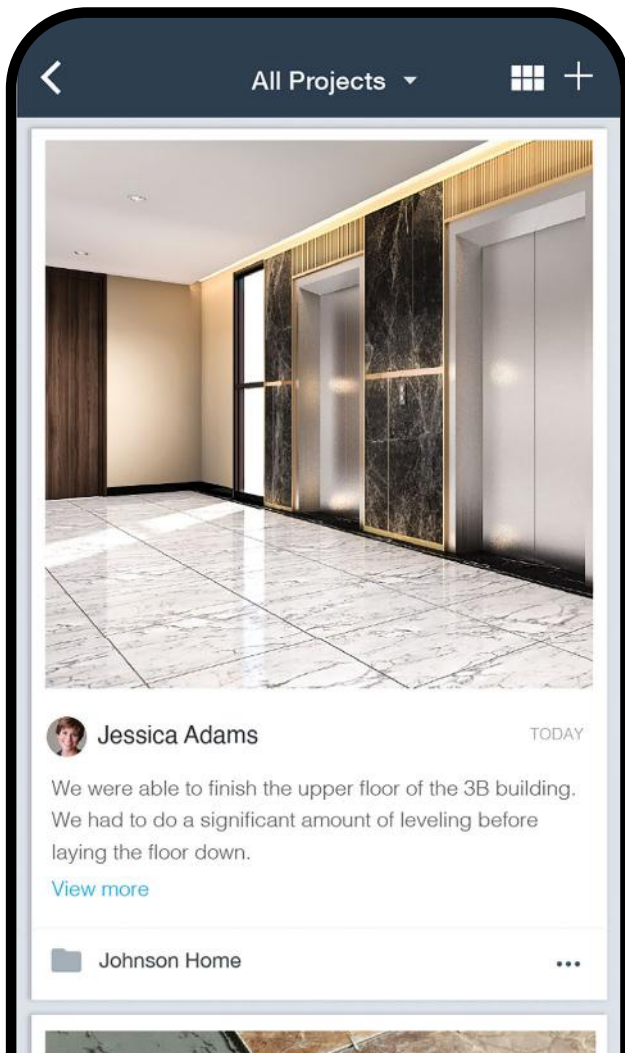
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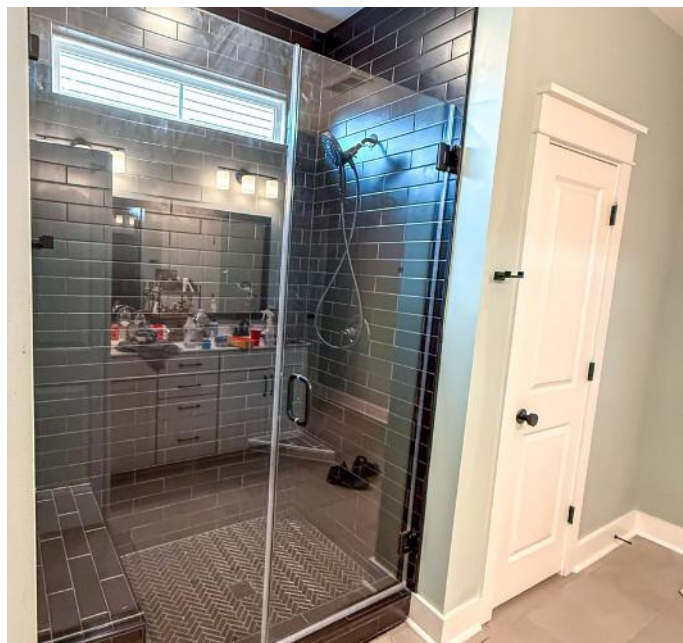
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This homeowner wanted to reuse the existing custom glass enclosure — leaving very little room for error because the dimensions of the finished shower needed to closely match the original installation. CNB carefully planned the substrate prep, waterproofing, layout, curb, and finished-wall dimensions around the existing glass. The shower was rebuilt with black subway-style tile on the walls and a contrasting herringbone mosaic on the shower floor. With careful planning and installation, CNB was able to successfully reinstall the original glass enclosure. This project reflects how decisions made during the earliest stages of a tile installation can directly affect the finished product.

CNB Renovations

Today, CNB Renovations specializes in residential remodeling throughout the Charleston, S.C., area, with a primary focus on bathroom remodels and custom showers, plus flooring, kitchen renovations, and other residential remodeling projects.

"Tile has become a major specialty for us, particularly shower systems, waterproofing, large-format tile, and technical installations where proper preparation and attention to detail really matter," he explained.

Burgos balances being a business owner with being a craftsman. He's transitioned from "wearing every hat" as a small-business owner to creating systems, delegating and stepping into the role of an owner, while continuing to grow as an installer.

He tackles rising material costs, scheduling challenges, and customer expectations through communication, education, and constantly improving processes.

"2026 has been a year of growth for me personally and professionally," he said. "I'm trying to become a better contractor while also building CNB Renovations into a stronger company."

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This complete bathroom transformation allowed the contractor to combine several different materials, patterns, and finishes into one cohesive space. The shower features vertically-textured green wall tile, a contrasting hexagonal mosaic shower floor, a tiled bench with a stone cap, and a frameless sliding glass enclosure. Wood-look porcelain tile was used outside the shower to bring warmth into the space while complementing the green tile. In a project like this, it's key to make sure all of the individual design elements work together while maintaining proper layout, waterproofing, drainage, and clean transitions between materials. This project represents what Burgos enjoys about remodeling: taking a space that looked completely different when the crew arrived and seeing the transformation come together one detail at a time.

Why NTCA?

Burgos joined NTCA last year to capitalize on the education that NTCA offers.

"I wanted to surround myself with people who had more experience than me and learn from contractors who take the craft seriously," he said. "The NTCA gave me access not only to technical information and training, but to people who have spent decades in this industry."

Burgos said this "helps accelerate growth while also giving me opportunities to share what I've learned with others coming up behind me."

Though he considers himself a student of the trade, and is deeply grateful for all he can learn, he also has information to share.

"You don't need 20 or 30 years in the industry before you have something valuable to contribute," he said. "Sometimes newer contractors bring a different perspective, different ways of communicating, and different ideas about how we can reach the next generation of installers."

He's putting that principle into practice by becoming an NTCA Regional Director for Region 3 (NC, SC, and GA) next month at Tile Solutions Plus. He sees it as an opportunity to learn and contribute at the same time.

Reaching Spanish-speaking contractors

As a Hispanic contractor himself, one of the things Burgos is passionate about is reaching Spanish-speaking installers to build relationships, create education that feels accessible for this population, and show Spanish-speaking contractors they have a place in organizations like NTCA.

"There are incredibly talented installers throughout this country who may not have the same access to technical education, business resources, training, or industry relationships simply because much of that information has historically been presented in English," he said. He'd like to see education, mentorship, representation and, ultimately, pathways created for more of those contractors to become educators and leaders themselves.

This exciting and important process is already underway. Burgos is working with the NTCA on several efforts aimed at better connecting with and supporting Spanish-speaking contractors. (See the Business story on page 12 in this issue).

Making the vision concrete

Burgos finds tremendous satisfaction when he stands back at the end of a project and looks at something that started as an idea, a drawing—or sometimes just an empty room—and realizes he built it with his hands.

"Tile is unforgiving. Details matter. A decision you make early in an installation can affect something several steps later, so when everything finally comes together, there's a real sense of accomplishment," he said.

Satisfaction doesn't end with what he creates with tile, but encompasses how he helps others learn.

"Four years ago, I was the guy searching for answers and trying to figure out the right way to do things," he said. "I still am, in many ways. The difference now is that sometimes I'm also the person someone else reaches out to with a question."

"Being able to continue learning while passing along what I've already learned is probably one of the things I enjoy most about where this career is taking me," he concluded. **TL**

A network diagram with various icons connected by lines. The icons include a speech bubble, gears, a smartphone, a laptop, a web browser (www), a mail icon (@), and the number 4. The background is a teal diagonal band.

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Residential remodeling considerations for tile installations

By Mark Heinlein, Contributor



There ain't nothin' easy or simple about tile. Tile is a permanent finish. It's beautiful. It's durable. It lasts a long time when properly installed. It is highly desirable. It increases the value of a structure.

Installing it professionally is a great way to make a living.

People generally love their homes. Your home is your refuge, your shelter. Your place to rest, relax, enjoy friends, raise a family, house your goldfish, display your Pokémon collection, store your stuff.

As homes age, they need maintenance, and updates are desirable. That decades-old style might or might not function well after all those years of use. An update could do the home and its occupants a world of good. An upgrade will enhance the life being lived in the home. Sometimes, it's hard to build or find a new home to buy. Sticking with the one you've got and putting some fresh love into it can make good sense.

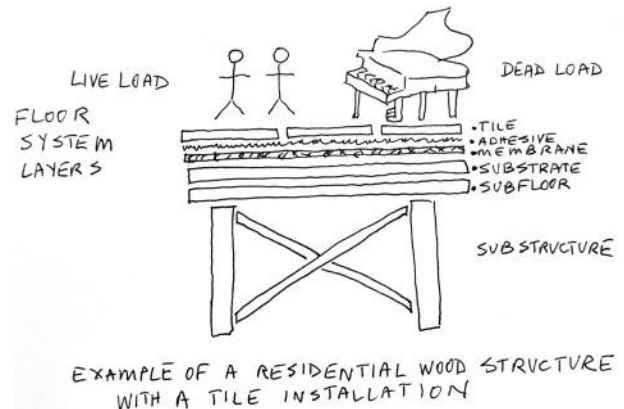
After working primarily as a residential remodeling tile contractor, and now as a homeowner who is currently remodeling a 1960s-era house, I have run into many instances of sprucing up a home by putting tile in places that didn't have tile before—and which weren't designed to support a tile installation of any type. Sound familiar?

So, let's take a basic look at substrates and substructure for setting tile where tile has never gone before, and on a structure that wasn't designed for tile.

A firm foundation

Tile is strong stuff. Some tile is stronger than others, but no tile that I am aware of is designed to be self-supporting. Tile's job is to be a beautiful, durable surface finish. The layers of the system and the design and condition of the structure beneath it must be able to properly support the installation as if it were to be there for decades—at least for the intended life of the installation or the intended life of the structure.

As a professional contractor doing work for others—unless your business model is to change your company name and phone number after every installation—you



Simple sketch showing multiple aspects of a typical residential floor tile installation.



Former bedroom after demo. Two closets were removed to make room for a shower and a water closet. The subfloor is 1/2" plywood on 16" OC 2"x 8" joists. The subfloor was not flat under the former closet floors due to floor joists overlapping at the carrier beam. The structure had sagged and the joist ends were not properly fastened at the time of original installation, so over time they pushed up on the subfloor and created high spots.

should understand the following common considerations for every tile installation. This basic list will help you avoid callbacks for failed installations. Refer to Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the *National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) Reference Manual* for detailed information and guidance to help you with matters related to tile substrates, backerboards, underlayment, and membranes.



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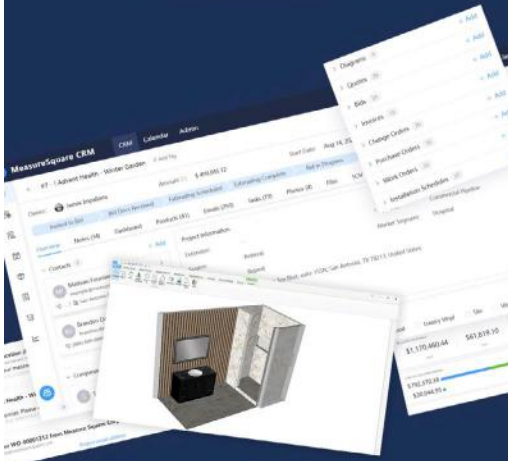
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High spots were corrected by properly fastening the existing joist overlaps, planing the tops of the joists, and sistering the joists to support new subfloor material.



New subfloor material added on top of the joist structure.



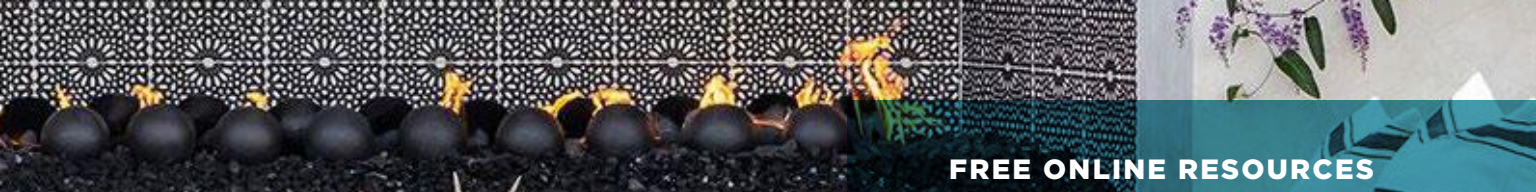
The 1/2" subfloor is flattened by sanding high areas and ridges and applying a rapid-setting patch to low areas. This was done in preparation for adding a new 3/4" plywood subfloor layer to reduce deflection between the joists, and as the support for the tile system to be installed on top.



3/4" plywood installed on top of existing 1/2" original subfloor.

- **Load and intended use:** The structure beneath the tile must be able to support the tile and intended use of the installation, including the people using it.
- **Deflection:** The amount of up-and-down or in-and-out movement of the horizontal or vertical structure beneath the tile is called deflection. The amount of deflection across the entire span of an installation and also between supporting structural members like joists or studs is limited. The *NTCA Reference Manual's* "General Statement on Deflection" is a great place to get started with your understanding of deflection. You will also find that the *Tile Council of North America (TCNA) Handbook for Ceramic Glass and Stone Tile Installation* states the minimum deflection ratings for installation methods wherever deflection is a necessary requirement for you to consider.
- **Bonding:** The tile has to be very well stuck to the surface beneath it (known as the substrate), or it will come off. The adhesive has to be the right one, properly prepared and applied. The top of the substrate and bottom of the tile have to be clean with no puddles of water. Learn more about this by attending a free NTCA training event.
- **Movement:** Structures are not usually completely rigid. They are designed to move. Tile doesn't love movement.





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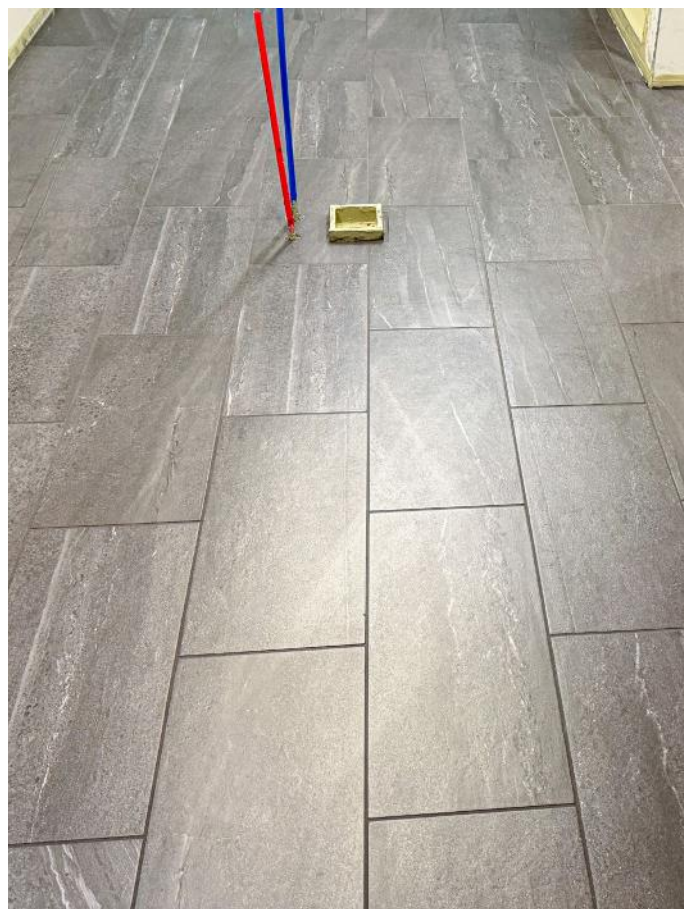
Waterproofing and flattening patch were applied on top of the new plywood subfloor to waterproof the entire project area, in accordance with material manufacturer instructions. At this point, the next step is installation of an underlayment and under-tile electrical heating system.



This double laminated beam was installed directly beneath the 2" x 8" floor joists under the entire room to support the additional weight of this remodeling installation and the bathroom appliances.

Placing a hard, durable tile surface on a structure that is designed to expand, contract, and move up and down, in and out, left and right, can make for real problems sooner or later. There are ways to design and install tile systems to be sure they stay intact (within limits) while stuck to a structure. Learn more about this in tile industry methods and standards, or in the *TCNA Handbook* and *NTCA Reference Manual* or at NTCA or CTEF training programs.

- **Membranes:** I can't think of a situation where it is not a good idea to install or apply a membrane directly beneath a tile. Membranes are good for helping with:
 - ☐ In-plane movement (side-to-side/lateral)
 - ☐ Keeping water and steam away from the supporting structure
 - ☐ Separating the tile layer from expansion in the structure beneath it
 - ☐ Bonding/adhering the tile to the substrate with adhesive
- **Flatness:** This is so important to understand. Read up on this in tile industry methods and standards in the aforementioned publications, and learn about this at NTCA and CTEF training events. Participate in the training and ask many questions.
- **Layout, joints, cuts, chips, grouting, and finish work:** A technically-perfect installation beneath the tile can be considered a failure if the finished appearance is not on par with excellence as defined by accepted tile industry recommendations for handcrafted-tile installations, which are becoming more popular. Owning, understanding, and implementing a few pages from the tile industry methods and standards can be a tile professional's best friend. The NTCA technical support team is your guide in such matters.



The finished floor, installed and grouted, transformed the space from a bedroom into a bathroom with a shower and water closet.

In the December issue of *TileLetter*, we'll further explore the complexities of being a residential remodeling contractor who does tile installations. **TL**



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Tile-over-tile installation DO'S and DON'TS

QUESTION

I am remodeling a residential bathroom, and the homeowner has asked if we can install the new porcelain tile directly over the existing ceramic tile floor to avoid the mess and expense of demolition.

The existing floor appears to be in good condition. I don't notice any cracked tiles, loose tiles, or hollow sounds, and the floor seems solid when walked on.

Is installing tile over existing tile an acceptable industry practice? If so, what should I be looking for before deciding whether the existing tile is a suitable substrate? Are there any ANSI standards or TCNA methods that address this type of installation?

ANSWER

Thanks for reaching out with your question about whether new tile can be installed directly over an existing tile floor. At first glance, it appears to be a simple yes-or-no question. But in reality, the answer depends on much more than the fact that there is already tile on the floor.

The real question isn't whether tile can be bonded to tile—it's whether the existing tile installation is suitable to serve as the substrate for a new tile installation.

This is an important distinction, because every new tile installation is only as good as what lies beneath it. If the existing installation has underlying deficiencies, installing new tile over it simply transfers those problems to the finished installation.



A bonding primer or mechanical abrasion may be recommended to improve the bonding surface of existing tile to prepare for a tile-over-tile install.

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Evaluate the existing floor

Before considering a tile-over-tile installation, the existing floor should be carefully evaluated. The installer should determine whether the tile is well bonded, free of significant cracks, and stable under load. Hollow-sounding tiles, loose tiles, evidence of movement, moisture-related issues, or an existing installation that has experienced repeated failures should all be viewed as warning signs that further investigation—or complete removal—may be necessary.

Deflection considerations

Equally important is determining whether the supporting structure meets the required deflection criteria for the type of tile being installed. Covering an existing tile floor does not improve the structural performance of the floor system. If the structure does not meet the minimum requirements for ceramic or porcelain tile, installing another layer of tile will not correct the underlying issue.

The bonding surface

The condition of the tile surface itself must also be considered. Most glazed ceramic and porcelain tile surfaces are dense and non-absorptive, making proper surface preparation essential. Contaminants such as waxes, sealers, grease, household cleaners, or other bond breakers must be removed. In many cases, a bonding primer or mechanical abrasion may be recommended to improve the bonding surface. Installers should always follow the mortar manufacturer's installation instructions regarding the required method of surface preparation.

Floor flatness

Floor flatness should not be overlooked. Existing tile floors often contain lippage or irregularities that become more problematic when installing today's large-format tile. Rather than assuming the new tile will hide these imperfections, installers should verify that the substrate meets the flatness requirements established by ANSI A108.02 before installation begins. Correcting flatness issues before installation is typically much easier than attempting to compensate for them while setting tile.

Floor height considerations

Another consideration is the increase in finished floor height. Adding another layer of tile affects transitions to adjacent flooring, door clearances, appliances, cabinetry, plumbing fixtures, and accessibility. These seemingly



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minor details can become significant challenges if they are not addressed during the planning stage.

Selecting the proper mortar

When all of these conditions have been evaluated and the existing installation is determined to be sound, tiling over tile can be a practical and successful installation method. However, installers should recognize that not every mortar is approved for this application. Always consult the mortar manufacturer's product data sheet to verify that the setting material is suitable for bonding to existing ceramic or porcelain tile and follow all installation instructions regarding surface preparation, mortar selection, cure times, and environmental conditions.

The NTCA's recommendations are based on the collective guidance found in the *TCNA Handbook*, ANSI standards, *NTCA Reference Manual* best practices, and the written installation instructions provided by product manufacturers. No single document can determine whether every tile-over-tile installation is acceptable.

Instead, success depends on carefully evaluating the existing conditions and selecting an installation system that is appropriate for the specific project.

In many cases, installing tile over existing tile can save considerable time, reduce demolition costs, and minimize disruption to the homeowner. However, those benefits should never come at the expense of proper evaluation and preparation. Taking the time to determine whether the existing installation is truly a suitable substrate is one of the most important steps in ensuring the long-term performance of the finished tile installation.

Before installing tile over existing tile, ask yourself:

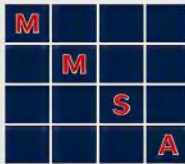
- Is the existing tile well bonded?
- Does the structure meet the required deflection criteria?
- Is the substrate flat enough for the new tile?
- Have all contaminants been removed?
- Have transitions and finished floor height been considered?
- Does the mortar manufacturer approve this application?
- Are there any movement joints that need to be honored or re-established? **TL**

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Remembering JIM ISAMINGER

By NTCA Staff



Former NTCA Executive Director Joe Tarver (L) and Jim Isaminger in 2002 when Isaminger was awarded the plaque for his service as NTCA President.

Jim Isaminger, former Owner and President of DMI Tile and Marble in Birmingham, Ala., passed away Aug. 5 at the age of 91. He was a valued member of the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) and his local business community.

DMI Tile and Marble earned national recognition for installation excellence and was an original Five-Star Contractor of the NTCA. In fact, DMI's Contractor Safety Program helped lay the foundation for NTCA's Five-Star Accredited Contractor program, which recognizes the top tile contractors around the country.

Isaminger is also credited with having one of the first open-shop apprenticeship programs. His curriculum was approved by the U.S. Department of Labor, and much of it was used to develop the NTCA Apprenticeship Program with the help of Dan Welch of Welch Tile and Marble in Kent City, Mich., and NTCA Curriculum Director Becky Serbin.

Isaminger and his wife Marilyn, along with son Terry and other key DMI Tile and Marble employees, were highly involved in educating local middle and high school students about career opportunities in the tile industry. Many of these students entered the DMI Tile and Marble Apprenticeship Program. NTCA used many of the materials they used in the Birmingham school district to begin promoting the trade at a national level.

Isaminger was named NTCA Tile Person of the Year in 1996 and received NTCA's prestigious Ring of Honor in 2005. He was President of NTCA from 2000-2002 and was instrumental in hiring current NTCA Executive Director Bart Bettiga in 2001.



Jim Isaminger

Isaminger also authored a book called *Point Up: Points to Ponder for the Tile Contractor Volume I* and allowed NTCA to sell it via the association's online store.

Fond remembrances from the industry

Isaminger was well loved in the industry. "If there was a Mount Rushmore for NTCA volunteer leaders, Jim Isaminger would certainly be on it," Bettiga said.

Isaminger's widow, Marilyn, said he was a passionate advocate for the tile and stone industry and its subcontractors. "His involvement with the industry, from the days of the Southern Tile Terrazzo Marble Association (STTMCA), Association of Tile Terrazzo Marble Contractors and Affiliates (ATTMCA) and finally the NTCA to the day he retired, gave him energy and satisfaction throughout his career, as did the many friendships we developed over the years," she said. "He will be greatly missed."

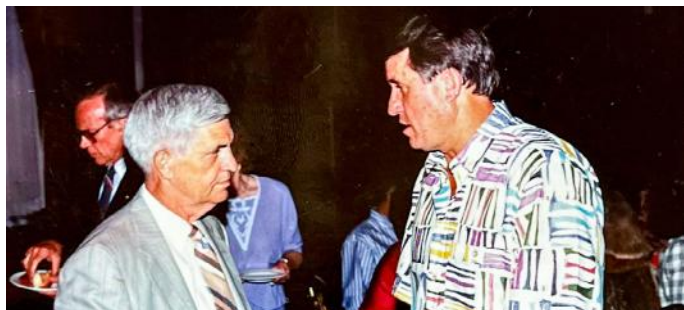
Isaminger leaves behind a lasting legacy. Thanks to the apprenticeship program he spearheaded, his mark on the industry will be felt for generations. When he and Marilyn began writing the apprenticeship program guidelines in



Marilyn and Jim Isaminger. Marilyn was instrumental in writing the apprenticeship program in 1995, and still proofreads *TileLetter* magazine for NTCA.



(L to R) Bart Bettiga, Paul Dinkel, Scott Carothers, Jim Isaminger, and Joe Tarver at the NTCA Ring of Honor Ceremony in 2005. Dinkel received the Association Ring of Honor and Isaminger received the Contractor Ring of Honor.



(L to R) Jim Isaminger with Doyle Dickerson at an industry event.

1995, his vision was, “Anyone who has completed a Bureau of Training-approved apprenticeship program successfully can go anywhere in the United States and find a job within days. Earn while you learn, and you won’t incur \$100,000 or more in tuition debt,” she explained.

“Fifteen years later, we had promoted 25 apprentice tile setters, some of whom went on to start their own businesses,” she added. “Through the team effort of NTCA and CTEF and their leadership, that number has grown exponentially.”

Bettiga underscored Isaminger’s contributions. “There are currently several apprenticeship programs administered around the country utilizing NTCA curriculum guidelines. A few of our members have received workforce development grants, and NTCA and CTEF are working together to secure further support of apprenticeship development in the future. None of this would have been possible without the work done by Jim Isaminger and his team at DMI Tile and Marble many years ago. NTCA is indebted to his philanthropy and support over many years.”

Scott Carothers, Academic Director for CTEF, remembers Jim Isaminger as a true icon who birthed several ‘firsts’ in the ceramic tile industry, including the aforementioned apprentice training program that was BAT-approved in his company, DMI Tile and Marble, along with his employee safety program, which served as a model in the tile industry.

“Jim was a friend of mine for almost as long as I was an

NTCA member,” Carothers said. “Jim was the Southern gentleman who took the new Northern boy under his wing, offering friendship, knowledge, and guidance in the workings of the NTCA. When I was appointed to the Executive Committee, Jim provided the necessary wisdom and advice to assist me in eventually becoming the president of the NTCA immediately after him. He was all about educating and training people within his company as well as those in the broader scope of the tile industry.

“Whenever I saw or called Jim, he would always say, ‘Well, how are you doing, son?’” Carothers added. “He always showed compassion and a readiness to help people who were willing to learn. We will miss Jim Isaminger and can’t thank him enough for all that he did for individuals and the craft that he loved.”

NTCA Executive Director Emeritus Joe Tarver added, “Time and space constraints prevent telling everything I would like to say about Jim Isaminger. Our lives were inextricably entwined for over 65 years, all related to the tile industry. Jim’s uncle, H. L. (Carload) Cooke, was the first true independent tile distributor in Memphis, Tenn.— Jim’s first employer and my largest customer when I was in manufacturing. That led to Jim opening his own distributing business. We developed a close friendship that has lasted a lifetime.



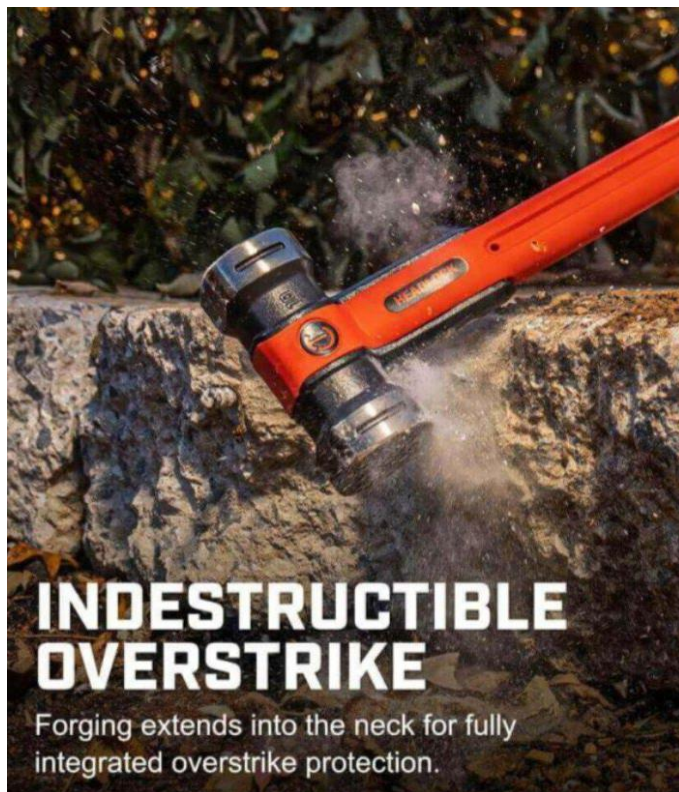
In 2007, Isaminger hosted children of NTCA staff and executive officers on a fishing trip. He’s shown with a fresh catch, and also listening to Bart Bettiga’s son Eli.

“From customers, to attendees at Southern Tile Contractors (STCA) meetings and conventions, to my becoming Executive Director and Jim going through the chairs of NTCA, our enduring friendship is evidence of similar goals and objectives,” he continued. “Jim played a pivotal role in the hiring of Bart Bettiga, bringing together two highly talented and motivated individuals to further NTCA’s presence and importance in this industry.

“Jim’s contributions to NTCA and our industry are well documented, recognized and deserved,” Tarver concluded. “You ran the good race and fought the good fight. Rest well, my good and faithful friend.” **TL**



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Crescent has launched HEADLOCK™ Sledgehammer, a breakthrough in heavy-striking tools designed to solve one of the most critical jobsite needs: head separation from the handle. The HEADLOCK system features a fully-encapsulated forged head with a multi-point locking mechanism that delivers a secure connection between the steel head, fiberglass core, and handle—eliminating the risk of head break-off.



Florida Tile

Florida Tile's new Threadscape collection reimagines the artistry of textiles in a porcelain tile. The collection features a stunning array of field tiles available in solid colors and sophisticated plaids. Threadscape is offered in three formats: 3.75" x 12", 12" x 24", and 24" x 48". Two mosaic styles—an offset basketweave and a semi-oval—along with three trim pieces—bullnose, cove base, and cove base corner—complete the collection.



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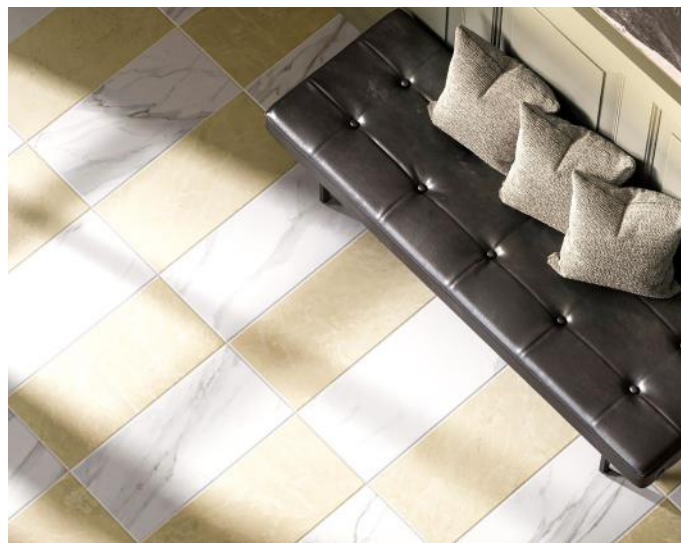


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Portobello America

Portobello America has introduced the Arca collection, a wood-look porcelain series made in the USA that captures natural timber's warmth and texture. Developed under the brand's "Living Home" philosophy, the collection includes Alpine, a warm, maple-inspired colorway with subtle blush undertones and a whitewashed finish, and comes in 8" x 48", 24" x 48", and mosaic formats.



AHF/Crossville

AHF Products' new Crossville® Reunited™ glazed porcelain tile collection features authentic stone character and a silky FeatherSoft™ finish and rectified edges. Three warm stone visuals include: Apuano (creamy white Calacatta marble look with grey veining), Oro (ivory marble look with beige/gold veining), and Avorio (shown—lightly veined limestone look with a warm palette). Reunited features 22 SKUs, versatile formats including a new 6" x 24" format, coordinated mosaics, a complete trim package, and an exterior option with Avorio Exterior.



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CLiMIT's new 7-Day NOAA Weather Forecasts and Heat Index Recording provides contractors and safety teams with clear, defensible jobsite condition tracking. It displays project-specific forecast highs and lows directly in CLiMIT using National Weather Service (NOAA) data—the same source OSHA uses for weather claims. This helps users track real-time conditions, protect crews, and streamline documentation.

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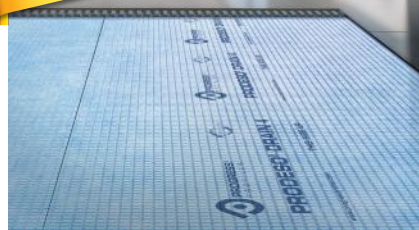


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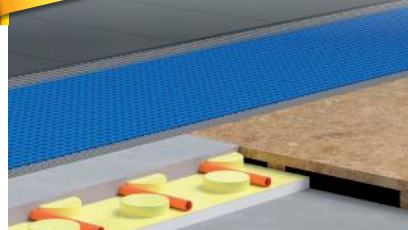
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mindset matters:

Maintain the hardware

A recent Mindset Matters post reminds us that sometimes we can't "think" our way into feeling better through analyzing emotions or grappling with our thoughts. Our brains are literally embodied organs that require nourishment, sleep, play, and movement, all of which impact mood.

Sometimes, what will bring about a mindset shift is getting away from our screens, going dancing or for a walk, prioritizing sleep, and eating food that truly nourishes you. Maybe it's stepping away from the problem for a while to give your brain a chance to regroup.

Retooling the software and upgrading your thoughts is a useful process, but remember to make sure that the hardware running the program is properly maintained and cared for as well.



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