

The Stocklists

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with *FlooringNews*

BRITAIN'S No. 1 FLOORCOVERING MAGAZINE FOR THE RETAIL AND CONTRACT MARKET



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Flooring the IT demons

Flooring retailers are losing their staid image by increasingly embracing the benefits provided by new technology.

With the pace of technological advancement continuing to gather momentum, this is increasingly encouraging involvement from all areas of the business world.



Kährs - Oak Nouveau Charcoal

Harvey Booth, Kährs (UK) sales manager, says the content of both e-commerce and info-only sites is improving, as are the more generic sites which serve as research tools.

'Although websites can increase presence and, in many ways, create a level playing field, research into what's behind a site should also play a part,' he says. 'Our website has transformed over recent years. It now includes a library of professional resources, as well as a virtual showroom. A powerful, new dealer search mechanism is also helping to drive sales to our customers' showrooms, which is essential in the current climate.'

Computers for Flooring's Chris England highlights the benefits of dedicated software, having searched widely for systems during his 16 years as a flooring retailer. 'I searched for many years to find the right system, not only to assist in day to day company activities, such as managing fitters or controlling stock, but also to allow my company to grow with the added efficiency data collating and filtering provides. The Carman management system does just that and

more!' he says. Growing demand to work online with customers and suppliers means businesses unable to provide this will suffer. 'With the ability to email customers and suppliers directly from the Carman system in seconds, users find they have more time to chase existing quotes to maximise work output and increase profitability.'

Modern flooring retailers are looking to install cost effective IT solutions to assist them and Carman is the tool that will help run their business efficiently at the click of a button, England concludes.

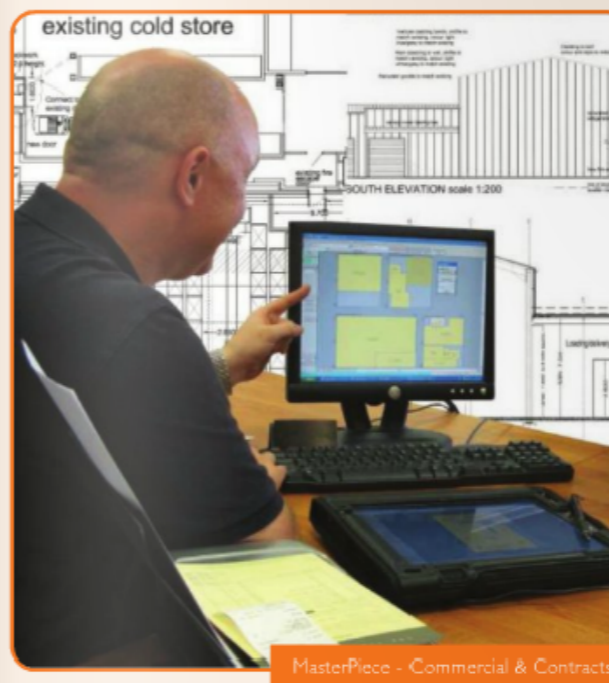
Laser Measure's Nigel Welsh says that technology, specifically estimation software, and flooring businesses have previously reacted like oil and water. 'What is encouraging for companies like Laser Measure UK is the value flooring companies are now placing on estimation software, lasers, tablet PC's and the latest buzz word "The Cloud",' he says. Without question the manual process takes skill and a certain talent for both sales and planning. Technology, however, raises the professional bar, reduces mistakes, increasing efficiency and collaboration. 'The bottom line, customer experience is paramount during any sales process and why not use every tool in the bag to make a business stand out in the crowd?' he continues. 'Laser Measure UK's parent company, Laser Measure Australia, have successfully introduced planning and estimating software to all of the major flooring groups and many commercial companies over the past four years.'

MasterPiece Systems agrees that technology take up is now considered essential among forward looking retailers, creating a lean, streamlined operation. Aside from the obvious time savings from automated planning, estimates, fitting sheets and printed plans, the MasterPiece system can also generate more business, says the company. Measuring up, planning and quoting on a tablet PC in the customer's home, combined with

immediacy of data retrieval for return customers creates a professional effect, as does amending quotations at speed. Emailing estimates directly from MasterPiece is efficient and makes the retailer stand out from the crowd, the company states, with many more advantages included.



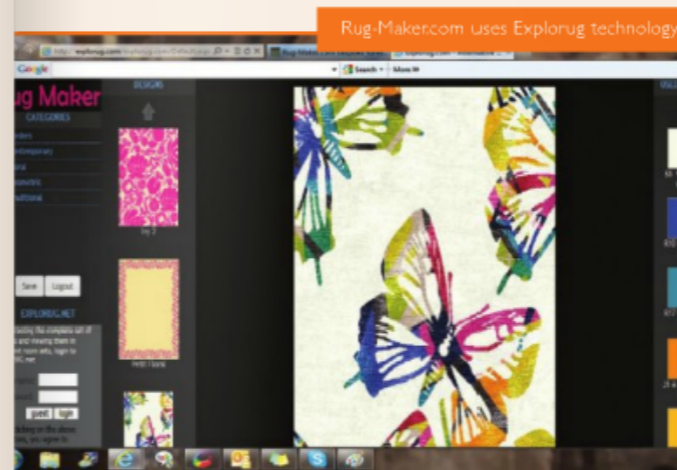
Floor Estimate Pro from Laser Measure



MasterPiece - Commercial & Contracts

For the contract flooring organisation the benefits are different but no less profound, helping companies to compete more effectively. MasterPiece dramatically cuts the time to take off measurements from a PDF floor plan or digitiser and also reduces wastage. Uniquely, MasterPiece enables the job to be quoted in the format based on 'rates' demanded by the large commercial customer, the company explains, and also allows multiple permutations for the same job, including plans and costings. The scalable, modular solution can be tailored to individual businesses and adapted as they evolve, says MasterPiece Systems.

Neil Gilmartin of Reflex Data Systems states that technology uptake is increasing, particularly among multi-site retailers who are looking to manage stock across different locations.



Rug-Maker.com uses Explorug technology

"Technology, specifically estimation software, and flooring businesses have previously reacted like oil and water. What is encouraging is the value flooring companies are now placing on these systems"

'Most flooring retailers compete on two points: value for money and customer service,' he says. 'Where prices are already matched, or profit margins are so low that prices alone cannot guarantee sales, customer service is the key to repeat business and word of mouth recommendation. When a customer finds a floorcovering they like in store, they want to know there and then what the availability is and when it can be delivered/fitted.'

Technology enables retailers to immediately give the customer all of the information they need to commit to the sale. Allowing a customer to leave a store on a Saturday with a promise of a phone call on Monday or Tuesday to advise on availability and fitting date will now almost always result in a lost sale, he concludes.

Richard Mathias explains how combining software with rug manufacture has enabled his company to offer its services on an international basis. Rug-Maker.com utilises explorUG and Galaincha software for design and pre-processing work, providing customised hand knotted rugs. The high quality representation provided by the software has enabled the company to communicate flawlessly with customers, he says, boosting confidence in the process and providing further sales growth.

Manufacturers are able to use their own factory colour sets and accurately estimate consumption, while designers can view designs in different colours and finishing options prior to weaving. Retailers can also work with clients to customise product to create the ideal design, then simply email this to the manufacturer for production.

'The software and what we manufacture has enabled us to become one of the leading hand made rug manufacturers in the world,' says Mathias.

For more information about featured products:

- Kährs • www.kahrs.com • 0800 587 2027
- Laser Measure • www.lasermeasure.co.uk • 01254 916139
- MasterPiece Systems • www.masterpiece-systems.com • 01739 355831
- Reflex Data Systems • www.reflexdata.co.uk • 01482 881152
- Rug Maker • www.rug-maker.com • 01727 841046