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Ways to Cut Costs Without Sacrificing Quality

by Peter L. Mosca

We are all health conscious today. For businesses, "trimming the fat" is also important. In fact, it is a necessary step for success, especially during down markets. Some companies offer employee incentives for ideas that cut costs. Others review purchasing decisions and look to new suppliers for more cost-efficient products that are at or above the quality normally purchased. One area where builders can cut costs without sacrificing quality, and meet a growing consumer demand, is in laminate flooring, where suppliers are also doing their best to gain traction in this burgeoning market.

According to [Global Industry Analysts, Inc.](#), (GIA), one of the world's largest portfolios of research reports in terms of topics covered, geographic regions analyzed, companies profiled, and pages published, growth in the laminate flooring market is being driven by cost advantages over other products made of stone, wood, ceramics, and vinyl. It projects that the global laminate flooring market will reach 1.68 billion square meters by 2010.

"Growth is mainly due to the product's resistance to denting, scratching, cigarette burns, staining, and fading. Manufacturers are increasingly developing a range of products that fulfill the requirements of the commercial sector," a GIA report concludes. "Development of glueless laminates, technological advancements, and enhanced moisture resistance are generating interest among end-users. The trend is likely to be boosted by increasing demand for products from countries such as China." The GIA also noted that enhancements in technologies such as embossed registration and texturing is offering a cost-efficient way of attaining the looks of ceramics, tiles, and hardwood.

As the technology, design capability and likability



Columnist Peter L. Mosca



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of laminate flooring continues to expand, choosing the best laminate flooring possible is an important decision for builders. Fortunately, the [North American Laminate Flooring Association](#) (NALFA) has developed the NALFA Certification Seal to assist in laminate flooring decisions. Laminate flooring products that successfully pass rigorous testing are outfitted with the NALFA Certification Seal. Performance requirements include but are not limited to: static load, thickness swell, impact resistance, light resistance, cleanability/stain resistance, wear resistance, dimensional tolerances and castor chair resistance. Products are approved in three categories: commercial, light commercial and residential.

"There is an abundance of laminate flooring products on the market today," explained E. C. "Bill" Dearing, president of NALFA. "Although this offers builders and homeowners numerous alternatives with varying price points, design styles and product specifications, it also raises the likelihood of selecting a product that may cause setbacks on the job site or cause difficulties for the homeowner."

Suppliers are doing their best to meet this growing demand. Just last month, [BuildDirect](#), a leading online wholesaler of building supplies, is offering a new line of high quality laminate flooring at prices up to 30 percent off. "We've always made aggressive pricing a priority," said Rob Banks, executive-vice president, sales for BuildDirect. "But I think what really differentiates this product are the top quality colors and finishes that we have made available. New colors range from Fir to Indonesian Teak. Handscraped effects, textured surfaces, and narrow board styles make them even more stylish choices. It's not often that you find laminate flooring that looks this good, and unheard of to see it at the price point we have been able to establish for these new Lamton lines. We are sure this is a product that will be a strong seller for retailers and distributors and very popular with architects, designers, builders and contractors."

Producers, as well, are banking on the continued desire for laminated flooring. Recently, [Mohawk Industries, Inc.](#) completed the purchase of four wood flooring plants from Columbia Forest Products. According to Mohawk, this addition will allow it to increase its participation in the \$2.4 billion wood flooring market; a pre-finished U.S. wood market it anticipates will grow at a rate of



six- to eight-percent over the long term.

Owning a quality home is very important; and a home equipped with quality material like laminate flooring is an added feature. By staying on top of consumer trends and what suppliers and producers are offering, builders can cut costs without sacrificing quality.

GIA's, "Laminate Flooring: A Global Strategic Business Report," provides a comprehensive review of market trends, drivers, challenges, product profile, players, competition, recent developments, mergers, acquisitions, and other strategic industry activities. Analysis is presented for major geographic markets such as United States, Japan, France, Germany, the UK, Italy, Spain, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Analytics are provided in terms of end-use segments including New Housing Starts, Residential Replacement (Including DIY Installations), and Commercial Markets.

Published: August 27, 2007

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Peter began his business career writing for several New Jersey newspapers, where he cultivated his interviewing and reporting skills. From there, he joined Treasury Communications, an east coast consulting firm. He was later employed by the New York State Society of CPAs and the New Jersey Association of Realtors, where he earned three National Association of Realtors (NAR) Certificates of Scholastic Achievement.

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