

Distributor Perspective

NAFCD Adapting to a Changing Industry

By Joe Reddington

The definition of distribution has changed over the past 10 to 15 years.

We were reminded of this during the recently held 38th Annual Meeting of the North American Association of Floor Covering Distributors (NAFCD) during a panel discussion of industry experts that included Luigi Di Geso of MAPEI Americas, Mark Hollinger of Mannington Mills, who was substituting for Tom Davis, Randy Merritt of Shaw Industries, and Paul Murfin of Armstrong Floor Products. These floor industry gurus explained that the influx of manufacturers, agents, and large retailers all offer distribution services to the floor covering industry. Add the internet to this mix of distribution entities and you have a situation that makes it very difficult to determine who, what and why companies should belong as members of the NAFCD.

This past year we have been tasked with doing just that: Re-defining what is an NAFCD member. The association will be reviewing the current by-laws to make sure that our wording is not so exclusive that it restricts growth and diversity for the future.

Next year's convention is a great example. NAFCD and the North American Building Material Distribution Association (NBMDA) will co-locate their respective 2010 conventions billed as "One event, two organizations and three days of relationship-building and education." The joint event will be held November 16-18, 2010 at The Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colo., and will feature a unique blend of networking functions, distribution management education, exhibits and business-to-business appointments. Uniting into one event builds upon the existing synergy between NAFCD and NBMDA while still maintaining their unique, individual identities.

Distributors will have the opportunity to interact with a larger concentration of their peers from across North America while also interacting with senior executives from the leading manufacturers of a wide variety of building materials and flooring products. The ability to evaluate new product lines and build new relationships will be the focus of the event. Additionally, an enhanced menu of educational sessions will be offered.

Manufacturers will have exposure to a broader base of distributors handling a variety of building materials including flooring, woodworking materials and supplies, and specialty products. These distributors serve many residential, industrial and commercial customer segments.

This meeting will be an excellent resource to open up and learn from members of a similar association, sharing the issues and networking. Isn't that what an association is all about? It was only two years ago that we adapted our association's name to include the words "North American." It is not inconceivable that we will soon be the "International Association of Floor Covering Distributors." The challenge is learning to put the interests of the association and its members as a whole before one's personal or professional interests.

NAFCD is guided by its four pillars of value: Leadership, Networking, Education and Trends. In the spirit of education, NAFCD will host "Below the Line Selling – Learn to Leverage Existing Accounts in a Challenging Market" to be presented by David Rubinstein on Feb. 3, 2010, at the upcoming Surfaces trade show, to be held Feb. 1-4, 2010 in Las Vegas. Mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Maintaining the uniqueness of the association and opening new channels of distribution is something many did not consider even 20 years ago. We must adapt to the new business arena to attract and create a stronger, more diverse network of leaders, while shaping the vision and the direction of the association and the industry.

Joe Reddington has more than 25 years experience in the floor covering industry. He is a Divisional manager with Bpi (Building Plastics Inc), and is currently serving on the NAFCD Board. Joe can be reached at jfreddington@bpitem.com. For more information on NAFCD, its programs and services, visit www.nafcd.org.