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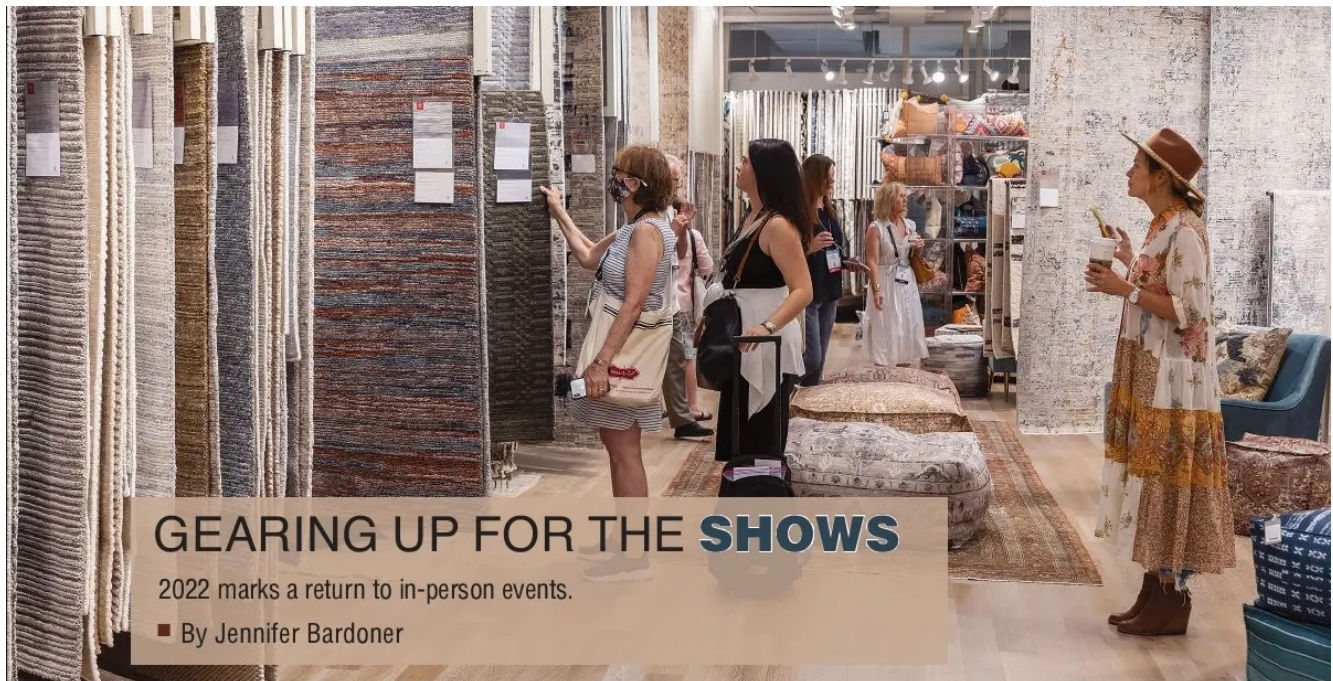
December 2021

EXECUTIVE OUTLOOK

YEAR IN REVIEW

CONTRACT DEALER SURVEY 2021





GEARING UP FOR THE SHOWS

2022 marks a return to in-person events.

■ By Jennifer Bardoner

Atlanta Rug Market.

After more than a year of upheaval to the established—and highly anticipated—exhibition circuit, it looks like things may finally be getting back to normal in 2022. As Covid cases resurged and then retreated again in different parts of the country throughout 2021 and vaccines made their way to the general public, many organizations opted for virtual events. Even after in-person conferences started trickling back in the later part of the year, they faced the uncertainty of drawing enough attendees to make the expense worth it, leaving many organizers to adopt a wait-and-see approach.

The calendar was a mess of red as events either fell off or got rescheduled—a move that was just repeated with Domotex Germany 2022. But with Surfaces (TISE), the U.S.' perennial first major show, inked in black for early February, things are looking more like 2019, albeit with some of the modifications birthed in 2020, including hybrid options and reduced or limited capacity.

SURFACES AND THE RETURN TO SHOWS

Surfaces (TISE) will be held February 1 to February 3 in Las Vegas, and organizer Dana Hicks says interest is high, both domestically and from abroad. Though a hybrid option will be available in real time, he anticipates strong in-person attendance. "We're excited to return to our normally scheduled edition," he says. "From an exhibitor standpoint, it's very strong, and from a visitor standpoint, it's looking very strong as well. Borders are starting to open back up. International interest is prevalent."

Those in the industry appear hungry for the unique product exploration and networking opportunities offered through in-person events, if the complement of scheduled conferences is any gauge. Many regional shows will be happening concurrently with Surfaces, piggybacking on its draw as one of the industry's premier events. Floors & More will even be offering its Winter Convention attendees tickets to Surfaces to help them make the most of their trip. "The Winter 2022 Convention marks our re-

turn to being fully live. We have more people registered already, still three months out, than we did for our last three events," says Floors & More vice president Vinnie Virga Jr., referencing both virtual and hybrid formats implemented last year.

While Mohawk will again have a commanding presence at Surfaces, Shaw is also returning to the show this year for the first time since 2003—though Shaw's Anderson Tuftex and Coretec brands have exhibited in the last few years, Shaw Floors and Philadelphia Commercial have not. The list of nearly 400 exhibitors also includes other major players like Armstrong and Mannington, yet another signal that things are returning to normal. The event's move to June last year saw fewer attendees and exhibitors present. "Attendees look for those bellwether companies," Hicks says.

With an emphasis on education, as well as new products and networking, the show will offer a full schedule of informational breakouts centered around each of the three categories covered by the show: floorcoverings—represented on the show floor through Surfaces; stone—represented through Ston-Expo/Marmomac; and tile—represented through TileExpo. "We're retooling our education program," Hicks says. "We'll have focused tracks for surfaces, installation, technology and products." The speaker lineup spans the gamut from business owners to social media experts to designers and installers.

The remote option, TISE Live Virtual Event, will offer those unable or too uncomfortable to attend the same opportunities to learn and explore everything that the show has to offer, including virtual product booths, live demonstrations, interactive workshops and interviews from the showroom floor.

"It's not an after-the-event thing, and it's not a greatest hits," Hicks says, adding, "People can almost shop for something online and connect with our exhibitors."

New this year will be a women's conference featuring female leaders from each of the three industry categories. For those attending in person, another new addition will be a reception for first-time attendees. "We're going to give them some tools and put some industry leaders in the room to help them navigate the show and know who to meet," says Hicks.

To help new and returning attendees more efficiently explore the sprawling show floor, the floor plan has been updated to centralize each of the three categories. "With a focus on the individual event brands, finding and sourcing products and seeking the targeted education is now easier than ever," a notice announcing the change on the website reads. "Surfaces is now across Halls D, E and F. TileExpo is presented in Halls C and D and StonExpo/Marmomac will be presented in Halls A and B."

Physical badges for attendees will be back, but the show will be implementing safety measures in line with local guidelines and those recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the time. "Preregistration is really important so we can be prepared for the crowds and create a safe environment for everybody," Hicks stresses.

DOMOTEX GERMANY DECISION

After announcing that Domotex would return in 2022 with a smaller footprint, following the eminent carpet and floorcovering show's cancellation last year, organizers changed gears last month, pushing the event down the calendar to a yet-to-be-announced date. Germany, where the convention is held, is currently experiencing its biggest spike in Covid cases since the start of the pandemic.

"We have been fighting for Domotex together with the exhibiting companies until the very end," a statement from director Sonia Wedell-Castellano reads. "Domotex is particularly affected by the impact of the Corona pandemic, as the vast majority of Domotex exhibitors and attendees come from abroad. However, given the current pandemic situation, international business travel is not expected to recover in the short term. What was considered a realistic and promising restart scenario a month ago, and was also well received by the market, has proven to be no longer feasible in recent days."

TISE EDUCATION PROGRAM GUIDE

*Note: These offerings begin one day earlier than exhibits and require a separate pass.

MONDAY, January 31

1:00 p.m.

- Business Basics for Small Companies
- Integrating New Equipment into Existing Fabrication Shops
- Tile Installation Best Practices

2:30 p.m.

- Cultivating a Reputation— Online Reviews, Grades and Recommendations
- Design, Fabrication and Installation of Large-format Porcelain Tile
- When the Switch Flips— Managing the Guest Experience When No One Wants to Work

4:00 p.m.

- If It's Not the Stone's Fault, Whose Fault Is It?
- Quartz and Solid-surface Fabrication
- Strategies to Run an Installation Shop at Peak Performance

TUESDAY, February 1

8:00 a.m.

- Common SEO and Social Media Mistakes that Result in Lost Revenue
- Introduction to Synchronous Flow for Manufacturing Efficiencies
- Skinny Tile— Understanding
- ICRI CSMT Education Session
- ICRI CSMT Certification Course
- ICRI CSMT Education Course
- ICRI CSMT First Recertification— Written Exam
- ICRI CSMT Second Recertification— Certification Course
- ICRI Certification Course with Demonstration and Workshop

9:30 a.m.

- HR Training, Hiring and Employee Retention for Fabricators
- Trend and Style Forecasting in Hardwood Surfaces
- Why Women Buy

11:00 a.m.

- 50 Ways to Differentiate Yourself from Industry Leaders Using Competitor Information
- Design and Color with Natural Stone
- Exterior Tile— Understanding

3:30 p.m.

- ICRI CSMT Demonstration and Workshop

WEDNESDAY, February 2

8:00 a.m.

- Geometric Tile— Understanding
- Say It with Video for Better SEO, Branding and Customer Engagement
- Trending Natural Stones and Quartzite

9:30 a.m.

- Customer Centricity— Going from Manufacturer Showroom to Customer Focused Showroom
- How to Determine the Return on Investment for Machinery Purchases
- Real World Social Media Strategies from a Real World Tile Installer

11:00 a.m.

- Defining Your Open Retail Positions and Hiring the Right Candidate
- How to Survive an OSHA Inspection
- Moisture's Effects on Flooring Installations

Abbey Carpet and Floors To Go's convention in March is one of the many other industry events returning in person this year. In yet another signal that things may be getting back to normal, Abbey Carpet vice president of marketing Bill Wilson says there's been "overwhelming support" for the return to a face-to-face format. "So many things have gone virtual, so many things can be done remotely, but [our industry is] tactile; people like to touch and feel stuff, they like to pick up products," he says. Underscoring the impact that opportunity can have on business, he adds, "That really translates to our consumer base too. I don't ever see a day when a drone is going to drop a pallet of hardwood off at somebody's house and go, 'Here you go, thank you.'"

SHOW SCHEDULES

Mohawk—MOMENTUM ROADSHOW

January 5 to 6: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 January 12 to 13: Chicago, Illinois
 January 24 to 25: Huntington Beach, California
 February 1 to 3: Las Vegas, Nevada (Surfaces)
 February 22 to 23: Atlanta, Georgia
mohawkmomentumroadshow.com

*Format: In-person; appointment required

Attendees will get a first look at the company's new flooring products from the Mohawk, Pergo and Karastan brands, along with updates to its Edge, Omnify and Neighborhood Ad Manager programs. There will also be several educational offerings developed based on client surveys and feedback: Unlock Your Potential—Updates to the Edge Program; Finding and Retaining Quality Employees; and Sell Beyond the Function—Flooring is Fashionable. Slots for the limited appointments available at each stop opened up September 18 on the website.

Laura Bartley, senior director of marketing communications and events, says the appointment-based format proved successful during the pandemic. "During the last year, when we had a very mitigated show presence, we decided to put those appointments into place, and we learned that they made the experience more valuable for everyone," she says, explaining that the reduced capacity allowed for individualized attention and one-on-one time with the company's leadership, who will attend every show.

Shaw—SHOWCASE EVENTS

January 5 to 7: Dallas, Texas
 January 25 to 26: Baltimore, Maryland
 January 26 to 27: Atlanta, Georgia
 February 1 to 3: Las Vegas, Nevada (Surfaces)
shawshows.com/markets

*Format: In-person

Shaw will also be hitting the road to "showcase" its new products and innovations through both traditional markets in Dallas, Baltimore and Atlanta, as well as curated product demonstrations that can be organized at the local level from December through February. "Shaw's 2022 Showcase events allow customers to browse product in a reimagined market experience: safe, comfortable and tailored just for them and their business," says Nina LoCicero, Shaw Residential vice president of marketing and digital commerce. "Customers should contact their territory manager to schedule a curated product session at a Showcase event near them."

The company will also be bringing back its SFN Open, streaming live from Dallas and offering a virtual option for those unable to attend the Dallas market.

Flooring Markets—SOUTHWEST MARKET, SOUTHEAST MARKET AND GULF COAST MARKET

January 6 to 7: Arlington, Texas
 January 26 to 27: Atlanta, Georgia
 February 17 to 18: Biloxi, Mississippi
flooringmarkets.com

*Format: In-person

With the tagline "Source Regionally. Grow Exponentially," these regional shows offer flooring dealers and retailers the opportunity to explore and source new products and form new relationships with manufacturers and suppliers. "Dealers need to find new resources that will help them to overcome the current supply chain issues," say market managing partners Lori Kisner and Barbara Stroup. "There are great options to be found at our markets, and our exhibiting companies are ready to engage with these buyers."

International Markets (Furniture)—ATLANTA MARKET AND LAS VEGAS MARKET

January 11 to 18: Atlanta, Georgia
atlantamarket.com
 January 23 to 27: Las Vegas, Nevada
lasvegasmarket.com

*Format: In-person

Drawing a broad array of industry-related professionals, these markets feature everything from home decor to housewares. With a focus on ancillary items like lighting and textiles, these events are an opportunity to explore the intersection of residential products, while offering a look at some of the hottest trends in area rugs.

CCA Global—WINTER CONVENTION

January 17 to 19: Orlando, Florida

*Format: In-person

This cooperative comprising a network of independent retailers across North America typically meets twice a year to allow members the chance to network and learn about new services and programs offered through the group. Flooring America/Flooring Canada, Carpet One and Floor Trader will converge for the upcoming Winter Convention.

Floors & More—WINTER CONVENTION

January 30 to February 1: Las Vegas, Nevada
vjvirga@floorsandmore.org

*Format: In-person

This annual member convention offers updates to benefits and services, along with the chance to explore Surfaces through complimentary passes, and a private tour for partner dealers. There will also be roundtable discussions between dealers, a keynote by speaker, author and entrepreneur Bill Wooditch, and new products and special show promotions from vendor partners—from cabinetry to window treatments, credit card processing, financing and more. Though limited to members, Floors & More vice president Vinnie Virga, Jr. says prospective

retailers are welcome to attend by contacting him.

"We are the freedom group where you choose what you use," Virga says.

Keying off of the theme for the group's 12th annual event, "The Odyssey: Adventure Awaits," lessons learned over the past year, two years and six years will be highlighted, and Floors & More has also secured exclusive access to the Adventure-dome five-acre indoor amusement for a special event.

NFA—SURFACES MEETING AND SPRING CONFERENCE

January 31: Las Vegas, Nevada (Surfaces Meeting)

March 20 to 24: Vail, Colorado (Spring Conference)

*Format: In-person

The National Floorcovering Alliance's meeting in January is a chance for its specialty vendors to showcase their products before hitting the Surfaces show floor. And, the Spring Conference gives core vendors the opportunity to not only showcase their products, but also to network in a relaxed environment while participating in both fun and educational activities that strengthen those relationships.

International Design Guild—SUMMIT

January 31: Las Vegas, Nevada

*Format: In-person

To be held just before Surfaces, this meeting will welcome members of the International Design Guild, a boutique member organization within CCA Global that works primarily through interior designers.

Cevisama

February 7 to 11: Valencia, Spain

cevisama.feriavalencia.com/en

*Format: In-person

This major international show features the latest in ceramic, stone and bathroom fixtures from a global array of major manufacturers, with a focus on Spanish ceramics. Attended by distributors, architects, designers and construction professionals, it offers the opportunity to source products and see trends, and the Architecture and Design Forum provides an industry-leading discussion of key topics. With additional industry-related informational sessions and special exhibitor events, it is a top stop on many ceramic and stone professionals' annual circuit.

KBIS—VOICES FROM THE INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

February 8 to 10: Orlando, Florida

kbis.com/conference/voices-from-the-industry-conference

*Format: Hybrid

Billing itself as the leading kitchen and bath design event, this conference will offer extensive live and on-demand workshops and professional development courses in six categories: Grow Your Business, Kitchen and Bath Specialty Training, Design, Management, Customer Service, and Building and Remodeling. Featuring new products ranging from stone and tile to fixtures—along with high-profile speakers like basketball-player-turned-entrepreneur Earvin "Magic" Johnson and TikTok global head of marketing Nick Tran, both scheduled for next year—the event draws a large crowd of designers and construction professionals.

Abbey Carpet/Floors To Go—CONVENTION

March 1 to 5: Charlotte, North Carolina

*Format: In-person

This annual event serves as a touchpoint for Abbey Carpet and Floors To Go retailers to learn from each other while also learning about member benefits and services—"highlights about what's coming out and a reminder to members about what's already available to them," explains Abbey Carpet vice president of marketing Bill Wilson. Breakout sessions will delve into new products and digital services, and attendees can network with suppliers while exploring their product displays.

2022 will place a special emphasis on marketing, Wilson says. In addition to introducing the new digital tools available, the event will offer an opportunity for retailers to assess their website with the help of an analyst. "With what's happening with consumers and online shopping, you really have to take a step back and take a look at your website again," says Wilson. "We launched a new platform with some really impactful changes, and we want to make sure everyone is aware of that."

Alliance Flooring—CONVENTION

March 11 to 15: Orlando, Florida

*Format: In-person

Another member show, this conference combines product displays with the chance to network and learn from fellow retailers and suppliers, as well as industry experts. "We bring in people to talk about sales training, product training, installation-type training," says Alliance Flooring marketing director David Ellis, adding that the upcoming event will offer information on Alliance's new carpet program.

A unique aspect of Alliance's membership program are the biennial "Summits" held at different designated member retailers, in which the store's team shares their experience and expertise. The annual convention often serves as a sort of mini Summit, with members hosting Q&As as part of the educational lineup, Ellis says.

Next year marks the group's 25th anniversary.

NALFA—SPRING MEETING

March 15 to 17: Raleigh, North Carolina

nalfa.com/events

*Format: In-person

A meeting of the North American Laminate Association board of directors, comprising top industry executives, the Spring Meeting offers the chance to further the group's principles: to establish and maintain consistently high performance and quality standards for laminate flooring products; to educate and communicate the meaning of NALFA standards and the value of the certification seal; to share knowledge with retailers and inspectors through hosted certification classes; and to research and evaluate ongoing opportunities for improved standards and technologies. Next year will mark the first under the direction of new board president Barbara Ellenberg June from Swiss Krono USA. Elected in October, she is the group's first female president, though she has served with the organization for seven years. "This is an especially exciting time for the association as the new leadership builds upon the success of the previous leadership to drive the association forward," NALFA said in a statement. ■