

Selling the Whole Package

By: Fred Jaeckle

Most retail flooring salespeople feel they are in the business of selling flooring. While this is true, most of them (whether they realize it or not) are really in a much larger and more complex business. Home Depot sells flooring, or at the very least offers it for sale. You, the independent flooring retailer offers so much more to the consumer.

First of all, if all the customer wanted was to “buy” some flooring, they most likely would go to a Home Depot or Menards, pick what they want, pay for it, and haul it home. Survey after survey tells us that what the customer really wants to buy is a beautiful room and a beautiful home. Flooring happens to be a part of that room/home. These same surveys tell us that even though people in the market for new flooring might visit a Home Depot to see what’s available, nine out of ten of them purchase their flooring from an independent retail flooring store.

Many flooring salespeople don’t realize the economic value of all the services they provide to the consumer. If a store were to list them and try to put a price on all of them, they would soon see that they actually are not charging enough. The price of the flooring product alone is but a small part of the total package that is being sold to the customer.

Let’s take a look at what a full service independent retail flooring store has to offer to a consumer:

- A warm and friendly environment in which to view and select flooring.
- A neat, clean, and well designed showroom that allows them a full compliment of products to select from without overwhelming them.
- Consultative help, an informed salesperson that asks the questions necessary to determine which type of flooring product, styles, and colors may best suit their needs.
- Decorating help, an informed salesperson/decorator that can select options that best coordinate with and compliment the other finishes in the room, and how that flooring relates to the flooring in adjacent rooms.
- A personal visit to their home, to measure, evaluate the job conditions, and make a fair assessment if extra work (such as sub-floor, removal of old flooring, special transitions, base removal or replacement, etc) is needed for a satisfactory outcome. Also, to determine the best options for seam placement if that is applicable.
- An accurate price for the job, preferably based on the total installed cost (including all extra’s), rather than just a price per square foot for the flooring, plus the all the extras priced separately on a list.
- Professional installation, professional looking installers, and all scraps, waste, and old flooring removed from the job site.
- Complete maintenance information on the flooring they selected.

- Assurance that one party (your store) is responsible for the product, old flooring removal, the floor prep, and the installation, so that if there is a problem or dispute the consumer is not “caught in the middle”.
- A phone call after the job is complete, to check if everything is satisfactory, and the customer is pleased with the outcome. (This also gives you the opportunity to thank them again for purchasing from you, and even ask for referrals!).
- Prompt response if the customer should call at a later date with a concern about the flooring or the installation.

Perhaps your store offers even more than the items listed above. Or, maybe you don't offer all of the above, but you certainly must offer most of these. Your store is providing a very valuable service for the customer, and the customer often won't realize it unless you tell them about it!

Now, you don't want to sit down with each customer and hand them a list of the above as they might view you as being a bit overbearing, but by performing all these services (most of which the customer probably already expects) you are giving the customer every reason to buy from you . . . today!

One service you might want to specifically point out to the customer is the home visit to measure and evaluate the job site. This is very important to both you and your installers, as well as to the customer so that there are not “surprises”, “disappointments”, or delays on installation day.

Unfortunately, too many flooring sales people don't realize all the value that they offer to their customer. Again, the price of the actual piece of flooring is but a small part of the whole picture. Your mark-up or profit is what pays for the rest.

Unless the consumer has decorating skills and an interior design aptitude, they need the guidance of the salesperson to create that beautiful room!

Likewise, unless the consumer is very well informed of what is available, what the technical job requirements are, etc. they need a professional making those assessments and determinations for them.

The total “package” as outlined above executed flawlessly would guarantee a very positive shopping and purchase experience for the consumer. It could also guarantee a great amount of referral business for your store. Remember, you are selling a package (a beautiful room), not just flooring!

Questions, comments, and feedback are always welcome.

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