

## **The Other Side Of Concrete Flooring**

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### **Contractor Success**

This flooring type is becoming more popular, are you ready to cement profits?

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As time passes, new trends emerge.

Some trends emerge from the abyss — once hardly recognized, but now vogue and hip. And, so goes concrete flooring.

Concrete floors were once thought of as dingy, dirty, unsightly, dull and warehouse-ish.

However, upscale restaurants, retail stores, residential establishments, offices and other commercial buildings are now making this type of floor the one of choice and these facilities are impressing — yes, impressing — customers and occupants with polished concrete flooring.

And, as facilities look to install, beautify or restore concrete flooring, profits exist for building service contractors (BSCs).

### **Works Of Art**

Modern-day concrete flooring that is found in common areas is a popular choice today and a primary reason is because of its attractiveness.

"People used to view concrete floors as old, dull, gray floors. However, with the onslaught of concrete polishing and the development of concrete dyes, [facilities are] able to do so much more to make [these surfaces] attractive," notes Chuck Hommey, marketing director for Equipment Development Company Inc.

According to [www.concretenetwork.com](http://www.concretenetwork.com), concrete floors offer a range unlike any other material, "Whether it's acid-stained, painted, overlays, microtoppings, radiant floors or a unique personal floor."

For cleaning professionals, these floors offer ease of maintenance.

"Because of all the new stains and dyes that can be added, [cleaners] understand that now you can have a beautiful, colorful concrete floor that is easier to maintain," notes Travis Daniel, concrete specialist in Amano Pioneer Eclipse Corporation's PowerStar division.

## **Your Services Are Solid**

Of the experts we spoke with for this article, they all agreed that no specialized training or equipment is needed to clean concrete flooring.

"For the most part, concrete is very easy to maintain," asserts Rob Godlewski, vice president of marketing for Powr-Flite. "In [some] settings, it may need to just be swept and mopped on a regular basis. [This] will provide years of durability at minimal care."

In fact, there may be less maintenance required with concrete flooring, such as resealing "once every couple of years," remarks Hommey. Compare this to some other floor types that may need a new protective coating at least once per year.

So, "you're not only [saving] on daily cleaning, but also on the annual maintenance of stripping and recoating," concurs Daniel.

"With concrete, you can polish it out or buff it, but another nice thing about [protected] concrete is that over the years and with foot traffic and other types of traffic, sometimes it brings more luster out," states Hommey.

BSCs that are trained to maintain typical VCT, wood, stone or other traditional flooring types are well-prepared to service concrete flooring.

BSCs must be aware of which products work best on concrete flooring.

If a polishing system that involves no chemical is used, the BSC must know how to properly use the system with the proper pad and equipment.

## **Getting Gritty**

If anything, says Godlewski, concrete will need some additional care based on a desired look and finish.

There are sealants and finishes on the market today that are designed for concrete flooring.

"However, these can be environmentally unfriendly and defeat the green benefits of concrete," says Godlewski. "Another option is for cleaning professionals to use specially designed metallic blades of different 'grits.'"

Various grits can be compared to different colored floor care pads — some pads are designed for scrubbing, while others are designed for polishing, as examples.

## **What Are You Waiting For?**

Unlike other flooring types, concrete floors are ideal for changing your mind when the next trend evolves.

The challenge for many facilities today that are looking to install concrete flooring is removing the old floor and adhesives.

Fortunately, some manufacturers, including companies we have interviewed for this article, offer specialized equipment that assists in the removal of old flooring types in preparation for concrete flooring.

This process, including the installation of concrete flooring, can be more expensive compared to other choices.

However, savings can be realized within short order.

"When it comes to existing facilities that are operating under budget, they have the opportunity to remove costly coatings and artificial surfaces and go with a long-term system instead, like polished concrete," says Daniel. "This will save a facility money in years to come."