

DISTRIBUTION EVOLUTION



By Frank O'Neill

Ever since we started our Top 250 Design Survey back in the mid 90s, the manufacturer's rep has always come out on top when we asked the designers who they rely on for advice about products, technical details or virtually anything else to do with the floor, for that matter. The contract dealer has always been a distant second, which never made a lot of sense to me, because the contract dealer should be a lot more objective than the manufacturer's rep, especially when it comes to product. After all, they aren't committed to selling a specific company's product.

I suppose you could say it's the contract dealers' fault that they've never gained the A&D community's confidence the way the manufacturer's reps have, simply because contract dealers have seldom catered to designers the way the manufacturer's reps have. So I find it very interesting that the new tagline from StarNet, the big independent contract dealers co-op is "The flooring project experts." StarNet's goal is to become just as important a resource to the A&D community and the end user as the manufacturer's rep.

If there's ever been a group of dealers who can call themselves flooring project experts, this group of 107 dealers has earned that right. The most important criterion for StarNet membership is integrity. The board of directors won't even consider a company if it doesn't have a reputation for outstanding service, installation skills and maintenance savvy.

As a result, in the eight years that StarNet has been in existence, it's quickly grown into a group of dealers who really do know what they're talking about. Hopefully, more designers will realize what a valuable resource StarNet can be for them.

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