

SLIPPERY ROCK

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BBM's PALADIN CNC Breathes New Life into a Growing Fabrication Industry

BY the time you read this, BBM (Better Built Machines) will be celebrating its ten-year anniversary. The company was originally formed to refurbish all brands of CNC machines that had aged out of their usefulness. With each machine they updated, the company's technicians were able to evaluate and make note of any and all problems that had developed during their working life. When compiled, this working knowledge would eventually help BBM to develop better and tougher production standards, bulletproof mechanical systems and efficient software, all in a simpler, easier-to-maintain CNC package, recalled BBM Founder and President Bryan Johnson. "We were seeing the design flaws that we were repairing, over and over, and realized that if we took that knowledge from refurbishing, a better machine could be built, and we started designing our own CNC."

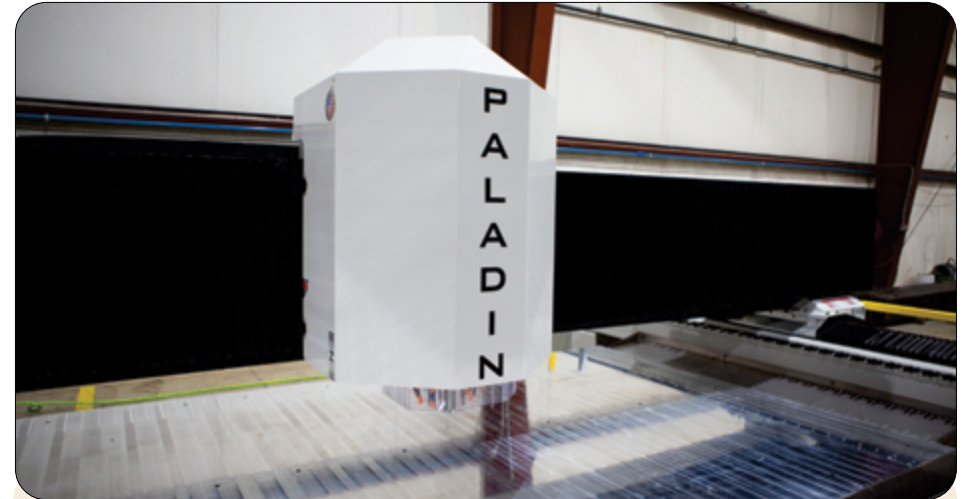
BBM is not an old company and, conversely, not the new kid on the block either,

by Peter J. Marcucci

Photos Courtesy Better Built Machines (BBM)

especially when considering that Johnson spent 17 years as a technician, installer, trainer, and parts and service manager with a major stone machine manufacturer, and then ten years on his own.

What is the new kid on the block, however, is BBM's PALADIN CNC— A super cool, state-of-the-art machine with a slew of features that any fab shop will wrap their arms around and adore for decades. Johnson recalled, "There were many failure points on the machines that we've worked on over the years, and we've seen these same points sit stagnant for the last seven years. I don't know if these big OEM's (original equipment manufacturers) simply refused to fix these problems or were just comfortable with the products that they sold, but because we refurbished so many CNCs, we knew that if the machine had so many hours on it and it was ten years old, we could predict every point of failure it would eventually have."



Above and Below: The PALADIN's sleek and simplistic design is unmatched in the industry of CNC stone routers. It was engineered for easy access and user-friendly operations.



Features and Benefits of the PALADIN

During assembly, every PALADIN monobloc frame is constructed using half-inch steel. It is then put through a process called, "White Blast", where all mill scale and impurities are removed from the metal.

A heavy zinc-based primer is then applied and left to dry. The next step is where a second, sealing primer is applied over the zinc in preparation for a final coat of a smooth, high gloss marine grade epoxy, adding a touch of pizzazz to each unit.

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NSI/CAL-OSHA Silicosis Prevention

IN July, CAL-OSHA took steps to further protect stone industry employees against the dangers of silicosis. The State of California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board approved creation of an advisory committee to strengthen existing regulations through an emergency measure with a priority to address dry-cutting and dry-polishing activities utilized by some fabricators. In short, these dry-cutting and dry-polishing activities will likely face stricter guidelines and/or a ban.

As an emergency measure, CAL-OSHA intends to assemble new regulations over a two-to-four-month period. Key industry leaders, including the Natural Stone Institute,

will be participating in the process to lend expertise and assistance. Citing the abundance of silica awareness training resources available from NSI and others, the committee is advocating an approach based on education, monitoring, and enforcement.

Fortunately, silicosis is completely preventable through the use of well-established industrial hygiene controls.

The industry recognizes that wet cutting procedures in combination with other controls are needed to effectively maintain exposure below dangerous levels. Stone companies must diligently follow well-established air quality state and federal requirements and regulations.

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BBM's PALADIN CNC

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As for components used, many are upsized from standard sizes used by other manufacturers, adding massive durability to the PALADIN. BBM also took the time to protect these components with easily removable covers as well as a self-lubricating feature in friction areas, such as ball screws and bearings. Another notably cool feature is that every bearing everywhere is the same size, 45 mm. Gone are the days that different sized bearings sit on the shelf waiting to be used. "It's one-size-fits-all on the PALADIN," said Johnson, adding that as of December 2022, BBM began developing their own spindles. "We are the only manufacturer of CNC stone routers that makes its spindles in America. Originally, we were importing them from Italy, but due to supplier issues decided to build them in-house, to cut down lead



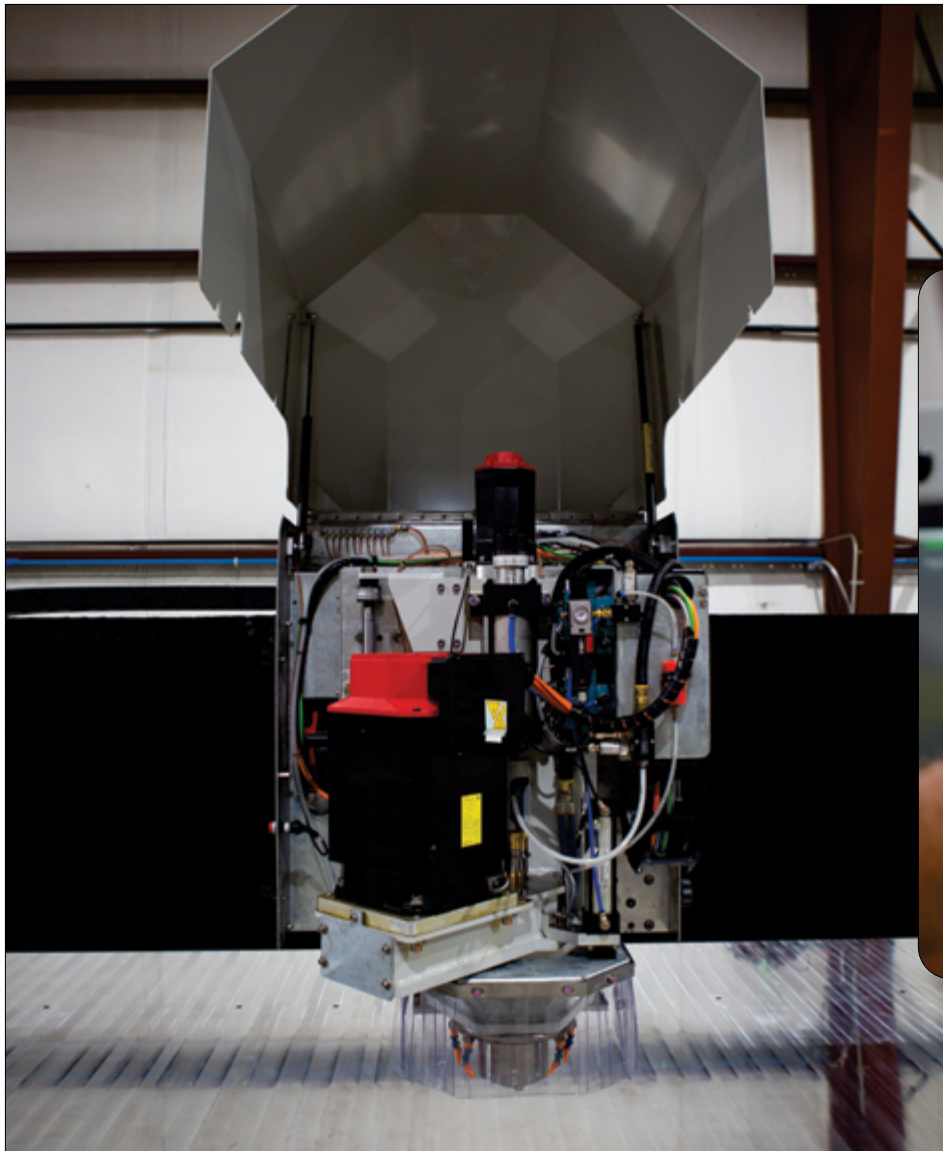
The PALADIN's massive 14 x 8 foot table bed was carefully designed for ease of accessibility.

times, control costs, improve quality and implement our design changes that needed to happen. Spindle issues are very predominant in the stone industry. You're cutting very solid materials and crashes happen. Our spindles are an upscale design with large bearings, and have a very unique pressurization system that keeps contamination out, allowing the spindle to last longer. To the fabricator, this means longer run time and less replacement costs."

designers thought long and hard on limiting components, explained Johnson. "One of our favorite things at BBM is keeping components to a minimum. Less or simpler components equals less things to go wrong and easier maintenance, and the easier the maintenance the more likely it will get done. We knew what the PALADIN needed to do, and built it with the least amount of components to do it." As a plus and the icing on the cake, so to speak, is that the PALADIN uses only Fanuc Motion Control Systems, the number one control system in the world, boasting a whopping four million control systems installed worldwide.

Another very cool feature of the PALADIN is that all wires, tubing, valves etc., are kept safely hidden from dust and slurry by easily removed covers and bellows, as well as being non-obstructive to operator movement. Additionally, BBM's

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Operators can program their PALADIN to remember specific commands, improving productivity with one touch of a button.

Left: Looking "under the hood." All wires, tubing, valves etc., are kept safely hidden from dust and slurry by easily removed covers.

BBM's PALADIN CNC

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Training and Support

Initial training can consist of online tutorials, while the remaining training is done in the customer's shop, doing real jobs, after the PALADIN goes live. "There are a lot of people in the industry who are completely afraid of a CNC machine," continued Johnson. "They don't understand them and think they are hard to run and complicated. So we designed software more suitable for beginner users, so they are not afraid to run our machine. It's called "Commander Software," and it's more intuitive, easier to run, updates automatically and is more catered to this industry. It is truly state-of-the-art."

Although rare, any trouble that may arise with PALADIN, BBM has it covered, he continued. "Our technical support system is available 24/7. We also have nine full-time technicians available to visit the customer within 24 hours. We currently stock over a million dollars of parts, and if the customer is able to do the fix themselves, we can next-day ship parts up to until nine

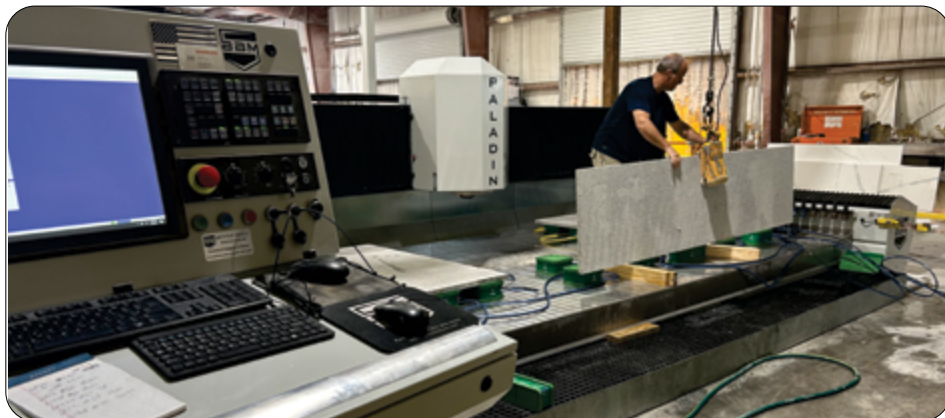
o'clock at night. We are still a service company and now we are a CNC manufacturer, and we pride ourselves on our service. Even if it takes me, the owner, going out in the field to fix it, I'll grab my tool box and fly out there. Our goal is to do whatever it takes to get the customer's PALADIN up and running as soon as possible."

When asked what's up and coming, Johnson said that a new 60,000 square-foot production facility will break ground in 2024, and that a few exciting new products are in the pipeline, but could not comment on what they were.

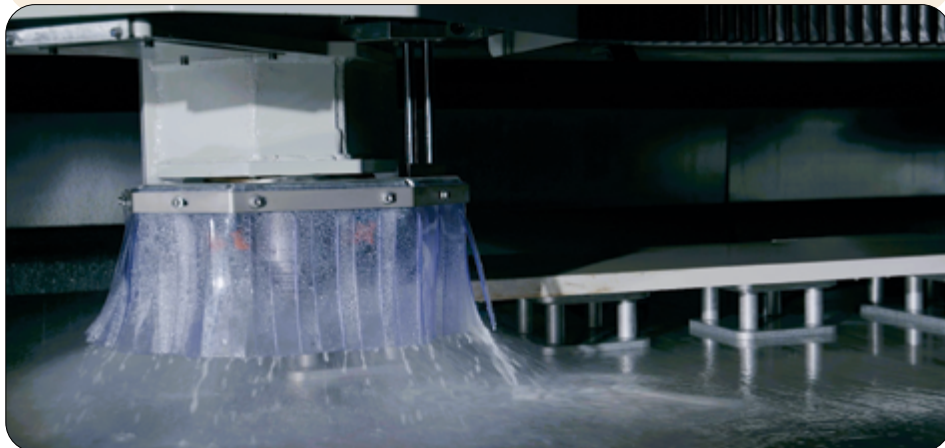
In closing, the first PALADIN was delivered on May 21, 2022, and as of this writing, just 16 months later; 35 machines are in operation nationally. All PALADIN CNCs are made in Shelbyville, Kentucky, and are available nationally and in Canada and Mexico.

BBM is a member of the National Stone Institute, the Stone Fabricators Alliance and the Shelby County Chamber of Commerce.

For more information visit www.bbmmachine.com or call 502-890-0463.



A fabricator at Distinctive Surfaces of Florida effortlessly loads a countertop onto the PALADIN's large table bed, which is free of safety cables that can get in the way. The PALADIN is, instead, equipped with a safety laser, improving accessibility.



Maintenance made easy! You can access the PALADIN's main components by simply lifting its hood.



The PALADIN comes standard with 44 position tool holders.



From Left: Gino Scolari, owner of Scolari Marble & Granite, and Gino Scolari Jr., proudly pose with their first-ever CNC stone router. Their shop has made the transition from hand fabrication to automation with the PALADIN.

Special Feature in this Issue...



SLIPPERY ROCK GAZETTE®

The Voice of the Stone Fabricator

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How Do You Compare?

Prove Your Quality & Safety Practices are Best in Class

Only the finest companies in the industry can meet all of the qualifications necessary to earn Natural Stone Institute Accreditation. Differentiate yourself from the competition. Prove to design teams and consumers that your fabrication and installation methods are best in class and that safety is a top priority. Get started by watching our accreditation webinars.

naturalstoneinstitute.org/accreditation

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INDUSTRY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 2023

NSI: Colorado Study Tour

When: Sunday, September 10, 2023 to Thursday, September 14, 2023

Where: Grand Junction / Glenwood Springs, Colorado

Visit Naturalstoneinstitute.org for more info.

ISFA Mineral Surfaces Training: Porcelain, Sintered and Ultra-Compact

When: Wednesday, September 13 to Thursday, September 14, 2023

Where: Tower Industries, Massillion, Ohio

Visit www.isfanow.org/calendar for more information and to register.

ISFA: Advanced CNC Technology Training and Certification

When: Wednesday, September 20 to Thursday, September 21, 2023

Where: ZOLLER, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Visit www.isfanow.org/calendar for more information and to register.

NSI: Missouri Stone Summit— Fabricator Town Hall

When: Thursday, September 21, 2023

Where: 10800 Linpage Place, St. Louis, MO 63132

Visit Naturalstoneinstitute.org for more info.

Marmomac Industry Trade Show

When: Monday, September 25 to Friday, September 29, 2023

Where: Verona, Italy

Visit <https://www.marmomac.com> for more information.

October 2023

ISFA: 2023 Annual Conference

When: Monday, October 16 to Thursday, October 19, 2023

Where: Sint Maartin; **Registration ends August 30, 2023**

Visit www.isfanow.org/calendar for more information and to register.

NSI: Connecticut Stone Summit, One Day Workshop

When: Thursday, October 19, 2023 – 9am to 3pm

Where: Sint Maartin; **Registration ends August 30, 2023**

Visit Naturalstoneinstitute.org for more info.

NTCA, CTDA, TCNA, TCAA: Total Solutions Plus

When: October 22 to October 24, 2023

Where: Hilton Riverside Hotel, New Orleans, LA

Visit www.ctdahome.org/tsp/2023/ for more information and to register

BACA Systems Training

When: October 25 & 26, 2023

Where: Orion Township, Michigan

November 2023

ISFA: New Member Workshop

When: Wednesday, November 8, 2pm to 3pm

Where: Online

NSI: Texas Stone Summit, One Day Workshop

When: Thursday, November 9, 9pm to 3pm CDT

Where: Triton Stone Group, Austin, Texas

ISFA: Stone Industry Training Days

When: Tuesday, November 13 to Wednesday, November 14

Where: Zoller North America Headquarters, Ann Arbor, Michigan

NSI: Effects of Deicing Chemicals in Natural Stone

When: Thursday, November 30, 11am to 12pm ET

Where: Online

Visit Naturalstoneinstitute.org for more info.

Other regional and online event opportunities are available through the industry association websites listed above.

NSI/CAL-OSHA Silicosis Prevention

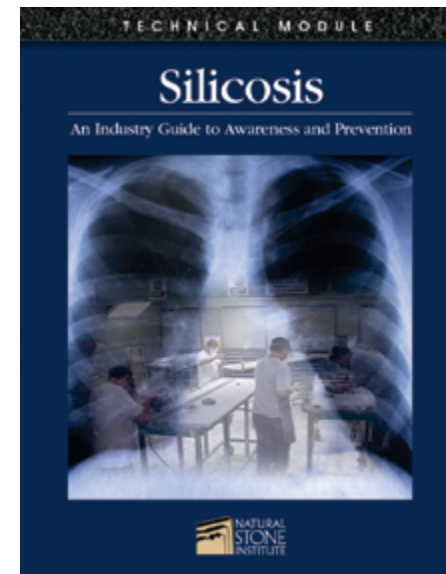
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Involvement by industry with CAL-OSHA creates a public/private partnership of manufacturers, stone distributors, and fabricators working closely with regulators to ensure employee safety and eliminate unsafe work environments.

Some have suggested a ban on select products which contain silica is warranted. The vast list of many common products that contain silica, including concrete, brick, plaster, glass, and a wide variety of other products, makes it impractical to focus on the product. Product bans do not address the primary issue which is adherence to **safe cutting/polishing measures, coupled with air monitoring and employee education.**

The NSI will continue to provide updates on this timely topic. As more people become aware of the threat of silicosis and learn about the CAL-OSHA action items, we encourage stone companies to remind customers that silicosis is **not** a danger to homeowners or other end-users. Make sure your company is following best practices and keeping employees safe. These issues will be in the front of mind for many customers.

To access information and safety training resources, the NSI offers resources at the following sites: www.naturalstoneinstitute.org/safety and www.naturalstoneinstitute.org/silica. Stone professionals are also encouraged to achieve the NSI's Silica and Slab Safety Certificate at www.naturalstoneinstitute.org/safetycertificate.



The Natural Stone Institute is a trade association representing every aspect of the natural stone industry. The current membership exceeds 2,000 members in over 50 nations. The association offers a wide array of technical and training resources, professional development opportunities, regulatory advocacy, and networking events. Two prominent publications—the *Dimension Stone Design Manual* and *Building Stone Magazine*—raise awareness within the natural stone industry and in the design community for best practices and uses of natural stone. Learn more at www.naturalstoneinstitute.org.



“Alexa, tell Siri I’m not speaking to her.”

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Pass Your Competition With Key Sales Management Practices

IS your sales volume relatively consistent month to month or does it vary significantly?

Can you reliably forecast your monthly sales for the next six to twelve months?

If you make a change in your sales processes, are you confident your sales team will execute the new process well or will they push back?

Does your sales team consistently follow-up on quotes the way you want them to?

Sales is the engine that powers your business. If it isn't hitting on all cylinders, then your business will struggle. If you can't accelerate this engine when you need to, profitability will suffer when you need sales the most. Effectively managing your sales engine is the key to success – especially when the economy is uncertain.

Is this your sales team?

- Frequently don't get customer signatures on orders
- Frequently push to change the schedule so 'their' clients get favorable treatment
- Don't follow up on quotes consistently so they miss out on potential sales
- Don't update sales and prospecting data in your CRM
- Not consistently calling on new prospect accounts
- Have too much time unaccounted for (are they even working?)
- Don't respond to customer inquiries in a timely fashion
- Don't collect the data needed to generate a solid sales forecast.

Over the next few months, we'll have a series of articles to help you with the key tools and techniques for effectively managing your sales team. This month, let's start with **Setting Expectations**.

Obviously, we set expectations with employees because they need to know what behaviors we require of them. They need to know what performance objectives we need them to achieve. They need to know what processes we need them to

Ed Young
Fabricator's Business Coach
Tiffany Brooks
Sales Leadership Coach



follow as they perform their jobs. So, how do we set expectations effectively? How do we make this process work for us?

Let's use quote follow-ups as an example.

First, let's define what we expect. We need to have our quote follow-up rhythm defined. How long after the quote is the first follow-up made? Is it a text or an email or a call? What is the timing and communication method for all subsequent follow-ups? What do we expect the content of each text, email, and voice mail to be? How many follow-up attempts are made before we stop following up? How is that last follow-up contact handled? What is the script we want used for that communication so that contact is final yet professional?

Without this additional detail, we couldn't reasonably expect our people to execute the follow-up process the way we want them to.

Next, we need to document our expectations. You may have heard the phrase: "If it isn't written down, it didn't happen". The same is true for our expectations. If they aren't documented, they don't exist.

But what happens when your expectations

change? The answer is: Document. Document. Document. To manage policy documents effectively, you need to know which document is the latest version. Googling "document revision control process" will help you identify a method that will work for you.

Communicate your expectations to your team. Sharing your documented process is an obvious step. Getting feedback and input from your team on the

Relationship Manager (CRM) software package should be an early step in building sales performance. There are many on the market and the selection can be dizzying. Getting the help of someone knowledgeable about these systems can save you a lot of time and help you avoid expensive mistakes.

Looking at the above example, hopefully it's apparent that, if you were to just tell your people to "make sure you follow up on all quotes within 24 hours", and didn't

follow the process above, you couldn't reasonably expect good performance from your sales team.

Finally, we need to follow-up with our people so we can ensure accountability. This follow-up isn't just a casual, "How's it going?" nor is it a punitive activity where we only criticize poor performance. Effective follow-up involves regular feedback on performance – both good and bad. In the case of poor performance, it involves validating the employee's understanding of our expectations and discovering, with the employee, the reasons for poor performance. How you handle this follow-up is critical to improving future performance.

Accountability cuts both ways. We expect employees to be accountable for their results. As managers, we are also accountable for how we track those results. If we evaluate employee performance without solid facts and data, we lose credibility with our team. This is sure to decrease employee motivation and performance.

Having adequate systems to track employee follow-up calls, texts, and emails is crucial to effectively managing a sales team. Implementing a good Customer

process is key, as is consistent training. Communication can be a complex topic, so we will dedicate an entire article to it soon.

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Your business is running exactly the way you have designed it to run. If you want to improve how your business is run, if you want to improve the performance of your managers, drop me a line at Ed@FabricatorsCoach.com.

Tiffany Brooks, Leadership Coach & Trainer at MBSB LLC, is a recognized sales leader in the luxury retail sector. Her focus is on professional development, leadership coaching, consultation, and training to get people, their teams, and their work to the next level. You can reach her at Tiffany@MBSBLLC.com.

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TRAINING & EDUCATION

Seven Effective Strategies to Boost Sales for Stone Fabricators

Things Stone Fabrication Shops Should Consider Before Spending More Money on Marketing

AS the owner of a stone fabrication shop or company, you understand the importance of consistent sales growth. However, achieving this goal can often seem daunting, especially when faced with limited marketing budgets. Fortunately, there are several proven strategies you can implement to increase your sales without spending more money on marketing. In this article, we will explore seven powerful techniques that will help you enhance your sales efforts and drive revenue growth. By implementing these strategies, you can maximize your sales potential and stay ahead of your competition.

Follow Up Faster for Improved Conversions

This is an area where we see shops leaving a lot of money on the table. Time and again, when we audit their sales and marketing, we see heaps of leads that have gone untouched. Often these are leads they are investing a significant amount of money to generate, both in ad spend and with the marketing company running the campaigns.

Time is of the essence when it comes to closing deals. According to a study by [InsideSales.com](https://www.insidesales.com), 35-50% of sales go to the vendor that responds first. As a stone fabrication business, prompt follow-up with your leads can significantly increase your conversion rates. Ensure that you have a streamlined process in place for responding to inquiries, whether through phone calls, emails, or website forms. Speedy responses not only demonstrate your commitment to customer service but also instill confidence in potential buyers.

Follow Up More Often to Stay Top of Mind

Don't underestimate the power of persistence. A study by the National Sales Executive Association found that 80% of sales are made on the fifth to twelfth contact with a prospect. Unfortunately, many salespeople give up after just a few attempts. By consistently following up with your leads, you increase the likelihood of converting

Justin Shaw
Stone Fabricator Elite



them into customers. Implement a structured follow-up system that includes various communication channels, such as phone calls, emails, and personalized messages. This approach ensures that your brand remains top of mind throughout the buyer's journey, increasing the chances of a successful sale.

Create and Communicate Your Competitive Advantage and Unique Value Proposition

To differentiate your stone fabrication business from competitors, it's crucial to clearly articulate your competitive advantage and unique value proposition (UVP). Your UVP highlights the distinct benefits your company offers to customers. Identify the aspects of your business that set you apart, whether it's your exceptional craftsmanship, use of high-quality materials, or excellent customer service. Once you've defined your UVP, communicate it consistently across all marketing and sales channels. Showcase your strengths through compelling messaging, website content, social media posts, and sales conversations. By emphasizing your unique selling points, you create a compelling case for why potential customers should choose your stone fabrication services.

As a Stone Fabrication Business, prompt follow-up with your leads can significantly increase your conversion rate.

Nurture Leads in the Consideration Stage with Relevant Content

During the consideration stage, prospects are actively evaluating their options and seeking valuable information. By providing educational content aligned with your UVP, you can nurture leads and position yourself as the obvious choice in your market. Develop a content marketing strategy that includes blog posts, articles, videos, and guides that address common concerns or challenges faced by your target audience. Ensure that your content highlights the unique benefits and advantages your stone fabrication services offer. By sharing valuable insights and expertise, you build credibility and establish a stronger connection with potential customers. This approach increases the likelihood that they will choose your company when they are ready to make a purchasing decision.

If you are limited on resources and time, you can create simple pieces of content that showcase your customer reviews, project before and afters, and other straightforward content to reinforce your credibility.

Implement Sales Pipeline Oversight and Ownership

To drive consistent sales growth, it's essential to have a well-managed sales pipeline. Regularly review and assess your pipeline to identify potential bottlenecks, gaps, or opportunities for improvement. Assign clear ownership of each stage of the sales process to individual team members, ensuring accountability and follow-through. By closely monitoring your pipeline, you can proactively address any issues and take corrective action to optimize conversion rates. Utilize customer relationship management (CRM) software to track and analyze your sales activities, enabling you to make data-driven decisions and identify areas where improvements are needed.

If you do not have the bandwidth to oversee your pipeline or sales team you may be interested in our Sales Sidekick Program. We provide weekly pipeline audits, support for your sales rep, and skill development. We monitor your pipeline and keep your team on track so that you can focus on the other important areas of your business.

Keep Your Sales Reps Accountable

Establishing accountability within your sales team is vital for driving results. Clearly define sales targets, both in terms of revenue and specific key performance indicators (KPIs). Regularly track and review individual sales performance, providing constructive feedback and coaching when necessary. Encourage healthy competition among your sales representatives by recognizing and rewarding high achievers. Additionally, implement regular training sessions to sharpen their skills and keep them updated on industry trends. By maintaining a culture of accountability, you create a motivated sales team that consistently delivers results.

Conclusion

Increasing sales doesn't always require a substantial marketing budget. By adopting these seven strategies, you can optimize your sales efforts and drive revenue growth for your stone fabrication business. From prompt follow-ups and consistent communication to showcasing your unique value proposition, nurturing leads with relevant content, and maintaining sales pipeline oversight, each tactic plays a crucial role in maximizing conversions. By keeping your sales representatives accountable and continually fine-tuning your approach, you'll be well-positioned to achieve sustainable sales growth in the competitive stone fabrication industry.

Justin Shaw is the founder of Stone Fabricator Elite, a new business development and sales improvement agency. Their flagship program includes providing end-to-end CRM implementation, full onboarding, support and monitoring to ensure sales teams are effectively using the tool and that the shops see a measurable improvement in sales. You can learn more about Stone Fabricator Elite at www.stonefabricatorelite.com.

The Importance of Perm Rate when Choosing Shower Waterproofing

The “perm rate” is a measure of the permeability of a material, indicating how much moisture or water vapor can pass through it. When it comes to choosing a waterproofing system for a shower installation, the perm rate is an essential consideration. It plays a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of the shower structure and preventing potential issues such as water damage, mold growth, and deterioration over time. Here’s why the perm rate is important in this context:

Waterproofing Efficiency: The primary purpose of a waterproofing system in a shower is to create a barrier that prevents water from seeping into the underlying building materials. A low perm rate ensures that the waterproofing membrane or material is highly resistant to water penetration, effectively protecting the structural elements of the shower and the surrounding walls from moisture damage. According to ANSI 118.10 (B), a low perm waterproofing membrane is tested to the ASTM E96 procedure E. The water vapor permeability must be below .5 perms. This test is at 100° F and 90% relative humidity.

Moisture Management: Bathrooms and showers are high-moisture environments, and water vapor can build up from regular use. If the waterproofing material has a high perm rate, it may allow some moisture to pass through, leading to potential moisture accumulation behind tiles or within the wall cavity. Over time, this can result in mold growth, decay, and compromised structural integrity.

by Dr. Fred Hueston

Stone Forensics

James I. Medina

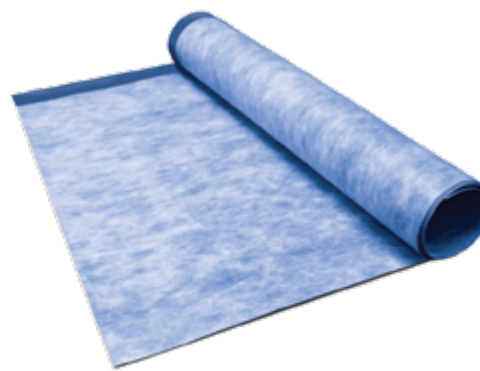
Director of Architectural & Contractor Services, Noble Company

Many installers and homeowners do not realize the unbelievable arch in performance of waterproofing membranes on the market today. Some meet low perm standards, while others do not. Some membranes have perm rates as high as 3.5 while others are as low as .15.

Durability and Longevity: A waterproofing system with a low perm rate tends to be more durable and long-lasting. It can withstand prolonged exposure to water and moisture without degrading or losing its effectiveness. On the other hand, a high perm rate material may degrade over time due to constant exposure to moisture, necessitating premature replacement or repairs.

When constructing with sustainability and product longevity, often little to no attention is given to the products that lay beneath the finished floor that are designed to protect the installation and contribute to the life of the project. As an example: A Porcelain tile has a life of 50 to 80 years, but it is only as durable as its substrate. Does it make much sense, if a product that only lasts 10 to 15 years is installed to protect it? When considering durability and longevity, the entire assembly must be considered.

Complementing Tile, Grout and Drain: Even though the waterproofing system



Noble Company Waterproof Membrane

serves as the primary defense against water, it is essential to consider that tile and grout are not entirely waterproof. They may allow some water penetration. Therefore, having a waterproofing layer with a low perm rate provides an additional layer of protection, reducing the risk of water reaching vulnerable areas beneath the surface.

The overall assembly in any waterproofing installation should be considered. The water-in, water-out method. If an installation is in a shower and the pan is mudded, the water should be designed to go through the grout and through the mud to the drain above and below the installation. But there are methods of waterproofing that are on the surface of the mud. Remember that the connection to the drain is critical. With the water in-water out method, you must consider weep hole protection which will allow a means of egress to the water in the system. With a surface waterproofing method, the attachment to the drain is slightly different. It may be bonded to a drain flange or under a clamping ring. Either method works, but having an understanding on the connection is critical before the installation starts.

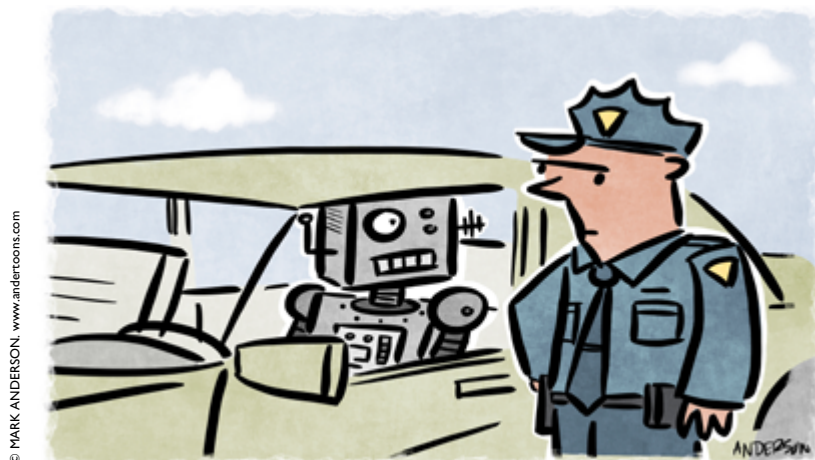
Building Code Compliance: Many building codes and regulations require specific perm rates for waterproofing materials used in shower installations. Ensuring that the chosen waterproofing product meets or exceeds these requirements is crucial for compliance and may be necessary for insurance coverage. All manufacturers give recommended installation methods. These methods will supersede the TCNA minimum standards. It is important to note that if products are not installed per the manufacturer’s recommendation, the manufacturer will void the warranty. When installing waterproofing sheet membranes, the manufacturer will require a 95% plus coverage on the bond coat! For manufactures of liquid waterproofing membranes, the manufacturer will require the product be put on at a minimum mil thickness. These may seem like minor line items, but I assure you they

are not if the matter goes to court.

The perm rate is a critical factor when selecting a waterproofing system for any wet area or shower installation. Choosing a material with a low perm rate will help ensure the long-term effectiveness and durability of the waterproofing, protecting the structure from moisture-related problems and maintaining a safe and functional shower environment. Always consult with a professional or follow manufacturer guidelines to select the appropriate waterproofing system for your specific shower installation needs.

Frederick M. Hueston is a respected scientist with a rich background and extensive expertise in the stone and tile industry. Growing up in a family deeply involved in the field, Frederick’s early passion drove his educational journey, resulting in a degree encompassing biological, chemical, and physical sciences. Combining academic knowledge with practical experience, he authored 40+ books and 200+ articles covering various stone and tile topics. His publications range from installation techniques to restoration methods, solidifying his reputation as a revered authority. Founder of StoneForensics, Frederick established a leading firm offering inspections, analysis, and consulting. Recognized for his contributions, he stands as a distinguished figure in the industry, continually advancing the field’s scientific principles and practical applications to drive excellence.

James I. Medina’s background in construction stems from over 30 years in the industry. Starting out as a tile contractor he later worked with a general contractor in Las Vegas as a Project Coordinator and Project Manager. Wanting to understand large commercial projects he worked with Mirage Properties in 1998. The management took note of his potential and brought him over to develop the Wynn properties. In 2004, while working for Wynn Design and realizing that flooring was his true passion, James earned his certification in Flooring Forensics. This gave him a different outlook on every project and approach to installations. This unique insight of why floors fail in residential, commercial, and hospitality helped James to analyze and solve some of the most perplexing failures. His mission is to educate design professionals on the current and future approaches to the changes in the industry and to find out the answers to why installations fail.



“What traffic lights, officer?”



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TRAINING & EDUCATION

The Need for Alignment

I have visited a number of businesses this summer to see how we can help them get their profits up to where they need to be for long term thriving. A common theme has emerged during this tour – the actions they are taking are often not aligned with the objectives they are stating.

Some are following excellent processes such as EOS, meeting regularly to choose their Rocks, the key the things they will work on for the next ninety days. When a business chooses their Rocks poorly, they just weigh themselves down, squandering scarce resources and good will in the process.

Let me give a simple example. I asked about the Rocks at one business and among the list of misaligned actions was ‘build a new website.’ This could be a very good idea when you can handle more business IF it is aligned with the goals of the business.

This particular business served multiple markets, ranging from very profitable to barely profitable, so I asked the next logical question: ‘Which market are you targeting, and how do you know that market will increase your overall profitability?’ An awkward moment followed.

We could easily get into a discussion on Target Marketing here, but I will save that

Rick Phelps
Synchronous Solutions

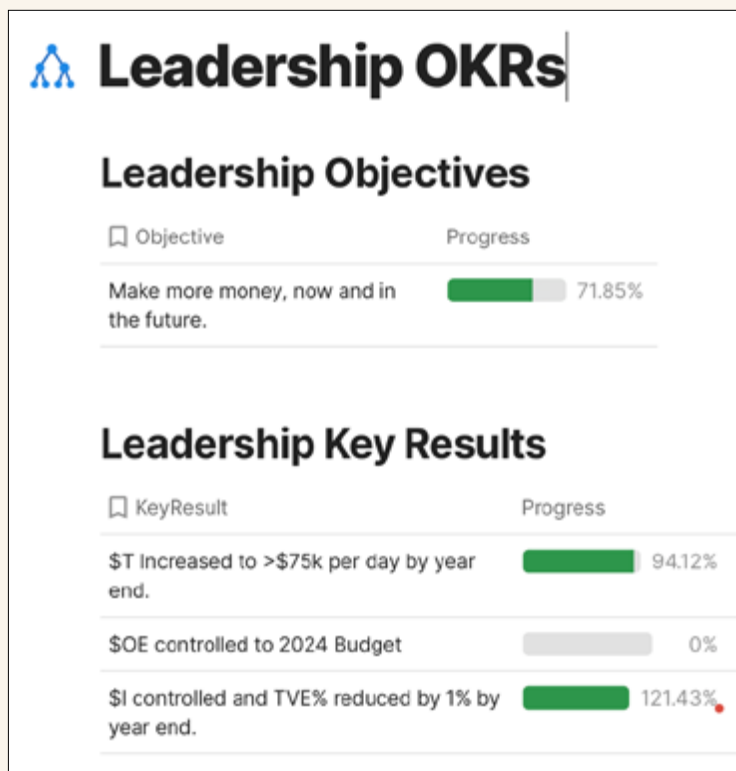
for a future article. Let’s just focus on the simple task of choosing projects to increase profits.

The generic goal of every business is to ‘make more money now and in the future’. It comes straight out of Goldratt’s book *The Goal*. The top Goal/Objective/Rock of your business should be some variation of this generic goal.

We use OKRs (Objectives & Key Results) in our Synchronous Flow Operating System. OKRs were developed at Intel and are used by the likes of Google, the Gates Foundation, and many other successful companies to align their massive organizations. It works great for the big guys, and great for us too!

When we work with clients to align their businesses using our Synchronous Flow Operating System, we start with that #1 Objective of every business: make more money now and in the future. The Key Results associated with this Objective are straight forward:

1. Increase \$T (Throughput Dollars)
2. Decrease \$I (Inventory)
3. Decrease \$OE (Operating Expense)



You shouldn’t have to think about these, they are the natural conclusion if you understand Throughput Accounting, and how a business actually makes money. Spend time saved turning these Key Results into S.M.A.R.T. goals. [Use Google if you don’t know about this form of goal setting]. A Key Result might read ‘Increase \$T Earned to greater than \$75,000 per day by the end of March 2024.’

Two parts of your organization would ‘own’ this Key Result. Operations clearly owns the Key Result as stated. Your Marketing & Sales group would own the prerequisite Key Result: ‘Increase \$T Made to greater than \$75,000 per day by the end of January 2024,’ since you need to Make money before you can Earn money. Sales is accountable for MAKING the \$T.

Not all \$T is created equal, and I use “created” in the literal sense. Production needs to create the countertop that carries the \$T, and that consumes Constraint capacity. Therefore, the measure \$T per Constraint Minute, which we refer to as Octane, is the ONLY measure of relative profitability.

Back to the new website example. Every job has a different Octane, as does every Market. You want to be sure Marketing and Sales are seeking business from the markets whose \$T flow the fastest through the Constraint, assuming you don’t already dominate those markets. There is an assumed bit of knowledge here – you must know the Octane of your relative markets. It’s also smart to know the Octane of each job you produce (and toward that end our software partners have integrated this measure into their systems).

But the point I am trying to make is not about marketing, it’s about aligning your business through identifying projects that are directly related to the Key Results your business needs to realize. Align your scarce resources to do projects aligned with how you make money. It’s worth the up-front effort to get it right!

We are always happy to help!

If you think having a skilled facilitator to walk your leadership team through this process will make it go a lot more smoothly and efficiently, contact Synchronous Solutions through our website www.synchronousolutions.com/contact-us/.

For Whom the Bell Tolls – Hemingway Look-Alike Celebrates Win

ON his 68th birthday, a white-bearded Wisconsin man won the Hemingway Look-Alike Contest, a highlight of Key West’s annual Hemingway Days celebration.

Gerrit Marshall, a retired television broadcast engineer from Madison, prevailed one Saturday night at Sloppy Joe’s Bar, a frequent hangout of Ernest Hemingway when he lived in Key West during the 1930s.

“This is the best birthday I have ever had,” said Marshall, whose birthday falls just one day after the July 21 anniversary of Hemingway’s birth.

On his 11th attempt, Marshall triumphed over nearly 140 other entrants in the contest that featured two preliminary rounds and that Saturday’s finals.

Competitors in sportsman’s attire, most emulating the rugged “Papa” persona Hemingway adopted in his later years, paraded onstage at Sloppy Joe’s before a judging panel of previous winners.

Marshall said he shares several characteristics besides appearance with Hemingway, and has written both non-fiction and short fiction.

“Like Hemingway, I have a love of the outdoors; I love fishing one heck of a lot,” he said, citing catches of walleye and northern pike in Wisconsin waters, as well as angling for tarpon in the Florida Keys.

He said, however, that he can’t match the late author’s tally of four marriages.

“I only have one wife, but that doesn’t matter — that’s all I need,” said Marshall.

As well as the contest and other festival events, the look-alikes focus on raising scholarship funds for Keys students. Hemingway Look-Alike Society president David Douglas estimated that they amassed close to \$125,000 during the 2023 festival.

Hemingway Days salutes the vigorous lifestyle and literary legacy of the Nobel Prize-winning author, who wrote enduring classics including “For Whom the Bell Tolls” and “To Have and Have Not” while living in Key West from 1931 until late 1939.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Online Reputation Management for Countertop Shops

In today's digital age, the online reputation of a business can significantly impact its success. This holds true for countertop shops as well. Countertop shops rely heavily on positive reviews and ratings to attract customers and build trust. Conversely, negative feedback can harm their reputation and deter potential customers. In this article, we will explore the significance of online reviews and ratings for countertop shops and provide strategies for managing and improving your online reputation. We will also discuss tactics for encouraging positive reviews and effectively handling negative feedback.

The Power of Online Reviews and Ratings

Online reviews and ratings have become a cornerstone of consumer decision-making. Before making a purchase, customers often turn to platforms like Google, Yelp, and social media to learn about other people's experiences with a business. Countertop shops are no exception to this trend. Positive reviews and high ratings serve as social proof, fostering trust and credibility among potential customers. On the other hand, negative reviews can erode trust and lead to missed opportunities.

Strategies for Managing and Improving Online Reputation:

1. Monitor and Respond Promptly.

Regularly monitor online platforms to stay aware of customer feedback. Responding promptly to reviews, both positive and negative, shows that you value customer opinions and are committed to providing excellent service. Acknowledge positive reviews with gratitude and address negative reviews with a professional and empathetic tone. Offer solutions and encourage the reviewer to reach out directly to resolve any issues. Most shops I talk to think they should only respond to negative reviews. But Google wants you to use their platform more and engage with it. So responding to positive and negative reviews help achieve this. Plus, as I mentioned,

Stephen Alberts
Countertop Marketing

it shows strong customer support when your replies are genuine to the positive and negative reviews.

2. Encourage Positive Reviews:

Satisfied customers can be your most valuable brand advocates. Encourage them to leave positive reviews by providing exceptional service and creating a pleasant experience. Request reviews through follow-up emails or post-purchase communication. Make the review process easy by providing direct links to review platforms on your website and social media profiles. Be careful with giving incentives for reviews. Most review platforms (including Google) do not want you to give someone an incentive in exchange for a positive review.

3. Showcase Testimonials and Positive Feedback:

Displaying testimonials and positive feedback on your website and social media platforms can help build credibility and trust. Ask satisfied customers if they would be willing to provide a brief testimonial about their experience with your countertop shop. Include their name and, if possible, a photo to add authenticity. Sharing these testimonials across various channels will enhance your reputation and attract new customers. A really great tool to use for this is elfsight.com. The widget to show reviews on your site is only around \$10/month. It's very easy to use, looks great and isn't expensive.

4. Provide Exceptional Customer Service:

Outstanding customer service is key to generating positive reviews and maintaining a stellar reputation. Train your staff to deliver personalized experiences, promptly address inquiries, and go the extra mile for customers. By exceeding expectations, you increase the likelihood of receiving glowing reviews and repeat business.



Enhancing customer trust and success is key to managing your online reputation.

Handling Negative Feedback

1. Respond Calmly and Professionally:

When faced with negative feedback, resist the temptation to be defensive. Instead, respond calmly, professionally, and promptly. Apologize for any inconvenience caused, express your willingness to resolve the issue, and offer a direct point of contact to discuss the matter privately. By addressing negative feedback openly, you demonstrate your commitment to customer satisfaction. A good tip I usually give shops is to write your response and then let it sit there for a day. Don't post it right away. Come back to it the next day and make sure it sounds "calm." You will be surprised about how you feel the next day after you cool off a little and read your response again.

2. Address Complaints Privately:

Some negative feedback may require more personalized attention. When appropriate, encourage the reviewer to reach out to you directly to discuss their concerns further. Providing a direct line of communication shows that you genuinely care about resolving issues and finding mutually beneficial solutions. Homeowners appreciate when they sense that you actually care and want to help with the issue. You always want to fix the issue first and make the customer happy. And if you successfully do that, you can go back to that customer and ask to either remove or change their review. We've had clients do this in the past and it works. But make sure that's not the first thing you ask them. Fix the problem, then go back to them.

3. Learn from Negative Feedback:

Negative feedback, although disheartening, can provide valuable insights for improving your shop. Analyze the feedback to identify any recurring issues or trends. Use this feedback constructively to make necessary changes and prevent similar situations from arising in the future. Demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement can turn negative experiences into positive ones.

In the digital era, online reputation management is crucial for countertop shops to thrive. Positive reviews and ratings contribute to building trust and attracting customers, while negative feedback can hinder growth. By actively monitoring online platforms, encouraging positive reviews, providing exceptional customer service, and effectively addressing negative feedback, countertop shops can enhance their online reputation, build customer loyalty, and drive long-term success. Remember, a strong online reputation is an investment that pays dividends in the form of increased customer trust and more sold projects.

Stephen Alberts is the owner of the Countertop Marketing Co. and STONE ENGAGE. They specialize in helping countertop companies grow the retail side of their business outside of word-of-mouth and referrals. They also offer software to help you engage more with customers and close more countertop projects. To learn more, visit <https://countertopmarketingco.com/> or <https://stonengage.com>. You can also email Stephen at steve@countertopmarketingco.com.

Breathe Out the Stress

WE now know that certain types of noise can help us relax and de-stress when the weight of the world sits on our shoulders. However, ambient noise is not the only thing that can help relax a body, mind, or soul, and help to get rid of some of the stress we feel on a daily basis.

One powerful tool that we all possess to combat stress is right under our noses – quite literally. Breathing exercises have been used for centuries as a natural and effective method to reduce stress and promote relaxation. By harnessing the power of our breath, we can tap into a calmer state of mind and find relief from the burdens of stress.

There are several popular and time-tested breathing exercises that can help you find tranquility amidst the chaos:

Deep Belly Breathing – aka Diaphragmatic Breathing or Abdominal Breathing: This exercise helps activate the diaphragm. Start by finding a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. Take a deep breath in through your nose, allowing your abdomen to rise and your chest to remain still. Exhale slowly through your mouth, feeling your abdomen lower. Repeat this process for 5-10 minutes at a time, 3 – 4 times a day. Focus on the sensation of the breath filling your belly and the subsequent release as you exhale. This exercise slows down your breathing, increases oxygen flow, and induces a sense of calm. It's also a great way to relieve a shortness of breath episode from over-exertion.

Square Breathing - aka Box Breathing: This is a technique that follows a pattern of equal-length inhalations, holds, and

“Freedom is the open window through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit and human dignity.”
– *Herbert Hoover*

Sharon Koehler
Stone Industry Consultant

exhalations. It helps regulate the breath and encourages mental clarity. Begin by inhaling slowly and deeply through your nose to a count of four. Hold your breath for a count of four. Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of four. Finally, hold your breath for another count of four before starting the cycle again. Repeat this sequence 4-5 times, several times a day. Focus on the rhythmic pattern and the sense of tranquility it brings.

4-7-8 Breathing: This breathing exercise is simple yet highly effective in promoting relaxation and reducing anxiety. To begin, find a comfortable seated position. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth and keep it there throughout the exercise. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four. Hold your breath for a count of seven. Exhale completely through your mouth to a count of eight, making a whooshing sound. This completes one breath. Repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths. This technique slows down the heart rate, calms the mind, and brings a sense of tranquility.

Alternate Nostril Breathing: Truthfully, this breathing exercise has its roots in yoga. Alternate nostril breathing is a balancing exercise that helps calm the mind, reduce stress, and increase focus. Sit in a comfortable position and bring your right hand up to your face. Using your right thumb, gently close your right nostril. Inhale slowly and deeply through your left nostril. Once you reach the top of your inhalation, use your right ring finger or pinky to close your left nostril and release your right nostril. Exhale slowly and completely through your right nostril. Inhale through the same nostril, then close it with your thumb, release the left nostril, and exhale through it. Continue this pattern, alternating nostrils with each breath. Focus on the coolness of the inhalation and the warmth of the exhalation. Repeat for approximately 5 minutes, allowing your body and mind to find balance and peace.

Simple breathing exercises can restore your calm and lower your blood pressure. Here are a few examples – find one that works for you.

Breath Counting: Breath counting is a mindfulness practice that helps anchor your attention and quiet your racing thoughts. Sit or lie in a comfortable position and close your eyes if it helps you focus. Begin breathing naturally, without attempting to change your breath. With each inhalation, mentally count “one,” and with each exhalation, count “two.” Continue this pattern, counting up to ten breaths. Once you reach ten, start again from one. If you find your mind wandering or losing count, gently bring your attention back to the breath and begin again from one. This exercise helps cultivate focus, reduces mental chatter, and promotes a sense of relaxation.

These are not the only stress relieving breathing exercises. There are others: Lion’s Breath, Pursed-Lip Breathing, Resonance Breathing and more. Keep in mind that every exercise may not work for every person. If one doesn’t work, try another until you find what works for you.

Breathing exercises have not only been used to reduce stress. They carry with them a lot of other benefits:

- Increases calm
- Relieves pain
- Increases energy
- Lowers blood pressure

Let’s face it, there are people, circumstances, and things all around us that stress us out, probably every day. And (I am sorry to say this) the holidays will be on us before we know it, and our stress levels always rise during that time of year. Get a head start on learning which techniques work for you so you can help yourself through the holidays and every day. Imagine yourself with less stress or just feeling better overall. It makes you smile, doesn’t it?

Please send your thoughts and comments on this article to Sharon Koehler at Sharonk.SRG@gmail.com.

Dining on Dino



AN unusual find in China suggests some early mammals may have hunted dinosaur for dinner.

The fossil shows a badger-like creature chomping down on a small, beaked dinosaur, their skeletons intertwined. The find comes from a site known as “China’s Pompeii,” where mud and debris from long-ago volcanoes buried creatures in their tracks.

“It does seem like this is a prehistoric hunt, captured in stone, like a freeze frame,” University of Edinburgh paleontologist Steve Brusatte, who was not involved with the study, said in an email.

The fossil, described in the journal *Scientific Reports*, shows two creatures from around 125 million years ago, during the Cretaceous period.

Even though the mammal is much smaller, researchers think it was attacking the dinosaur when they both got caught in the volcanic flow, said study author Jordan Mallon, a paleobiologist at the Canadian Museum of Nature. The mammal is perched on the dinosaur, its paws gripping the reptile’s jaw and a hind limb while its teeth plunge into the ribcage.

[Please turn to page 23](#)

TRAINING & EDUCATION

How Effective Is Your Forklift Training?

A fragmented and inconsistent approach to safety is inadequate when applied to today's dynamic, fast-moving work environments. The result can include increased risk to employees, disruptions in operations, damaged equipment and exposure to compliance issues.

Implementing an integrated and individualized approach to a safety training plan can help bring a consistent focus to safety management. It also stresses the important role everyone plays in creating and maintaining a safe work environment.

A robust training program is a vital component of an integrated and individualized approach to safety. It needs to be a program designed to do more than simply check a box on a safety checklist. The effectiveness of a forklift safety training program can vary significantly depending on how it is delivered and who within the organization is receiving it.

Effective safety management requires extending training beyond forklift operators

Stephanie Kovach

to include managers, supervisors and pedestrians, and making it readily accessible and convenient for everyone involved. By focusing on both comprehensive classroom and hands-on training, training programs have the potential to encourage meaningful behavior changes that can enhance warehouse safety and form the foundation for a strong safety culture.

Additionally, taking a top-down approach to forklift safety training is an effective method to increase organizational buy-in and effectiveness while helping to communicate the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to safety.

Organizations need to continually evaluate safety programs to minimize gaps in training, as well as to ensure that everyone has an understanding of the role they play in your organization's safety culture.

To identify gaps in your training, you can evaluate your current program by asking the following questions:

To identify gaps in your forklift training, ask these eight questions to evaluate your current forklift training program.

1. How effective is the training you are delivering?

Relying too much on classroom training and not providing hands-on training can limit the ability of operators to translate learning into practice. The classroom can provide the foundation, but new skills are best internalized when operators can get on a forklift and apply their new knowledge under the supervision of an experienced trainer. A fleet and operator management system can support training effectiveness and evaluations and help identify improvement opportunities.

2. What is the frequency of your safety training?

Like any form of education, the positive

effects of safety training can erode over time. In the United States, OSHA states that training is required every three years, at a minimum, but more frequent refreshers can have positive effects. Establish a frequency for operator refresher courses and maintain discipline in ensuring established guidelines are followed. As much as possible, integrate regular training into your operations, leveraging online learning systems that allow operators and supervisors to regularly refresh their knowledge at their own pace with minimal disruption to operations.

3. Are new operators receiving training in a timely manner?

In today's fluid job market, you will inevitably see some transition in your team of operators. It is essential to have a process to ensure new employees receive the training they need early in onboarding. Some forklift telematics systems can provide real-time feedback to operators that reinforces correct behavior and recognizes incorrect behavior. They can also give supervisors the performance data they need to showcase exemplary operators and their good choices while also identifying areas for additional training.

4. Are supervisors trained to identify and address incorrect operating practices?

Positive reinforcement by supervisors can be one of the most effective methods for sustaining safety improvements initiated by formal training programs. However, supervisors must be appropriately trained to spot incorrect behavior and deliver positive and constructive feedback in a way that creates long-term behavioral changes.

5. Are non-operators trained to work safely around forklifts?

Forklift operators are not the only ones who could be involved in forklift-related accidents. Distracted or inattentive pedestrians can also put themselves in harm's way.

A comprehensive approach to training should include those team members who work around but do not operate forklifts.

This training helps pedestrians better understand the "do's and don'ts" of working in environments where forklifts are present.

Please turn to page 15

STONEBIZ PUERTO RICO

On The Beach

Business Seminars

Gino Wickman - Entrepreneur and author of the best-selling "Traction - Get a grip on your business" book library which has sold over 3million copies! He is the founder of EOS (entrepreneurial operating systems) Worldwide, an organization that has helped over 190,000 companies succeed with his operating systems. His skills include helping leaders run better businesses, get better control, have better life balance, and gain more traction while working as a cohesive team!



Casey Brown - a pricing expert and the president of Boost Pricing! Her slogan is "IF YOU ARE EXCELLENT AT WHAT YOU DO, YOU SHOULD BE PAID LIKE YOU ARE EXCELLENT." Casey is a prominent global keynote speaker, with a resume in the fortune 500 and TEDX talks!



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Forklift Training

Continued from page 14

6. How is training being used to support the introduction of new technology?

As you introduce new technologies into your operations, training plays a key role in accelerating adoption and addressing safety considerations associated with the new technology. Training may even help realize the benefits associated with the new technology. Listening and collaborating with front-line workers can help determine if additional adjustments to training programs regarding the new technology are required.

7. How is new technology being used to support your training?

Several operator-assist technologies are available on today's forklifts that can work passively or actively to reinforce training and guide operators to employ best practices consistently. Advanced sensors and software can adjust forklift performance parameters based on the load, task, location and environment to promote safe, productive operations. For instance, a system that uses Lidar sensors installed on the lift truck that scan for objects, pedestrians and other forklifts to alert the operator of their presence and actively slow the vehicle.

8. Do you have the resources and expertise to manage training in-house effectively?

Effective training requires a high degree of expertise in equipment operating practices and how people learn—in addition to the time to plan, execute and manage training programs. Even the best designed training programs can be derailed or lose effectiveness if internal resources don't have the expertise, up-to-date knowledge and time to prioritize it.

Training is a fundamental element of the safety equation and is vital to building and maintaining a strong safety culture. Asking these eight questions of your training program can help you identify gaps in your training that need to be addressed to help leverage your investment in safety and implement a successful safety program.

Stephanie Kovach is director of training with forklift manufacturer Crown Equipment. Visit www.crown.com/en-us.html for more information.

Bear Necessities!

A Maine woman was bitten by a bear in her backyard while defending her pet dog, necessitating a trip to the hospital for stitches, officials said.

Lynn Kelly, 64, was tending her garden in Porter when her dog took off into the woods barking at something one Friday. In short order, the


dog was racing back to the yard with a black bear in hot pursuit, said Mark Latti, spokesperson for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Kelly stood and made herself appear large, which is recommended in a black bear encounter. But instead of slowly retreating, she proceeded to confront the bear, which is *not* recommended, Latti said.

The bear briefly latched onto Kelly's wrist after she punched the animal on the nose, and she received

stitches for the wound at Memorial Hospital in North Conway, New Hampshire.


It's rare for someone to be bitten by a bear in Maine even though the state has one of the largest black bear populations on the eastern seaboard, Latti said. Encounters with bears can be reduced by removing bird feeders, garbage, and other things that could attract bears' attention like pet food left outdoors.




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Never-Ending Mirth with My Wife's Car From Hell

The story you're about to read is true. I swear on a 55-gallon drum of motor oil.

Sam Venable
Department of Irony



Names, brands and dealerships have been omitted, however. The Venables simply are content to be shed of this mess and the mischief it keeps creating.

Our saga began the day Mary Ann drove off the lot in a late-model, low-mileage used car. It was just the right size for her. Handled well. Peppy, yet frugal with fuel.

Inside was a faint whiff of cigarette smoke, but the dealership had pointed out this flaw from the get-go. We figured the mild odor would soon dissipate. Indeed, it was on the verge of vanishing when up popped an issue that had nothing to do with sense of smell.

It was a different type of sense. A sensor. Somewhere in the digital guts of this Damien was a faulty tire monitor. On a

whim, it would flash warnings about low pressure.

I didn't think much about it the first time. Simply swung by my neighborhood gas station, fed quarters into the machine, and added air until my handy-dandy tire gauge gave the A-OK.

Sometime later (several weeks, if memory serves), the monitor flashed warnings once more. Back to the gas station,

quarters, air machine, et al.

When the third warnings flashed, we returned to the dealership.

No sweat, said the service folks. Easy-peasy fix, covered by warranty. Sorry for the inconvenience, but everything's fine now.

Nope. After a bit, the warnings flashed again.

I need not repeat this sequence. Suffice it to say we made seven trips for seven fixes. Repeat: s-e-v-e-n. Enough was enough. It was time for Damien to go.

The warranty had expired by now. Thus, the dealership wouldn't offer a full refund. We briefly considered stubborn legal recourse but knew it wouldn't be worth the time and effort. Just give us a check and we'll depart.

Sure, said the rep. We'll have everything wrapped up shortly.

It took a bit longer than "shortly." So long, in fact, that someone finally came out of the office and announced a glitch.

Seems Damien was shackled with a lien in North Carolina.

"That's your problem," we smiled. "You sold us this car in Tennessee, free and clear."

Yes, we got our check. Quickly.

That was three years ago.

Recently, we received a "personalized" (aka computer-generated) letter from yet another dealership, Kentucky return address this time, offering cash for the car we haven't owned in three years. The car with tire sensors from hell and a North Carolina lien. We deep-sixed it with a laugh.

We doubt Damien will ever mend his evil ways, but it would be nice to occasionally hear from him again. Maybe from Nebraska next time.

Sam Venable is an author, comedic entertainer, and humor columnist for the Knoxville (TN) News Sentinel. His latest book is "The Joke's on YOU! (All I Did Was Clean Out My Files)." He may be reached at sam.venable@outlook.com.



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Stone Restoration and Maintenance Corner

Technical Issues on Terrazzo

A restoration contractor recently worked on a terrazzo exposure and light restoration project. The terrazzo had been previously covered in carpet but was recently covered in hardwood flooring. Another flooring contractor had removed the wood planking but in doing so, had scored through the wood into the terrazzo with his circular saw in quite a few places throughout the 2k square-foot project. It looked like a bunch of tic-tac-toe games had been played on the floor with the circular saw!

The client did not want to spend exorbitant amounts of money on a full restoration but was happy with essential-only repairs (restoration hardware?). There would be large bound rugs in most of the rooms, so the floors did not need to be completely restored. However, all of the deep cuts (probably at least 1/64" – 1/32" deep) that would be exposed around the edge of the bound rug, needed to be rectified.

This was a real problem because, as you probably know, the surrounding surface

Bob Murrell

M3 Technologies

Photos by Bob Murrell

would have to be ground down to the lowest valley of the cut. Terrazzo is typically poured to only 1/4" to 1/2" thick, on top of the concrete bed.

You can take a Makita hand tool with a 5" ELF 40 grit flexible metal-bond diamond and go to town. Of course, this would make for a big bowl of a cut which simply spreads the dip or cut in this case, out over a larger area. There is also the risk of creating chatter marks with a diamond this aggressive as most techs will try to speed up the scratch removal/blending process by running the diamond on an angle, instead of concentrating on keeping the diamond flat/parallel to the surface. It takes longer to feather out the scratch correctly, but patience pays off in the long run. The higher in the grit series the floor is taken (especially if polished), the more these refinishing imperfections show up, at the end.

Two 25 lb. weights help maximize down pressure when running Flexible Metal Bond ELF3-40 grit diamonds.



ELF3-40 grit Flexible Metal Bond diamonds for heavy stock removal.



Two views, and closeup: Deep circular saw cuts in original terrazzo flooring from solid wood overlay removal. This was a 2,000 square foot project.



Also, when you do run the floor machine to do the overall heavy grinding, the low areas are harder to hit or make good contact with. I definitely recommend using the diamonds with rubber spacers to help them follow the floor better. Let's face it, the floor is only as flat as the original installer took the time to make it. It is common to find both original grind spots and scratches in older and newer terrazzo. Most installers typically applied a topical coating/sealer of some type which tends to hide these installation flaws. Stripping the coating and refinishing exposes them again. If you are going to finish naturally (little-to-no coatings), these need to be rectified as best possible, or they will show up like a sore thumb at the end.

Edges are another concern. You need to do the borders or edges (along the wall or other obstacle) before using each grit with the floor machine. If you don't, you run the risk of leaving a picture frame around the border, whether it be lighter or darker. So, if you are starting at 120 grit, do the borders with a 120 grit first, then do the floor machine with the 120 grit. Follow the same procedure for the next grit, and

so on.

The terrazzo floor in this particular project had some difficult issues to overcome. In particular, the circular saw blade cuts imparted during the hardwood overlay removal, as mentioned above. These cuts were unfortunately quite deep in many areas and required heavy stock removal to help eliminate them completely. So ELF3 40 grit (3" flexible metal bonds) were used under the floor machine to accomplish this daunting task. Two 25 lb. horse-shoe weights were used on the machine, bringing it up to well over 150 lbs. Three weights could have been used on the M3 Heavy Duty machine which could have sped up the process some, but operator fatigue would be much higher at this weight. Therefore, two weights were used.

The cuts didn't go to the wall, so the borders did not need a 40 grit cut. The floors were ground with the 40s, next the borders were cut using the Makita and a 5-inch 70 grit (ELF5-70) due to original grind marks left behind, then the floors were cut with the 3-inch 70 grit under the M3 machine.

Please turn to page 23

"We are either a United people, or we are not. If the former, let us, in all matters of general concern act as a nation, which have national objects to promote, and a national character to support.

If we are not, let us no longer act a farce by pretending to it."

—George Washington

The Stone Detective

And the Fountain of Youth

I had just recovered from a mild case of COVID and was chomping at the bit to get out of my house. Being cooped up for 10 days had been driving me crazy. I missed my mornings at my favorite greasy spoon and even hearing the Admiral's same old stories. It's funny how you miss things you never thought you would. I still felt a little weak, but my last COVID test was negative, so off I went to see Flo, the Admiral, and enjoy a good cup of joe.

Just as I was about to hop into the old Woody, my cell phone rang. In a weaker than normal voice, I answered with my usual response, "Stone Detective here. How can I help you?"

It was a man with a very deep voice. He went on about a marble fountain they had in a lobby that was deteriorating. He kept referring to the fountain as their "Fountain of Youth." *That's odd*, I thought, but later I would find out why. He continued to talk about how they had several experts come in, yet no one could determine why the marble was disintegrating. Fortunately, for him, I've had my fair share of fountain inspections over the past 35 years. I was sure I could figure this one out. I hung up the phone and made my way to the diner.

I walked in, and Flo looked at me, holding her arms to her heart, and said, "Oh my goodness, we were all worried about you. Where have you been?" I took off my fedora and just said one word: "COVID." She backed away from me, and several

Dr. Frederick M. Hueston, PhD

customers sitting nearby got up and moved away as well. I stood up and said, "It's okay, folks, I tested negative." They all seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. I was half tempted to start coughing, but I wasn't in the mood for that.

You know, it's funny – we used to cough to cover up passing gas, and today we pass gas to cover up a cough (LOL). I finished my breakfast, told Flo and the Admiral that I was going to the Fountain of Youth, and they might not recognize me when I got back.

I arrived at the office complex where the Fountain of Youth was supposed to be. I parked the Woody and walked toward the door. As I approached the building, I noticed a large sign on the front. Now I knew why the caller kept referring to it as the Fountain of Youth. The name on the building was "Johnson's Geriatricians Center."

I walked through the front door, and there it was – a large marble fountain right in the center of the lobby. It was clad in white marble tiles, including white marble below the surface of the water. The first thing I noticed was a strong chlorine smell. I walked closer to the fountain and noted that the marble just above the waterline was spalled. My initial impression was that the water chemistry was off. I was prepared and had brought my test kit to measure the

pH, hardness, chlorine, and a few other parameters. I took out my test kit and felt a gentle tap on my shoulder. I turned around, and there was this giant of a man. In a deep voice, he said, "You must be the Stone Detective." I extended my hand to shake his, but it was wet. I apologized, and he ignored the gesture, starting to give me the history.

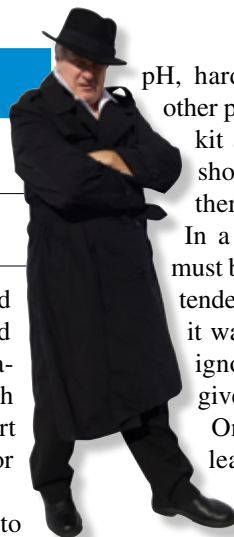
One of the many things I've learned over years of doing these types of inspections is to listen carefully. Often, the client will reveal something that offers a clue to the cause of the failure. This case was no different. I let him go on and on, and then he said something that raised my eyebrows. He mentioned they had brought in soft water for the

fountain to prevent these white scale deposits from forming on the sides. He was proud to say it worked and solved the white buildup.

I let him finish, and with a deep breath, I told him that was the problem. I continued to explain that marble is made of calcium carbonate, which is soluble in water. The soft water was eating away at the marble, causing it to spall and pit. "What the heck are you talking about?" he said. I went on to explain the following: Marble is primarily composed of calcium carbonate, and its interaction with water lacking minerals can lead to a process called "leaching" or "dissolution." Soft water, being low in minerals, can slowly dissolve the calcium carbonate in marble, causing the surface to deteriorate and potentially leading to etching, pitting, and other forms of damage over time.

He just stood there, saying nothing. He looked like a little kid who had just been caught doing something wrong. I told him that the marble was likely irreparable but he would need to drain the fountain, replace the deteriorated marble, and use the proper water. Another case solved. I guess I won't try to take a drink from this Fountain of Youth – after all, it didn't make the marble any younger.

The Stone Detective is a fictional character created by Dr. Frederick M. Hueston, PhD, written to entertain and educate. Dr. Fred has written over 33 books on stone and tile installations, fabrication and restoration and also serves as an expert for many legal cases across the world. Send your comments to fhueston@stoneforensics.com.



Talk About Being Full of Bologna...

AN enormous Lebanon bologna sandwich billed as one of the world's largest has been unveiled at a central Pennsylvania fair.

The 150-foot-long (45.7-meters-long) sandwich was created one Tuesday night at the Lebanon Area Fair by a large crew of volunteers known as the "Bologna Security." Lebanon bologna is known for its distinct smoked and tangy flavor.

Every footlong "bite" was sponsored at \$100 per foot. The money was donated to Lebanon County Christian Ministries and their efforts to help people dealing with

food insecurity in the Lebanon Valley.

PennLive reports that Bologna Security used 600 slices of provolone cheese and 1,200 slices of half-sweet and original Seltzer's Lebanon Bologna to create 900 sandwiches, or six sandwiches per foot. Fairgoers had a chance to enjoy the sandwich for free that Tuesday night.

Lebanon is 72 miles (about 116 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia.

An enormous bologna sandwich, billed as one of the world's largest, was unveiled at a fair in central Pennsylvania. The 150-foot-long sandwich was created one night at the Lebanon Area Fair.



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MS International is proud to support the Travis Mills Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting veterans and their families who have been injured in active duty or as a result of their service to the nation. By partnering with the Travis Mills Foundation, MSI aims to improve the lives of those who have served and sacrificed for their country and ensure they receive the care and support they deserve.

The Travis Mills Foundation, founded by Army veteran Travis Mills, focuses on supporting post-9/11 veterans who have suffered life-altering injuries. As a quadruple amputee himself, Travis Mills understands the challenges faced by injured veterans and seeks to empower them and their families by providing support and opportunities for recovery and growth.

The foundation's programs are designed to promote adaptive activities, family

bonding, and inclusive, all-expenses-paid vacations in the Belgrade Lakes Region of Maine. By creating an environment that fosters camaraderie, relaxation, and adventure, the Travis Mills Foundation helps veterans regain their physical and emotional well-being while strengthening the bond within their families.

MSI is honored to be part of this noble cause, supporting the Travis Mills Foundation in their mission to make a positive impact on the lives of injured veterans.

The Travis Mills Foundation is a nonprofit organization founded by Army veteran Travis Mills. The foundation's mission is to support post-9/11 veterans who have been critically injured by providing them and their families with opportunities for recovery, relaxation, and growth.

For more information about MSI's philanthropic efforts, please visit the charitable trust page at <https://www.msisurfaces.com/corporate/charitable-trust.aspx>.

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– *Thurgood Marshall*



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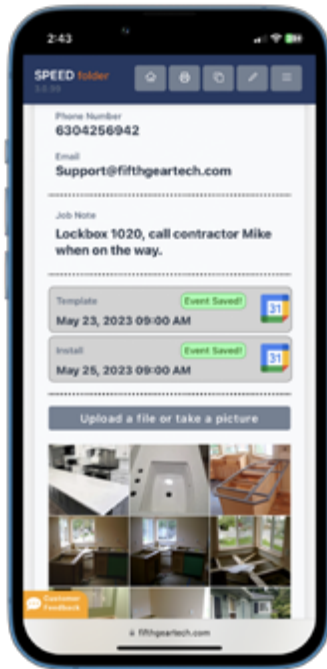
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Fifth Gear Technologies Launches SPEEDfolder

Fifth Gear Technologies, a leading provider of software solutions for the Countertop Industry, proudly introduces SPEEDfolder, an innovative application designed to transform how countertop businesses manage photos, organize job details, and seamlessly integrate with Google Calendar. Best of all, SPEEDfolder is offered completely free of charge, with an unlimited number of users.

Thanks to the generous support of industry sponsors who want to see fabricators succeed, SPEEDfolder is available at no charge to fabricators. SPEEDfolder offers the following key features for countertop fabricators:

Photo Capture and Storage: SPEEDfolder revolutionizes photo management by providing a convenient platform for capturing and storing job site photos. From on-site progress images to specific project details, all photos can be securely organized within SPEEDfolder, ensuring easy access and efficient documentation for every job. **Centralized Job Details in the Cloud:** With SPEEDfolder, countertop businesses can consolidate all



The new SPEEDfolder is a simple and free solution for photo capture, job organization, and Google Calendar integration.

job-related information in one place. From customer details to hand or digital drawings, every critical aspect of the job can be stored and accessed within the application. This eliminates the need for multiple tools or manual processes, saving time and reducing errors.

Google Calendar Integration: SPEEDfolder seamlessly integrates with Google Calendar, enhancing job scheduling and coordination. Job events in Google Calendar, such as Measure and Install, are automatically populated with all relevant job information from SPEEDfolder. This integration eliminates re-typing and minimizes mistakes, ensuring accurate and comprehensive job management.

By combining photo capture and storage, centralized job details, and seamless integration with Google Calendar, SPEEDfolder empowers businesses to streamline their processes, enhance collaboration, and optimize their operations.

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With this comprehensive solution, businesses can capture every aspect of the job, keep all job details in one organized place, and efficiently schedule and manage events through Google Calendar. Best of all it's simple and free.

To learn more about SPEEDfolder and its transformative capabilities, please visit www.speedfolder.com.

Fifth Gear Technologies is a leading provider of solutions such as SPEEDlabel and ETemplate for the countertop industry. With a focus on innovation, quality, and customer service, Fifth Gear Technologies strives to provide products and software that help Fabricators improve their processes, delight their customers, and reach their businesses goals.

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2023

Ads not meeting guidelines will not be published.

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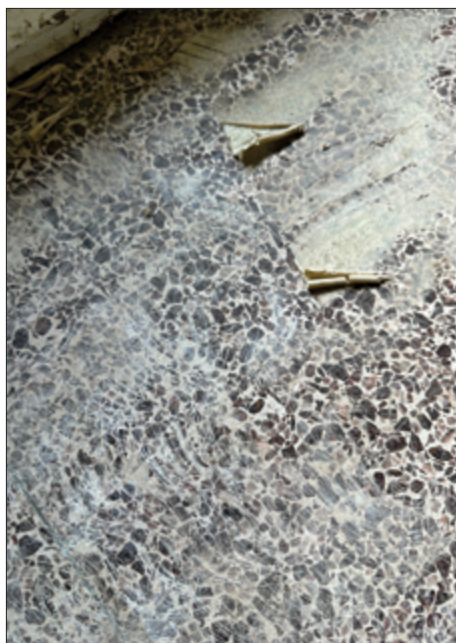
Stone Restoration

Continued from page 17

The borders were then cut with 100 grit DICP5 resins, then the floors with DICP3 100 grit, then 200 grit was used for both. The floor looked pretty good at this point and because the client did not want a super high polish or gloss, a 1500 grit PLP DIP (diamond impregnated pad) was used and the floor really started to look good. Finally, a PLP 12,000 grit DIP was used to clean everything up and the client was extremely happy with the results.

This floor, as mentioned previously, had original grind marks in many places which were left behind by some type of hand tool or edger machine. These were probably left by some type of cup wheel. So, with all of these issues, grind marks, blade cuts, cracks and settling issues, the coarse grind with the 40 grit was totally necessary. Considering the issues on these floors, the project turned out really nice and the client was very satisfied with the results.

As always and before beginning any new project, I recommend submitting a test area to confirm the results and the procedure, prior to starting a stone or hard surface restoration/maintenance project. Also, the best way to help ensure success is by partnering with a good distributor, like BB Industries, that knows the business. They can help with technical support, product purchase decisions, and other pertinent project information.



Damage to the terrazzo includes left over glue from wood floor removal and bad tool mar scratches from the original install.



Damage also included shifting eruption in the door threshold.



Cutting in the borders with a Makita and ELF5 40 grit flexible metal bond.

Bob Murrell has worked in the natural stone industry for over 40 years and is well known for his expertise in natural stone, tile, and decorative concrete restoration and maintenance. He helped develop some of the main products and processes which revolutionized the industry, and is currently the Director of Operations for M3 Technologies.

Send your comments and questions to Bob at attn: publisher@slipperyrockgazette.net.



So, with grind marks, blade cuts, cracks and settling issues, the coarse grind with the 40 grit was totally necessary. Considering the issues on these floors, the project turned out really nice and the client was very satisfied with the results.

Dining on Dino

Continued from page 13

“I’ve never seen a fossil like this before,” Mallon said.

That mammals ate dinosaur meat had been proposed before: another fossil showed a mammal died with dinosaur remains in its gut. But the new find also suggests that mammals may have actually preyed on dinosaurs several times their size, and didn’t just scavenge ones that were already dead, Mallon said.

“This turns the old story on its head,” Brusatte said. “We’re used to thinking of the Age of Dinosaurs as a time when dinosaurs ruled the world, and the tiny mammals cowered in the shadows.”

The study authors acknowledged that there have been some fossil forgeries known from this part of the world, which Mallon said was a concern when they

started their research. But after doing their own preparations of the skeletons and analyzing the rock samples, he said they were confident that the fossil — which was found by a farmer in 2012 — was genuine, and would welcome other scientists to study the fossil as well.

The mammal in the fossil duo is the meat-eating *Repenomamus robustus*, about the size of a house cat, Mallon said. The dinosaur — *Psittacosaurus lujiatunensis* — was about as big as a medium-sized dog with a parrotlike beak.

This species was a plant eater, but other dinosaurs were meat eaters or ate both. In the end, dinosaurs were probably still eating mammals more often than the other way around, Mallon said.

“And yet we now know that the mammals were able to fight back, at least at times,” he said.

Rockheads Group Hosts Oklahoma City Event

Event Draws Over 130 Industry Professionals for Networking, Best Practice Presentations, and Annual Benchmarking Study Analysis

The Rockheads Group, a leading professional association in the stone and granite fabricating industry, hosted a highly successful event in Oklahoma City, bringing together over 130 industry experts, leaders, and professionals. The event encompassed two days of robust networking opportunities, engaging Best Practice presentations, and insightful analysis of the association's annual benchmarking study.

The event, held at the prestigious Oklahoma City Marriott National, Autograph Collection Hotel, was attended by professionals from various sectors of the industry. Attendees converged to exchange ideas, gain valuable insights, and establish meaningful connections with peers. The highlight of the event was the presentation of the association's annual benchmarking study, which provided attendees with comprehensive insights into industry trends, performance metrics, and key growth indicators.

According to Rich Katzmann, Executive Director of the Rockheads Group, "We are thrilled to have witnessed such a remarkable turnout at this year's Oklahoma City event. The engagement and enthusiasm displayed by our attendees truly reflect the dedication of professionals in our industry to continuous improvement and knowledge-sharing. This event is a testament to the Rockheads Group's commitment to fostering growth and collaboration within the stone fabrication industry."

One of the attendees, Andrew Drage from Accent Countertops remarked, "Attending the Rockheads Group Oklahoma City event was an incredible experience. The networking opportunities were unparalleled, allowing me to connect with peers and industry veterans who shared invaluable insights."

The Best Practice presentations were thought-provoking and provided practical strategies that I can implement in my own organization. Additionally, the analysis of the annual benchmarking study offered a comprehensive overview of where our industry stands and where it's heading."

The Rockheads Group remains dedicated to providing a platform for industry professionals to come together, share knowledge, and collectively drive the fabrication sector forward. With its commitment to innovation and collaboration, the association continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the industry.

For more information about the Rockheads Group and its upcoming events, please visit www.rockheadsusa.com.

The Rockheads Group is a premier professional association in the stone & granite fabrication industry, dedicated to promoting excellence, fostering collaboration, and driving innovation within the industry. With a focus on knowledge-sharing, networking, and professional development, the Rockheads Group serves as a hub for industry professionals to connect, learn, and thrive.

"I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. In my youth I travelled much, and I observed in different countries, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer."

—Benjamin Franklin



Oklahoma City conference attendees at a demo of the Poseidon Industries T-Rex machine during an enriching visit to Starlumber.



Conference participants at the benchmarking presentation. Conference goals were fostering the exchange of knowledge, collaborations, and growth within the stone industry.

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