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Radiant Elegance: Transforming Spaces with Backlit Natural Stone

Thanks to celebrity culture, more natural stone options, better technology, and social media influencers giving us a peek of backlit kitchens and islands in high-end homes, natural stone is getting lit.

by Megy Karydes

Reprint Courtesy usenaturalstone.org

Photo Courtesy United Marble Fabricators



This stunning backlit Honey Onyx bar back was awarded a 2015 Pinnacle Award of Excellence in the Residential Interior category. Above, right: Byzantine Onyx wall.



Photo courtesy of River House Interiors and Corry's Creations

Jensen, launched Triton Stone Group almost two decades ago, a client might ask for onyx for a front of the bar or a backsplash in a bar atmosphere to be backlit. It was something requested to amp up the aesthetic in a hospitality setting or very high-end homes because at the time, natural stone options that could be backlit were limited and onyx was considered top tier and luxe.

As more accessible and affordable natural stone options entered the market, and lighting technology improved, Jones says demand for backlit stone in homes began to increase. At the same time, homeowners were looking for more color and movement in their stone options, outside of the white and gray tones that have dominated the market for the last decade.

There are several places where backlit stone can be added to make an impact. While Jones admits most people add them in a kitchen area, others like Judith Meaney, interior designer with River House Interiors, have installed Byzantine onyx in a home to brighten up an otherwise dark hallway. Some have included backlit stone behind a wine cellar. It's a great option for those who are seeking a wow factor.

Better Technology Allows Stone to Shine

Technology plays a crucial role with backlit stone and cannot be an afterthought when it comes to the installation process. It's always a good idea to make sure your fabricator and installer are top notch but it's even more important for this kind of work, according to Jones. "You want to work with experienced stone and lighting installers to ensure lighting is balanced," she says.

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Tucker Design Awards Announced

The Natural Stone Institute, the largest and longest serving natural stone trade association, proudly presented the 2024 Tucker Design Awards in a ceremony on August 26 at The Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Tucker Design Awards tradition was launched in 1977 by the Building Stone Institute and honors those who achieve a criterion of excellence in the use of natural stone through concept, design, and construction. All aspects

of natural stone application – including exterior building, landscape, interior design, ornamentation, or restoration of commercial, institutional, or residential projects – were considered in this Tucker Design Awards selection process. This year's recipients represent some of the finest building and landscape projects completed throughout the world utilizing natural stone from around the globe.

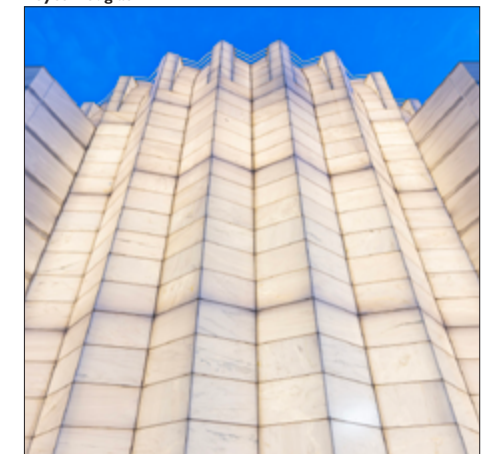
Tucker Design Awards celebrate the innovation and vision that designers bring to their projects through the specification and use of

St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and Shrine New York, NY

natural stone. For Natural Stone Institute members, acknowledgment as a contributor to a Tucker Design Award winning project is a genuine tribute to their traditional values, physicality of work and dedication to precise specifications required in the realization of such accomplished architectural design.

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Royce Douglas



Radiant Elegance

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In the past, Jones says one would be able to see the individual light bulbs because the lights are part of a strip. “Now they’ve figured out a way to kind of blur the lights so that it truly does look like the full slab is lighting up,” she adds.

The thickness of the stone has to be just right in order to ensure the lumens (a unit of measurement that indicates the amount of visible light a light source emits) are bright enough so the stone is illuminated when backlit. There is another reason skill and thickness come into play and that has to do with skillfully shielding the weave on the back of the slab that often looks like honeycomb. “If you backlight it cheaply or with the wrong light, you actually project that honeycomb through the stone and it ends up looking chalky,” Jones adds.

Depending on the type of lights installed, a homeowner can opt to change the colors with the touch of a button. This can be especially fun with stones where there are a few colors at play within a pattern. “There have been so many advances in technology with LED lighting that most are operated with a light switch and a remote can change the color while it’s already in,” Jones says. Think of it like the lighting a homeowner installs in a swimming pool where one can

Photos (2) Courtesy Triton Stone Group



Translucent slab for a special residential project.

change the lighting color by simply tapping a button on a phone app.

For those concerned about replacing burnt lights, Jones notes a smart installer will recommend including a panel or other way to access the lighting so any lighting issues can be addressed easily.

Backlit stone might not work for every project but it certainly makes a statement in the right spots.

Megy Karydes is a Chicago-based writer. Find her at MegyKarydes.com.

Tucker Design Awards

**2100 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC**

Marble melds nature, architecture, and sculpture together, elevating placemaking to its highest levels at 2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, a LEED Gold, mixed-use development on the north-east corner of George Washington University campus.

The design embraces the site’s challenging geometry, carefully establishing uplifting public space within encircling v-plan floor plates. The inviting 3-story entrance lobby rises into a grand 10-story atrium – a “forest” of daylit wood and stone, animating the prominent corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 21st Street – visible over a mile away. The playful signature undulations of the building – emulating the

iconic streamlined Flatiron Building and Barcelona’s Casa Mila – culminate in the public interior, where a sweeping marble stair carries the rich pattern of varied stone textures from the street level lobby up 12 feet into the atrium amenities level.

Considering the need for a beautiful and durable material in all high traffic areas, the team chose natural stone. Stone procurement started with exploring an array of medium to dark-colored stones to complement the brighter white oak and etched glass walls, with deeper tones and colors emulating a riverbed.

Unprecedented levels of fabrication followed a thorough, 100% dry-lay review process, including all dimension

**Pelli Clarke & Partners
2100 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC**

stones, curving slabs, and the grand stair dry-set in relative position. While the dry-lay reviews helped ensure a smoother installation, there were still issues of unavoidable cupping. The most challenging parts to finish were the ramp and grand stair’s walls. In select areas, the installer had to grind and refinish the leather surface to match throughout. This proceeded after a careful review of additional mockups and input from the installers, architects, and owners.

2100 Pennsylvania Avenue showcases how to conceive and implement natural stone to the highest levels of craft, elevating architecture to new levels of uplifting placemaking.

All Project Photos © Jeff Goldberg/Esto



PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

WDG Architecture, PLLC
Architect of Record

AKDO Intertrade
Stone Supplier

Lorton Stone, LLC
Stone Installer

STONE
Dark Olive marble

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Tucker Design Awards

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Bank OZK Headquarters Little Rock, AR

Located between parallel ridges in the shadow of a popular state park mountain, the Bank OZK Headquarters building strives for a timeless, modernist clarity intended to attract talent, foster creative collaboration, and engage the community. Two primary office wings are linked by a 5-story atrium that acts as a vertical center of collaboration. The building seeks to balance a striking form with modularity and repetition of details as core design elements, seeking to be as relevant in fifty years as today. The client requested a progressive workspace that welcomes clients nationwide and acts as a recruiting tool for young talent. Finally, they asked for the space to feel like it could be placed within a major city and

compare aesthetically with their competition.

Stone became a prominent design element for its representation of permanence and its striking natural beauty. Large format Pearl Grey marble floor tile over a radiant heat system provides the appropriate scale for the 5-story atrium. Having selected the blocks from the quarry for this stone, the layout is organized such that variations between tiles are subtle and feel organic. These specific blocks were selected for the clarity between veining. Thirteen bookmatched natural stone walls serve as timeless artwork for open office areas and give ownership of various departments. These were hand selected from various stone dealers throughout the Arkansas and Texas area. The design team studied patterns to select the best slabs available for immediate shipment and fabrication. Each wall is treated as artwork, complete with its own plaque stating its name and origin.

Timothy Hursley



Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects (2)

Polk Stanley Wilcox
Architect

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

Levantino*

The Stone Collection*

Triton Stone Group*

Stone Suppliers

McElroy Tops & Floors

Stone Fabricator

STONES

Calacatta Apuano Extra marble

Calacatta Borghini marble

Calacatta Macchia Vecchia marble

Icarus Quartzite

Michelangelo quartzite

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church & National Shrine New York, NY

Since its founding in 1916, The Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine in New York City is the anchor for a vibrant New York neighborhood. The original Church building stood in the shadow of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers. Destroyed on September 11th, 2001, the rebuilt Church reopened in 2022 as a Shrine for the Nation and a place for remembrance.

Inspired by the Hagia Sophia, the new Church design is a safe haven for prayer and remembrance. The church façade is Pentelikon white and grey marble from Dionysos, Greece with the same chemical composition and texture as the Pentelic marble of the Parthenon. Sharing the form and material of two UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Shrine refers to history and offers hope for the future.

Stone cladding at opaque façade areas are honed (white) or bush hammered (grey) 2-1/2 inch thick panels anchored to the concrete base building structure. Through the dedication of the fabrication and installation team, the building's aligned façade and joint treatments give the appearance of loose-laid massive stone cladding.

Facades at the central dome and above the West Entry incorporate translucent panels with thin stone sandwiched between glass plates. The backlit Shrine is a beacon of light onto the World Trade Center memorial.

A metaphoric and physical symbol of hope, The Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine's timeless massing articulates graceful curves, corners, and pleats in an inviting stone facade.

Royce Douglas



Santiago Calatrava
Architects & Engineers,
in collaboration with
Koutsomitris
Architects

Joe Brennan



PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

Venus Marble Group S.A.

Stone Supplier / Fabricator

AVRO Consult Engineering*

Façade Engineer of Record

Thornton Tomasetti

Structural Engineer

MG McGrath Architectural

Glass & Glazing

Stone Installer

STONE

Pentelikon marble

Cotswold-Inspired Residence Strafford, PA

The design of this new residence on Philadelphia's Main Line was inspired by the quintessential character of villages in the Cotswold region of south-central England. It features many typical details of Cotswold' homes such as low eaves, steep roofs, tall chimneys, and cross gables. The property is located on eight acres of land with its orientation creating a park-like feel. An abundance of natural light was a priority for the client, so orientation was critical.

The exterior is a blend of local mica schist and Indiana limestone. Each piece of limestone was cut using a CNC machine, and hand-tooled. Richly carved accents were then added to the limestone by local craftsmen. There are many unique features including a carved limestone portal with datestone, gable parapet, decorative limestone finials, and an antique French fountain situated in a three-bay limestone loggia. At the rear of the house, there is a timber-framed porch with

a stone loggia providing access to the yard. The wood windows are fabricated with lead cames and the doors and windows feature carved limestone trim. The clad roof is typical for an English home and consists of terra cotta tiles manufactured in Turkey. The chimneys feature schist fieldstone at the base with hand-tooled ashlar schist above a carved limestone water table and a limestone cap. A slight recess was added to the ashlar stone portion of the chimney to create the illusion of a double chimney.

The elaborate design continues at the interior with custom millwork and decorative plaster, as well as floors that were fabricated from red and white oak trees that were located on the property prior to construction.

There are carved limestone elements, creating a connection to the exterior, including a limestone alcove for the kitchen range, carved with the family's motto in Latin.

The Tucker Design Awards will be continued in the December Slippery Rock Gazette.

Durstan Saylor Photography



John Milner Architects
Architect

PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

Jonathan Alderson Landscape Architects

Landscape Architect

Media Quarry Company

Vickery Stone Company*

Stone Suppliers

Joseph Manero & Sons

Stone Installer

STONES

Indiana limestone

Wissahickon mica schist



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ISFA Announces 2024 Annual Conference Agenda

Themed “Crafting Success: Innovate, Fabricate, Dominate,” this leading event for surfacing industry professionals features expert-led panel discussions, presentations and networking opportunities.

The International Surface Fabricators Association, a globally recognized trade organization serving the surface industry, announced the detailed agenda for its highly anticipated 2024 Annual Conference, set to take place November 6-8 at The Palms Hotel & Spa in Miami, Florida. The event will bring together leading fabricators, manufacturers, suppliers and other industry professionals to discuss the latest trends, technologies and innovations shaping the future of the surfacing industry.

This year’s conference will feature a robust lineup of educational sessions, business development workshops and presentations from renowned industry experts. Attendees will explore new materials, cutting-edge fabrication techniques and best practices for driving operational excellence.

Highlights of the agenda include:

Keynote Breakfast Stress Less, Achieve More: Turning Pressure into Productivity with Dr. Sharon Grossman, an executive coach, business consultant and author of *The Stress Advantage*. Dr. Grossman has over 20 years of experience helping individuals and organizations overcome stress and achieve their goals. She will share strategies to turn stress into a strength, find work-life balance and boost productivity without burnout.

Education Track: Innovate. In this track, attendees will discover groundbreaking ideas and forward-thinking strategies from industry leaders that can redefine goals. Topics include:

Exploring Surfaces: The Value of Adding Solid Surface & Porcelain to Your Shop with Aaron Davis, Avonite Solid Surface, and Todd Hibbs, Caesarstone, and moderated by Tim Saddoris of Grand Onyx.

Marketing for Fabricators: Learn How to Show 'Em All You Got, with Anthony Milia of Milia Marketing.

A Fabricator’s Inspiration | La Inspiracion de un Fabricador, a bilingual session that explores the journeys of two fabricators from humble beginnings who have become leaders in the industry, presented by Laura Grandlienard, ROCKin’teriors, and Rodrigo Velázquez, Indeko.

Life Cycle of a Project, a panel discussion featuring award-winning designer Jennifer Farrell.

Education Track: Fabricate. In this track, dive into educational sessions that turn visions into reality. Whether it’s new skills, projects or products, attendees will leave with tangible insights and a toolkit for success. Topics include:

Safety First: Best Practices & Leadership in a Safe Shop with Tim Denzer, a leader in safety education programs at Cambria.

Eight Steps to Improving Your Sales Team’s Capacity with Rick Phelps of Synchronous Solutions.

Shop to Office Transition: How to Make It Work, with Ed Young, Fabricator’s Business Coach.

OSHA Update: What to Expect in 2025 & Beyond presented by ISFA leadership and various industry experts.

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Industry Calendar of Events

November 2024

ISFA 3-Day Annual Conference

When: Wednesday November 6 to Friday, November 8 (CDT)

Where: Miami Florida

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

BACA Bash

When: Wednesday November 6 to Thursday, Nov 7

Where: 101 Premier Drive, Orion Township, Michigan

Visit www.bacasystems.com for more information on BACA's training events.

NSI: Texas Stone Summit

When: Thursday November 7, 9a.m. –3p.m. CDT

Where: Arizona Tile, 2701 Regent Blvd, #100, Dallas Texas 75261

Visit naturalstoneinstitute.org/calendar for more information.

ISFA Member Connect Meeting

When: Thursday November 14 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. ET

Where: Online Event

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

December 2024

NSI: Virtual Quarry Tour: Colorado Stone Quarries

When: Thursday December 12, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. ET

Where: Online Event

Visit naturalstoneinstitute.org/calendar for more information.

ISFA Announces 2024 Annual Conference Agenda

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Education Track: Dominate. In this track, attendees will establish powerful connections and gain exclusive insights that help overcome challenges and elevate successes. Topics include:

Policies, Practices & Protection: Does Your Handbook Have What It Takes? presented by human resources expert Wendy Christie.

Make Your Life Easier with Data-Driven Decision Making with market insights leader and president of Direct Opinions, Darlene Campagna.

Accountability in the Stone Industry with Jon Kaplan, stone fabrication consultant for Kaplan Consulting.

Recruiting & Retaining Stone Industry Talent with Bo Schwarz and Travis Sterrett of Bronwick Recruiting.

Networking Events: The conference will

offer several dedicated networking opportunities that foster chances for attendees to connect with peers and industry leaders, including a welcome reception, partner party and offsite curated activities. The ISFA Recognition and Awards Luncheon will celebrate this year's ISFA Award winners and other accolades.

Expo: The Expo will feature leading suppliers and manufacturers showcasing the latest tools, materials and equipment tailored for fabricators in the surfacing industry. Attendees can connect with product experts, demo new technologies and source materials for upcoming projects.

"We are thrilled to present an exciting and dynamic program that addresses the key challenges and opportunities facing our industry today," said Marissa Bankert, executive director of ISFA. "Our goal is to provide fabricators with actionable



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insights, practical skills and valuable connections to help them thrive in this ever-evolving market. We want everyone — all kinds of fabricators from the shop floor to the leadership team — to walk away with something tangible. This event will enable attendees to focus on multiple ways to impact their businesses so that they can hit the ground running in 2025."

Registration is open to members and nonmembers, and anyone interested in attending can find more details at www.ISFAnow.org/annual-conference. Registration fees include programming and activities listed on the agenda.

The International Surface Fabricators Association (ISFA) is globally recognized as a premier trade organization serving the architectural surface industry. ISFA exists to help fabricators and other industry professionals increase product quality, improve safety measures, encourage

professionalism and elevate profitability by facilitating education, standards and camaraderie. ISFA values innovation, dependability, trust, honesty, ethics and serving others above all else. Learn more at www.ISFAnow.org.

"I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than those attending too small a degree of it."
—Thomas Jefferson

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Make Sure Your Shop Machinery Doesn't Have You Running in Circles

Uncertainty right now is a real thing. We've barely recovered from COVID and we've just had the second and third-largest bank failures in history. We have no idea what the fallout is or how the economy will perform moving forward. Regardless of what happens, you still need to run a strong shop and get the most from your machines and your people. So, if ... it ... does hit the fan, you're prepared.

When there's uncertainty, cutting costs and maximizing productivity are crucial. But isn't it really important at any time? In some cases, you've invested between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in these machines. You should be pushing them to the limits to get maximum production.

Follow these steps and when you're done, you'll be breaking shop records, producing more slabs than you thought possible on your machines, and have a process that ANYONE can run if the dreaded turnover visits your door.

Why I Don't Eat Chef Boyardee Ravioli

In my past life, I worked for the second-largest food-producing company in the world, ConAgra Foods. I was on a special technology team and I got to travel around the country to see how things were made, like Chef Boyardee, Egg Beaters, Swiss Miss, and more. I'll eat all of it except for Chef Boyardee's Ravioli. Not only do I not buy it, but I close my eyes when I walk by it in the grocery store. Trust me, you don't want to know what's in this stuff.

Outside of learning how these products are made, I was mentored by some of the best plant managers in the country and I noticed one consistent behavior among the best leaders; they all started by working with operators to understand the problems and inefficiencies. It makes sense if you think about it, but is often overlooked by managers.

Your employees have chosen to run your CNC or wet saw. They know they're

Tim Saddoris
Grand Onyx

good at it, and, believe it or not, many of them enjoy it.

Shop Floor Productivity? Think NASCAR

I liken it to a NASCAR race. I'll never forget the first race I went to — the speed, the power, the noise, the r-u-m-b-l-e. It's exhilarating! You can literally feel it in your bones. But then, it was the circles. And more circles. Then, even more circles. How could anyone enjoy that for hours on end? Around and around and around.

Well, they do. And these people know how to run their machines better than anyone else, and they achieve things that are impossible for most. If you or I were in the driving seat, we could never do what these skilled and trained professionals could do. So, what is the one thing that would completely destroy the race in a matter of minutes — and it's not a pileup?

STOP KEEPING SCORE.

If they stopped counting how many times they went around the track or what position they were in, why would they bother pushing their machines to the limit? Why can't we tap into the same competitive environment to achieve on the shop floor?

Improve Production: Step by Step

Before you invest in that new machine, make sure you're running your current machinery the best you can with the operators you have. Here's how to do that.

Step 1: Track your downtime and create visibility.

Leaning into the NASCAR Theme, I own another company called ThriveMES that tracks and improves machine downtime all over the world. One of my favorite stories was about what we did for Amsoil, the premium oil company. In all types of manufacturing, there are changeovers. This is the time it takes to convert a machine from

There's one consistent behavior among the best leaders; they all started by working with operators to understand the problems and efficiencies of the equipment.

running one product to another. Amsoil does about three to four each day per manufacturing line. Their schedule was planned for 20 to 25 minutes per changeover. Once they started tracking it, they found it was actually closer to 45 minutes. Imagine how that adds up across dozens of lines!

After measuring it, they were able to manage it. They went from 45 minutes to under 20 minutes per changeover. This enabled them to run their busiest time of year without any overtime and make preventative maintenance a priority to keep the machines in tip-top shape without messing with the production schedule.

Staying with the NASCAR theme, another customer, AIRLIFT (they invented the air suspension that helps cars hug corners), found out that some machines just far outperformed others. They actually ended up shifting all their production to a handful of operators and machines, and significantly increased output. Do you know which machines and operators in your shop work most efficiently? You are likely shorthanded, so you may be able to consolidate your production into fewer machines to work more efficiently or maybe even with fewer operators. But, you don't know if you don't measure it.

Step 2: Create a competition.

Once you measure it, you have the facts you need to see what's causing you the most downtime. So, how do you manage it? I had a client who said his bottleneck was the wet saw. He was considering kicking out a wall and buying a new wet saw. So, we started tracking his machine usage — the percentage of time the machine is running during a scheduled shift. You get

that by subtracting the downtime from the amount of time it should be running.

His average machine usage was 65%. That meant for more than a third of the day, his wet saw wasn't running. In an eight-hour shift, that's about three hours of total downtime. That's a lot of wasted time that machine isn't producing. When we showed the operator we were tracking production, he started to pay attention. Within a few weeks, machine usage jumped to 85%. That's an extra 1.5 hours of production — just because we were keeping score.

Now, I can't say he didn't do anything differently, because obviously he did. But what?

Step 3: Document the process.

Once you've improved the process, you need to document what changed to capture that knowledge for the future. As your operator has pushed the limits, ask what they're doing differently. Can it be documented?

With this client, we discovered that the time between jobs had been reduced from eight minutes to five minutes. Over the course of a day, that's a big deal. The operator had changed the job-to-job process. By documenting what he was doing differently, we made it part of the standard operating procedure for any operator. This is especially important in dealing with the inevitable turnover that's likely to occur in the future. Better processes become part of the training for replacements.

If you don't have the time or capacity to document, here's a suggestion. Talk to your local mechanical or industrial engineering college. Ask to participate in a school project or offer an internship or school project to document your process. I've seen it done. These kids are so excited to document your process and get some real-world experience — and it's free!

Another idea is to consider discretely setting up a camera. While you don't want to spy on your employees, recording the workflow can help you find places you can streamline operations. You can pick up a Wyze Camera and SD card. They're cheap but work just fine and can store weeks and weeks of footage.

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Shop Machinery

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Reviewing the video can help uncover patterns that create inefficiencies. And maybe you're not going to do this yourself, but you could enlist that college student to do it. You get the info and they get the experience. Win-win.

Tracking your downtime, creating competition and keeping score, and documenting your processes can produce significant results. You can uncover the roadblocks that are preventing you from operating at peak efficiency, so you can take proactive steps to improve productivity. Instead

of running in circles, you can start running circles around your competition — just like the NASCAR drivers do on their victory lap.

Tim Saddoris is the president of Grand Onyx, a firm dedicated to building world-class surface fabricators. Grand Onyx helps companies define operational processes and create road maps to achievements that enable more predictable revenue, stronger margins and foster legacy businesses that stand the test of time. To learn how Grand Onyx can help with hiring or automating your business, visit www.GrandOnyx.Pro. Tim's always willing to connect ... AFTER the NASCAR race is over.

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"I know it's terrible. Do you have an actual question?"

ANDERSON

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Eleven Marketing Hacks for Countertop Shops

Stephen Alberts
Countertop Marketing Co.

Having the right marketing strategy goes a long way when it comes to countertop shops. It's a competitive market out there, and you need to stand out! And while you can't take shortcuts, there are some strategies you can use to hack your marketing strategy into something with an incredible reach and lots of conversions. Using smart marketing strategies can help your shop attract new customers, build lasting relationships, and boost sales. Here are 11 of our favorites.

1. Optimize Your Website for Local SEO

Your website is often the first point of contact between you and potential customers. To ensure it reaches the right audience, optimize it for local search engine optimization (SEO). Include relevant keywords like "countertop shop in [Your City]" throughout your site. Make sure your business name, address, and phone number are consistent across all pages and online directories.

Additionally, create location-specific content, such as blog posts about local design trends or customer testimonials from your area. This will help your site rank higher in local search results, making it easier for nearby customers to find you.

2. Leverage Social Media Platforms

Social media is a powerful tool for connecting with potential customers and showcasing your work. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest are ideal for sharing high-quality images of your countertops and engaging with your audience.



Post regularly and interact with followers by responding to comments and messages promptly. Use relevant hashtags like #KitchenRemodel or #GraniteCountertops to increase your visibility. Social media advertising can also be an affordable way to reach a targeted audience interested in home improvement.

3. Showcase High-Quality Visual Content

In an industry where aesthetics are paramount, visual content is king. Invest in professional photography to capture the beauty and craftsmanship of your countertops. High-resolution images and videos can be used on your website, social media, and marketing materials.

Consider creating virtual tours or 360-degree views of your showroom to give online visitors an immersive experience. Quality visuals not only attract attention but also build credibility and trust with potential clients.

4. Implement Email Marketing Campaigns

Email marketing is an effective way to keep in touch with past clients and nurture leads. Collect email addresses through your website or in-store promotions, and send out regular newsletters featuring new products, special offers, or helpful tips on countertop maintenance.

Personalize your emails to make recipients feel valued. For instance, send a thank-you

message after a purchase or a reminder when it's time for a countertop reseal. Email campaigns keep your business top-of-mind and encourage repeat business.

5. Collaborate with Local Businesses

Partnering with other local businesses can expand your network and attract new customers. Connect with interior designers, contractors, real estate agents, and kitchen remodelers to create mutually beneficial relationships.

Offer referral incentives or collaborate on projects to showcase your combined expertise. Hosting joint events or workshops can also draw in a larger audience and strengthen your community presence.

6. Encourage and Respond to Online Reviews

Online reviews significantly influence consumer decisions. Encourage satisfied customers to leave positive reviews on platforms like Google, Facebook, and Houzz. Make the process easy by providing direct links or sending follow-up emails requesting feedback.

Always respond to reviews, both positive and negative. Thank customers for their support and address any concerns promptly and professionally. This shows that you value customer satisfaction and are committed to quality service.

7. Utilize Retargeting Ads

Retargeting ads allow you to re-engage

potential customers who have already visited your website but didn't make a purchase or inquiry. By displaying ads to these users as they browse other sites or social media platforms, you keep your countertop shop top-of-mind.

Set a budget that fits your goals, and use retargeting platforms like Google Ads or Facebook Ads to create customized campaigns. Retargeting can be highly effective, ensuring your ads are shown to users who have already expressed interest in your services. Regularly monitor and tweak your campaigns to maximize conversions and return on investment.

8. Offer Exclusive Promotions and Discounts

Attract new customers and incentivize repeat business with special promotions. Limited-time offers, seasonal discounts, or referral bonuses can create a sense of urgency and encourage action.

Promote these deals through your marketing channels, including your website, social media, and email campaigns. Make sure the promotions provide genuine value to your customers while still maintaining your profit margins.

9. Create Engaging Blog Content

Maintaining a blog on your website is an excellent way to showcase your expertise and improve SEO. Write articles on topics like countertop material comparisons, design inspiration, or maintenance tips. High-quality content attracts visitors to your site and keeps them engaged.

Share your blog posts on social media and through email newsletters to reach a wider audience. Consistent blogging positions your shop as a knowledgeable authority in the industry.

10. Utilize Customer Testimonials and Case Studies

Highlighting success stories and customer testimonials builds trust with potential clients. Create case studies that detail specific projects, including challenges overcome and the final results. Include quotes and endorsements from satisfied customers.



"I want 'USDA REJECT' right here."

[Please turn to page 9](#)

Marketing Hacks

Continued from page 8

Display these testimonials prominently on your website and marketing materials. Real-life examples of your work and happy clients can significantly influence purchasing decisions.

11. Participate in Community Events and Sponsorships

Getting involved in your local community can significantly enhance your brand's visibility and reputation. Participate in local events such as home shows, fairs, or charity fundraisers. Sponsoring local sports teams, school events, or community projects can also increase your exposure.

Even if you tackle just a few of these marketing hacks, and you're consistent with executing the tips then you will see growth in your shop. It's not easy work and does take persistence so don't give up! Reach out to us if you have any questions.

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. Visit countertopmarketingco.com or stonengage.com. You can also email Stephen at steve@countertopmarketingco.com.

“I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

—Edward Hale

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Can the Constraint Move to Sales? Yes, it Can!

Maria Leali
Synchronous Solutions

IN a little Midwestern town, Jerry owned a shop that had once thrived with operators hustling to keep up with the incoming work. But lately, business had slowed. The schedule, once brimming with slabs to be cut, felt emptier, and Jerry sensed a shift in the rhythm of his days.

Jerry prided himself on being efficient; he had mastered the flow of work through his shop. But now, despite his best efforts, it seemed that customers were fewer, and the vibrant energy that once filled his shop was dimming. It wasn't that there was a lack of work—opportunities still floated in the air, waiting to be captured. Jerry just needed a new approach.

As he sat in his quiet office one afternoon, he began to ponder the situation. “What if the real issue isn't my pricing or my selection of slabs to choose from?” he thought. “What if the problem is in how I'm reaching out to my customers?”

That's when he recalled his coach's advice about investing in a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. At first, it seemed daunting. “How can a computer program really change the way I sell?” he mused. Yet, as he considered it more deeply, he realized that maybe his sales process needed a fresh perspective.

Determined to turn things around, Jerry started measuring how his sales team's time was spent. He asked the small team of 6 to jot down their daily activities. He poured over their notes a week later, observing the hours spent talking with customers versus time spent organizing the sample rack or planning deliveries of samples. The results were eye-opening. “Too much time is spent on things that don't directly lead to sales!” he exclaimed.

With a blinding flash of the obvious, Jerry connected that he could become much more efficient in his sales department, just as he had in his shop. “Start with identifying the constraint,” he recollected as he set about planning improvements to his front office.

He considered his part-time sales assistant, Emma. She was great with customers but often tied up with administrative tasks like scheduling appointments and



delivering samples. Jerry decided to delegate those responsibilities to a local college student looking for part-time work. With her help, Emma could focus on what she did best: connecting with customers.

With a little help from the new CRM, Jerry's team started scheduling visits more efficiently. He noticed Emma was now spending her time where it counted—talking to customers, engaging with them, and nurturing those relationships. The system reminded them to follow up, minimizing the chances of missing out on potential sales.

“Okay, let's see how many more conversations we can have in a week,” Jerry said, full of newfound optimism. He set a goal for Emma: aim for twelve meaningful conversations instead of the usual ten. As she embraced this challenge, he watched her confidence grow. Each interaction led to another, and soon, customers who hadn't visited in a while began to trickle back.

Jerry's heart swelled with pride as the shop came back to life. The sound of saws and shop talk filled the air once more, and he could see Emma thriving as she reconnected with old friends and welcomed new faces.

As weeks passed, the sales began to pick up. Jerry realized that the key wasn't just about having a great product to sell but ensuring that he and his team were free to make genuine connections with customers. The CRM had turned into more than

just software; it was a tool that empowered them to focus on what truly mattered.

In the end, Jerry learned that when the constraints of a business shift to an area outside production, the same Synchronous Flow principles apply. With a little creativity and the right tools, he could adapt, grow, and breathe new life into his shop. As he read an email from a happy customer one afternoon, he couldn't help but smile, knowing that the heart of his business was beating strong again.

Could your team use a boost in creating a sales system that helps them focus on what truly matters? Our next cohort of 12-Week Sales Masterclass kicks off on Tuesday, November 5 at 12:00 PM EST. To get more information, email MariaLeali@SynchronousSolutions.com.

Maria Leali is an executive coach with Synchronous Solutions, helping leadership teams perform better with their existing teams. Maria believes that success happens when we challenge the status quo, think outside the box, and find a better way to do business. Synchronous Solutions simplifies business processes and systems to improve the flow of information and materials. WHY we do it is to ultimately create a better life for everyone in the business. Because we don't win, unless you win. And it's FUN to win! Learn more at SynchronousSolutions.com.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Thriving in a Challenging Economy: How to Strengthen Your Marketing Sales and Strategies

AS the dreaded economic slowdown affects more fabrication shops each day, it's clear that relying on old strategies won't cut it anymore. To navigate these challenging times successfully, you need a solid marketing plan that doesn't rely on lowering prices to generate leads, and you need effective sales techniques to convert those leads into bookings. Here's how you can adapt and rise above the competition.

Stop "Marketing by Accident" and Start "Marketing on Purpose"

The goal of marketing is simple: generate leads—prospective customers that your sales team can convert into paying clients. But here's the catch: if your marketing is focused on your latest discounts, new colors, or pictures of recent installations, you're positioning yourself as just another shop among many. You're not giving your customers any reason to consider you beyond price or variety.

Don't believe it? Try pulling up the websites or Facebook pages of 10 different fabrication shops. After looking at three, you'll see that they all start to look the same.

Most fabricators fall into the trap of copying what others are doing. This includes playing the "low price game." If you're not careful, you might be doing the same thing. So, how do you avoid wasting money on ads just to compete on price?

Understand Your Customer's Perspective

To stand out, start by stepping into your customer's shoes. Look at the world from their perspective, and craft your marketing message to reflect their concerns. When you do this, you become much more than just another option—you become a trusted partner.

Begin by identifying the problems that keep your customers up at night. If your primary customer is a contractor, tailor your message to show that you understand their challenges. If you primarily serve homeowners, adjust your messaging accordingly.

For example, contractors are worried about hitting deadlines and managing multiple

Ed Young

Fabricator's Coach

projects. Homeowners, on the other hand, are focused on selecting the perfect product that fits their vision and budget. While there's overlap, their core concerns differ.

Five Insights on How to Sell Without Being "Salesy"

Even with excellent marketing that brings in high-quality leads, you still need to convert those leads into actual sales. The challenge is that no one likes being "sold to." So, how do you sell without coming off as pushy?

The answer lies in changing your perspective and approach. Here are five key insights on how to sell without selling:

1. Understand Why Buyers Buy

People don't buy products or services—they buy solutions to their problems. Whether they're trying to relieve a pain point, reduce fear, or achieve a goal, purchases are driven by emotion. Buyers make emotional decisions and then justify them with logic.

If you only ask surface-level questions, you won't uncover the real reasons behind a customer's purchase decision. Connect on an emotional level by understanding their deeper motivations. Customers want to work with someone who understands their unique situation and can guide them toward the best solution.

2. Focus on Helping, Not Selling

Sales shouldn't feel like sales. Your role is to serve by helping prospects find the best solution for their needs. When you shift the conversation from selling to solving, the value of what you offer becomes more apparent.

3. Create Interest, Not Resistance

Every interaction you have with a potential customer either generates interest or creates resistance. Your mindset plays a huge role here. If your primary focus is "How can I get this person to buy?" you may be pushing customers away.

WAYS TO THRIVE EVEN IF THE ECONOMY IS SLOW

- AVOID wasting money on ads just to compete on price
- SHIFT your messaging so you can sell on VALUE not PRICE
- SERVE first, SELL second



Instead, focus on truly helping your prospects. When you approach each conversation with the goal of serving their needs, you'll build stronger connections and gain more clients.

4. Ask Provocative Questions

Exceptional salespeople challenge prospects to think differently. By asking thoughtful, provocative questions, you help them reframe their current situation. This approach provides value to the customer and helps you better understand their needs.

Asking the right questions allows you and the prospect to jointly uncover the best path forward. This not only builds trust but also helps you identify if your solution is the right fit.

5. Master the M3 Formula: Mindset, Mechanics, Motion

Success in sales requires a strong foundation in three areas: Mindset, Mechanics, and Motion.

- **Mindset:** A positive, proactive mindset is critical to long-term success. Understand what drives your perceptions and reactions.
- **Mechanics:** This refers to the specific skills and processes you need to succeed in sales. Being prepared for any situation will help you close more deals.

• **Motion:** Consistency is key. You need to maintain constant, intelligent action. Set clear goals, create a plan, and stick to it, adapting as needed.

By mastering these three elements, you can ensure steady, reliable results.

The Takeaway: Serve First Sell Second

At the end of the day, customers don't just want a product—they want a trusted advisor who can guide them toward the best decision for their unique needs. A solid marketing strategy will generate a steady flow of leads, but without effective sales techniques, those leads won't convert.

By focusing on serving your prospects and shifting away from the "low price game," you can build a more profitable, sustainable business, even in tough economic times.

It's possible to grow your business, make money, and still have time to enjoy your success.

For further insights or a more tailored approach to your business, feel free to reach out to the author at Ed@FabricatorsCoach.com.

PSA: Beware!

Can you keep a secret? Shhhh, don't tell anyone what I am about to say. If you tell people, there will be panic in the streets, and we definitely don't want that! What's the secret?

THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE!

Yep, it's that time of year. Thanksgiving, Feast of St Nicholas, Hanukkah, Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Las Posadas, Yule, Festivus, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Boxing Day, and so many more, are here.

Along with all these holidays comes an uptick of shopping and gift-giving aka gift purchasing. Meaning... we are shopping in places we wouldn't normally shop and writing/sending checks we wouldn't normally write or send.

On a personal level, I can't remember the last time I wrote a check for anything. I pay most things by automatic payment, the payment option on a lot of websites like credit cards or utilities. Or I use my bank's bill pay

Sharon Koehler
Stone Industry Consultant

system. So, I was quite surprised to learn that check fraud is up roughly 385% since the pandemic, to more than \$1 BILLION per year.

Of that 385%, 87% is mail theft. Meaning: that check you wrote to your sister to cover your part of a holiday expense and put in the mailbox or that check you send to your niece, nephew, cousin, grandkid or friend as a "holiday tradition" is in jeopardy of being stolen and fraudulently used to rob you.

How do criminals use your checks? There are many ways, but these are the most popular:

- **Check washing** – Checks are washed in chemicals to remove the ink and then other payees and amounts can be written on the check, usually for much more than the check was originally written for.



- **Check Cooking aka Check Baking** – A scammer, crook, criminal, or bad guy just needs to take a digital photo of a stolen check and then use commercially available software to alter it to make counterfeit checks, more than likely with the intent to clean you out in the process.

- **Fake Check Scams** – The above-mentioned scammer, crook, etc. sends you a check or money order worth more than the amount owed to you and instructs you to wire the excess funds back to them before receiving your lump sum payment. After you've sent the money, you find out that the check or money order is bogus.

So now that you know how it happens, what can you do to prevent yourself from becoming a victim?

- Write checks with black gel ink pens. It

dries quickly, adheres to the check paper better and is harder to "wash" off. Or look for and use "Fraud Prevention Gel Pens." One company advertises their gel pens as "protection against water, fading and fraud".

- Don't put checks in your mailbox – Mail them from the post office.

- Use certified mail or a trackable service like UPS or Fed-Ex.

- Use electronic payments when you can – ACH payments, wire transfers and digital wallets help to cut down on check fraud.

- Keep your checks in a secure place – Handymen, contractors, delivery people, caterers, house cleaners, etc. are more likely to be in your home or business during the holidays. Admittedly, all these people are more than likely honest and above board, but there is always a hiring crunch at the holidays and all it takes is 1 second of temptation for a not-so-honest person to do you in.

[Please turn to page 12](#)

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The Stone Detective

The Case of the Purple Marble Mayhem

IT was a cold and dreary morning as I woke up to the grating sound of my alarm clock. My head felt like it was still circling the baggage claim from the red-eye I took back from California the night before. I had just wrapped up an inspection of a high-rise marble fiasco in L.A., and I was running on fumes. Half asleep, I stumbled into my usual detective getup and headed out the door. There was only one thing on my mind—getting to my favorite greasy spoon diner for a cup of jo and a chance to swap a few words with Flo. She had a way of brightening up the darkest of mornings.

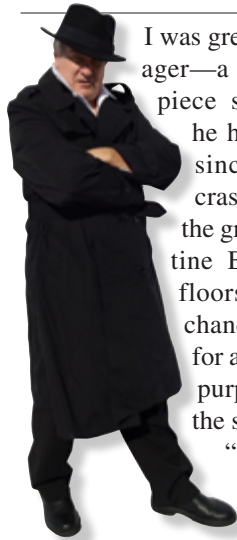
But as luck would have it, I barely got out the door when my phone rang. I fumbled for it, still half awake. “Stone Detective here,” I muttered, trying to sound alert, but not quite pulling it off.

The voice on the other end was all business, cold and steady, like something out of a Liam Neeson flick. For a second, I thought he was about to rattle off that speech about his special skills and how he would find me, and, well, you know the rest. Instead, he said he had a marble emergency. “We have purple stains appearing on a Bianco Rhino marble installation in the lobby of a hotel. We need you here—now.”

I rubbed my eyes and glanced at my watch. “I’ll head your way soon as I finish my breakfast,” I replied. You don’t rush a man when he’s halfway to a date with a fresh cup of coffee and a waitress with a smile.

By the time I rolled up to the hotel, the sun had barely pierced the clouds, casting long shadows over the marble lobby.

Dr. Frederick M. Hueston, PhD



I was greeted by the hotel manager—a stiff guy in a three-piece suit who looked like he hadn’t cracked a smile since the stock market crash. He led me through the grand lobby, where pristine Bianco Rhino marble floors gleamed under the chandelier lights... except for a few spots where nasty purple stains had marred the stone’s beauty.

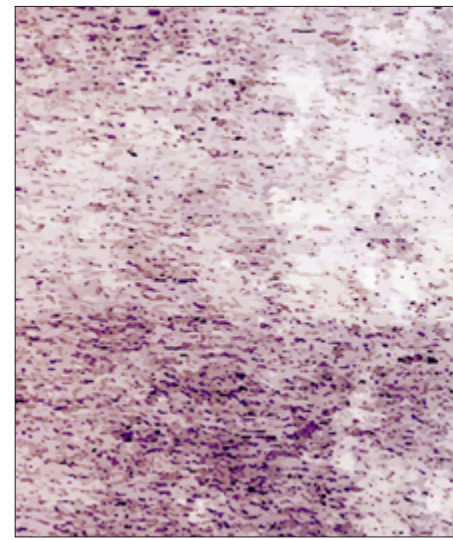
“What do you think, Detective? Ever seen anything like this?” The manager’s voice was tense, desperate.

I knelt down, running my hand over the stains. They weren’t superficial—these babies had seeped into the stone. I reached into my pocket for my loupe, examining the surface. It didn’t take long to recognize the familiar reddish undertones beneath the purple.

“I’ve seen it before,” I said, standing up and brushing off my knees. “Iron oxidation. Your marble’s got some iron in it, and once moisture gets in there, it’s like a time bomb. Rust starts to form, and in this case, it’s giving off a nice purple hue.”

The manager looked puzzled. “But this is Bianco Rhino! It’s supposed to be high-quality marble!”

“Even the best marbles can have iron deposits,” I explained. “And when water finds its way in—be it from improper sealing, cleaning, or just the natural porosity of the stone—it reacts with the iron and, well,



this is what you get. You ever notice how some old buildings have rusty streaks on their stone walls? Same deal here, just a different color.”

“So what do we do?” he asked, wringing his hands.

“Well, first things first—you’re gonna need to dry out the stone. The moisture is causing the oxidation, and if you don’t stop that, more stains are coming. Then you’ll need to treat the stone with a poultice to pull out the iron stains. After that, I’d suggest sealing the marble properly this time to prevent any future moisture from sneaking in.”

I could see the gears turning in the manager’s head, but the weight of the problem was clear on his face.

“I’ll get on it right away,” he said.

I tipped my hat and turned toward the door. “Make sure you use a proper stone sealer. You don’t want to see me back here again unless it’s for a cup of jo.”

The manager nodded, relief starting to replace the panic in his eyes.

As I stepped out into the chilly morning air, I took a deep breath. Just another day solving mysteries in the world of marble and stone. Another cup of coffee would be nice, but that would have to wait.

I checked my watch and smiled to myself. “Another case solved,” I muttered as I headed back toward my car, already pondering what the next call might bring.

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.

PSA: Beware!

Continued from page 11

- Don’t leave any blank spaces on your checks – Write out the full amount in both numbers and words and draw a line through any remaining space. This prevents anyone from adding extra numbers or names to alter the check’s intended amount or payee.

- Look at your bank accounts often – (I look at mine everyday). A lot of times crooks will start out with a small amount to see if you notice. If you don’t then they get bigger and bolder with your inattention.

- Use secure check stock – Secure checks include multiple security features such as watermarks, micro-printing, security threads, and chemical-sensitive paper. These features make it harder for the bad guys to alter or counterfeit checks without detection.

- If you are expecting a check for some reason, check your mailbox frequently – Don’t let your mail sit there for days at a time. Plus, if you are going away, stop your mail at the post office or have a friend get your mail out of your mailbox.

If you are a business, ask your bank/credit union if they have positive pay or a similar system. It works by requiring businesses to provide their banks with a list of checks they have issued, including details such as check number, payee, and amount. When a check is presented for payment, the bank cross-references it against the list. If something doesn’t match up, the check is flagged for further verification or inspection.

The holidays are here. We are mailing things we wouldn’t normally mail and writing checks we wouldn’t normally write, and the bad guys know it. This is prime time for them to take advantage of you. Just be careful and enjoy the holidays.

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

“How do you tell a Communist?
Well, it’s someone who reads Marx
and Lenin. And how do you tell an
anti-Communist? It’s someone who
understands Marx and Lenin.”

– Ronald Reagan, 1987



“It is not in the nature of politics
that the best men should be elected;
the best men do not want to govern
their fellowmen.”

– George MacDonald



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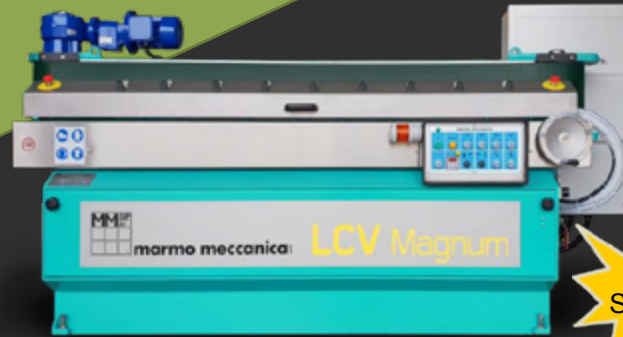


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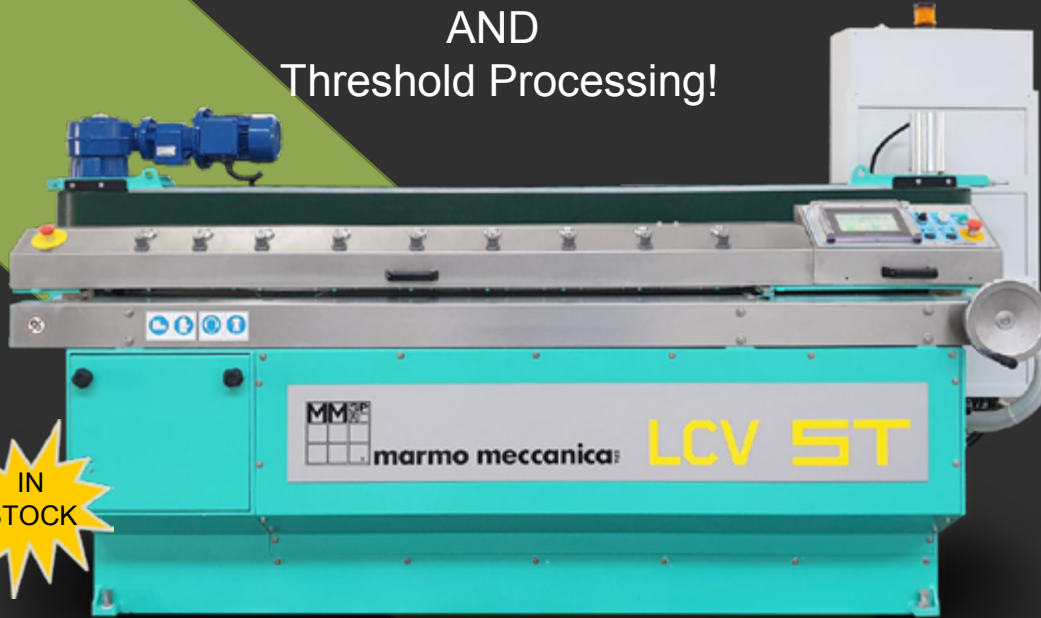
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A Warm Round of Applause for 'Exothermic Oxidation'

Sam Venable

Department of Irony

I have no idea how “exothermic oxidation” works. I wouldn’t know what to say — other than “ouch, %\$&*!-it” and then drop like a load of bricks — if “exothermic oxidation” ran up and whacked me over the head with a tire tool.

I couldn’t pick “exothermic oxidation” out of a police lineup.

But, boy-howdy, am I glad “exothermic oxidation” exists. It sure does keep my hands and fingers toasty.

“Exothermic oxidation” is what occurs when iron powder is mixed with water, salt, activated charcoal and vermiculite and then exposed air. The result is heat — without flames, fumes or smoke. Happily, you don’t have to stock up on all those ingredients. Or mix them. Someone will do it for you, and even wrap everything in a tidy, flat little package. All you gotta do is supply the air.

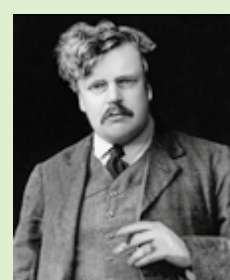
If you haven’t guessed by now, I’m talking about cheap, disposable hand warmers that sell by the mega-bazillion this time of year. They’re available at supermarkets, hardware stores, outdoor shops, convenience stores and anywhere else commerce is conducted. Usually they come in packs of three, although I’ve seen, and purchased, many of them in batches of 10. You can never buy too many.

Nor can you buy ’em too large. None of those itty-bitty, palm-sized models for me, thank you just the same. I prefer the “body super warmers” which are advertised to stay hot for 18 hours.

OK, so technically, “body” is misleading unless we’re talking chihuahuas; they’re only about 2½ times larger than the regular ones. And 18 hours stretches the truth like a cheap rubber band; eight to 10 hours max has been my experience. Nonetheless, one in each coat pocket will turn misery into comfort all day long.

Please turn to page 20

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“An adventure is only an
inconvenience rightly considered.
An inconvenience is only an
adventure wrongly considered.”
– G.K. Chesterton

Stone Restoration and Maintenance Corner

Diamond Abrasives

If you're old enough, you may remember when commercial buildings in the 60s, 70s, and even 80s were constructed mostly of concrete, steel, and glass. This new look was trendy at the time, but nowhere near the timeless beauty of natural stone. Unfortunately, natural stone had become too costly to fabricate, especially with the existing tooling and methods of that time.

Folks, I've been in the business for well over 45 years now, off and on. I helped make silicon carbide bricks (Frankfurt and other style abrasives) for radial arm and automatic line machines when I was 12 years old (in 1970, for Greenstone Products). I used to hang out on Saturdays at Candoro Marble Company, here in Knoxville, because my Grandpa worked there. There were no industrial diamonds on the scene at that time, at least in general production, anyway. Even the gang saws (saws that cut blocks into slabs) were silicon carbide and or used sand as the cutting abrasive.

I then started working for my dad, Vic Green, at VicCo (later called Vic International) selling the Frankfurt bricks and other fabrication tools and equipment. I remember the first industrial diamond tools to hit the market, like core bits, blades, and such. Later, there were Frankfurt style diamonds. All of these diamonds were metal-bond (sintered) segment types. Soon, there were electroplated metal diamonds available and ultimately the resin-bond diamonds made their appearance.

Why use diamond abrasives? To start with, diamond is the hardest material you can use to polish, grind, or cut stone, being a 10 on the Mohs Hardness scale. Diamonds cut much faster than silicon carbide or other abrasive materials. They also hold their shape and sharpness much longer than softer materials. Because of these features, there is less abrasive material in the cutting wastewater (slurry). This is not as much of a problem in the fabrication and production facilities where they have plenty of water and are able to recycle (filter) the wastewater.

As restoration contractors, however, water usage must be managed to a much

Bob Murrell
M3 Technologies
Photos by Bob Murrell



Segmented metal bond MAGNUM MAG3- 0400 grit mounted on a GRIP magnetic plate, closeup, below.



AA Turbo Polishing PADS, epoxy resin discs

finer detail. Our operations are in commercial and residential structures, not in a plant with water recycling. We need the cutting speed and the longevity of diamond abrasives, and don't need the massive amounts of water needed to run silicon carbide abrasives. So, diamond abrasives are the best tool for most stone, terrazzo, and concrete grinding, honing, and polishing operations.

Let's discuss some of the most popular diamond abrasives for stone, terrazzo, and concrete restoration industries. Remember, our cutting operations are usually done wet, except for certain concrete applications. We do heavy grinding operations, like lippage removal, as an example. Standard honing operations, say for countertops and floor traffic wear lanes, are typically started with a 220 grit followed by a 400 grit and in some situations an 800 grit, prior to polishing with a 5X Gold or similar polishing abrasive.

Typically, coarse grinding operations are completed using a metal-bond diamond of

some type, as these are the most aggressive. Honing operations are usually completed using resin-bond diamonds of some type, as these will provide a smoother finish. Epoxy resin diamonds tend to give a higher finish per grit level than do the phenolic resins, but the phenolics cut faster. I like the epoxy resins for most marble and similar stone countertop operations.

At M3 Technologies Inc. we have many diamond abrasives to choose from, based on the application. Our most popular epoxy resin-based diamonds are the Triple Thick TX 3-inch series for floors and the AA Turbo 5-inch for hand tool work. The AA Turbos come in several sizes, up to 7 inch. Made in Bulgaria, the TX resins are the standard in the industry for floor work. Both the TX and AA series cut fast and leave an excellent finish after each grit level. The TXs are somewhat flexible, which can help accommodate mild lippage on floors.

[Please turn to page 17](#)



Rosette epoxy resin discs

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Frank Hermans of Coldspring Receives Thor Lundh Quarrier Award



Frank Hermans, Milbank #3 Supervisor for Coldspring, is the inaugural recipient of the Thor Lundh Quarrier Award. Hermans was celebrated during the Tucker Design Awards ceremony at the NSI Study Tour in Salt Lake City on August 26, 2024.

Over his 54+ year career in the industry, Hermans has displayed exemplary leadership, an extraordinary work ethic, and an unrelenting commitment to the betterment of his community. He has mentored new quarriers to ensure their safety and efficiency, supplied material on short notice and in difficult conditions, and leads by example. Pat Alexander, Coldspring CEO commented: “Your legacy of teaching and leading people will never be matched.”

The Thor Lundh Quarrier Award recognizes a Natural Stone Institute member who has made an extraordinary contribution to quarrying natural stone. The ideal candidate has demonstrated successful and notable accomplishments throughout a professional career in quarrying natural stone. They have been involved and dedicated to the activities and objectives of quarrying operations in their companies and have contributed to furthering the careers of other professionals in the quarrying field.

The award is named after Thor Lundh, founder of Lundhs AS, the largest natural stone producer in Northern Europe. Thor Lundh has been instrumental in transitioning quarry operations from manual to industrial production, contributing to numerous local and international jobs. Thor Lundh demonstrates how far a natural stone

supplier can go when daring to take risks and innovate. He industrialized larvikite production in Norway and today the company is developing a global brand. Thor-Anders Lundh Håkestad, CEO of Lundhs commented: “We at Lundhs are honored to be able to present the Thor Lundh Quarrier Award in close cooperation with the Natural Stone Institute. The areas of use for natural stone have changed a lot and the ways of extracting have changed completely. Lundhs has always been at the forefront of these changes and will continue to develop sustainable production methods and utilization of the stone resources for generations to come. With this award we are looking forward to supporting great achievements within the quarrying industry.”

Nominations for the 2025 Thor Lundh Quarrier Award will be announced in early 2025. Learn more at www.naturalstoneinstitute.org/quarrieraward.

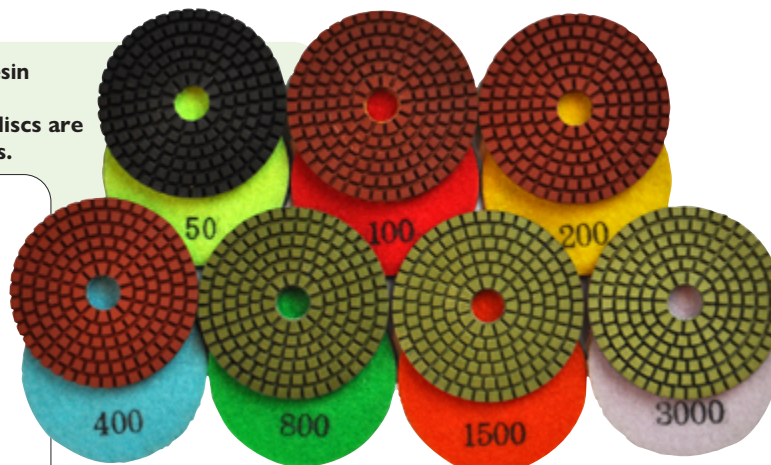
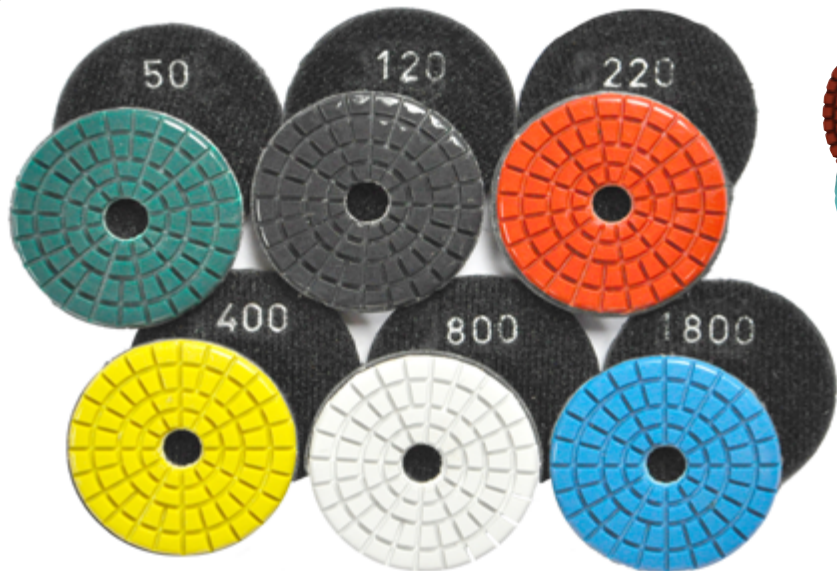
The Natural Stone Institute is a trade association representing every aspect of the natural stone industry. The current membership exceeds 2,000 members in over 50 nations. The association offers a wide array of technical and training resources, professional development opportunities, regulatory advocacy, 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.

Stone Restoration Corner

Continued from page 15

Below: TX Triple Thick epoxy resin diamond discs

Right: DICP Ceramic Polishing discs are phenolic and ceramic resin discs.



M3 Technologies also offers the TYP Typhoon resin discs and the Rosette resins, both of which are epoxy resin discs. Their performance is like that of the TXs. The differences are that the TYP are the thickest

(this means less flexible than the TXs) epoxy resins M3 offers, and the Rosettes have a different water channel design. It is strictly a personal preference, based on the specific application. M3 Technologies'

Technical assistance can help with the correct choice.

The Premium Flexible DICP series resin-bond diamonds are a great all-around diamond abrasive which works well on most any hard surface like marble, terrazzo, granite, some engineered stones, and concrete. They are phenolic resin with ceramic and will tend to cut faster than epoxies, but will not give the same shine level after each grit that the epoxies do. They are a great general-purpose diamond that I use

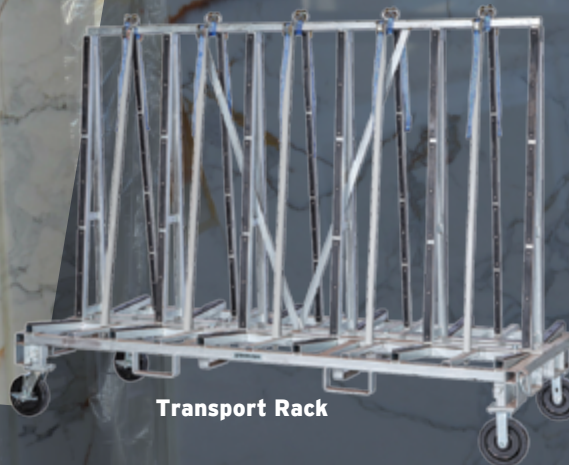
for doing borders (edges on floors). I usually prefer the AA Turbos for marble countertops but the DICP5s will work, you will just need to take them up higher in the grit series to get the same look.

The Superior Hard Concrete HC3 resins are also phenolic and are designed specifically for concrete honing and polishing. They work very well under planetary machines as well as single disc machines, for both wet and dry operations. They will cut faster wet and last longer when used dry.

[Please turn to page 19](#)

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BACA Systems Announces Strategic Partnership with D2 Technology and Horus Software

BACA Systems, a leader in innovative and automated solutions for the stone fabrication industry, is proud to announce a strategic partnership with D2 Technology & Horus Software, a pioneering Portuguese company with operations in New Jersey that meets the US market needs, specializing in high-technology solutions for the stone sector. Under this partnership, BACA Systems will serve as a sales agent for D2 Technology's cutting-edge Iris Scanner, along with Horus Software.

D2 Technology and Horus Software has been at the forefront of technological advancements in the stone industry, consistently pushing the boundaries of innovation. The companies are renowned for

developing the most advanced vertical and horizontal stone slab scanner in the market, the Iris Scanner, which boasts an impressive 12K high resolution specifically designed to meet the exacting standards of the stone industry. Horus Software is an all-in-one software for manufacturers with the best 3D and AR technical capabilities.

"We are thrilled to join forces with D2 Technology & Horus Software and bring the unparalleled capabilities of the Iris Scanner to our customers," said Chuck Russo, CEO of BACA Systems. "This partnership aligns perfectly with our mission to deliver best-in-class solutions that enhance efficiency, productivity, and precision in stone fabrication. The Iris Scanner's advanced resolution and technology will be a game-changer for fabricators, offering



them the ability to achieve exceptional quality and detail in their work."

BACA Systems has built a strong reputation over the past decade as a leader in providing robotic systems and advanced

machinery for the stone, quartz, and porcelain processing industries. The company's extensive product portfolio reflects its commitment to excellence, offering standard and/or tailored solutions that meet the unique needs of fabricators worldwide.

With this new partnership, BACA Systems is excited to introduce the Iris Scanner and its Horus Software to its customers, providing them with the tools needed to stay ahead in a competitive industry. BACA Systems will not only promote the D2 Scanner and the Horus Software but will also work closely with D2 Technology and Horus Software to ensure seamless integration.

[Please turn to page 22](#)

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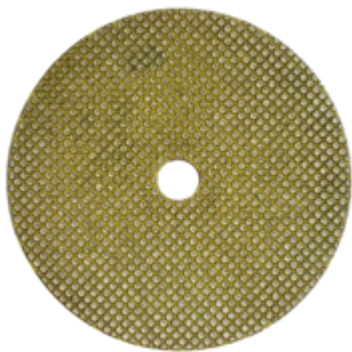
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Stone Restoration Corner

Continued from page 17



ELF series electroplated flexible diamond discs are recommended for heavy scratch repair.

For heavier grinding operations like lip-page removal, using one of the metal-bond diamond series is suggested. They will typically cut much faster and last longer than resins. There are basically 3 types of metal-bond diamonds: sintered (segmented), electroplated (rigid), and electroplated (flexible). Choosing the appropriate type for a particular project is best discussed with your supplier. For mild lippage and heavy scratch repair, I do like the flexible metal-bond ELF series. For heavy lippage and or heavy stock removal (like concrete grinding or surface prep), I would probably recommend either the segmented type, like The Magnum MAG3 series or the rigid electroplated type, like the Marble Lippage Removal LT series.

There are other diamond abrasive products like the PLP series diamond impregnated pads. These come in 100g through 12,000 grit and have many uses. They are available in sizes from 7 inch to 20 inch and larger.

I always recommend doing a test area on any project to confirm both the results and procedure. 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, logistics, and other pertinent project information.

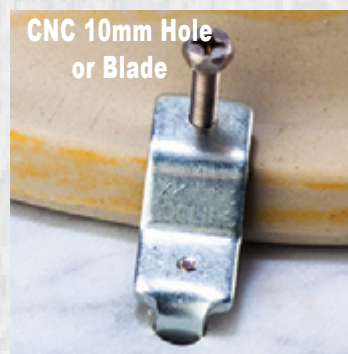
Bob Murrell has worked in the natural stone industry for over 40 years and is well known for his expertise in natural stone, tile, and decorative concrete restoration and maintenance. He helped develop some of the main products and processes which revolutionized the industry, and is currently the Director of Operations for M3 Technologies. Send your comments and questions to Bob at attn:publisher@slipperyrockgazette.net.

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A Warm Round of Applause for 'Exothermic Oxidation'



Continued from page 14

When I was a kid, “cigarette lighter” hand warmers were all the rage. You know, those flat, shiny metal cases tucked inside a red velvet pouch. The hateful things were a pain to keep stoked with fluid. They were difficult to ignite in the wind. They stunk like the dickens. And if a lit one ever slipped out of the pouch and touched bare skin, it felt like you’d just been brushed by a glowing horseshoe fresh from the forge.

Not so these days. I don’t care how many pairs of gloves and mittens you own or how much high-tech, waterproof fiber they contain; when it’s big-time cold, gloves and mittens won’t do a complete job unless used in tandem with good ol’ “exothermic oxidation.”

Don’t take my word for it. Ask anybody who ventures outdoors from first frost to spring thaw, for work or for play. If I’m hunting or fishing during cold weather, I’d rather leave guns or tackle at home than hand warmers. How in the name of Daniel Boone did we ever exist without them?

Of course, “big-time cold” here in the South means anything from 38 degrees above zero Fahrenheit down to minus-100 degrees Celsius — and let us pause for a moment so ice-fishing and snow-snowmobiling Yankee readers can laugh their frozen heads off and call us wimps. We’ll return the favor when those same Yankee readers melt and moan about “big-time hot” when both the temperature and humidity are pushing 90. So there.

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.

“What we anticipate seldom occurs;
what we least expected generally happens.”
— Benjamin Disraeli

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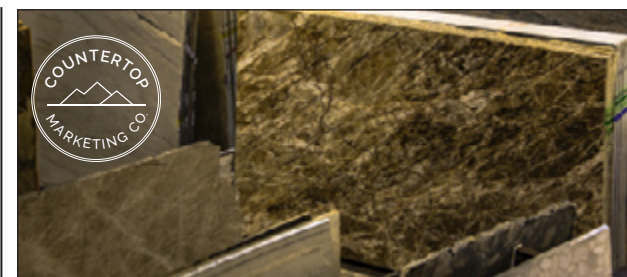
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For Sale

Tree Sculpture for Sale: Limestone tree that Cliff Dieker carved at the Missouri Ledge Stone Co. in Oak Grove Mo. Very detailed with squirrels, raccoon and even acorns in and on a hollowed out tree trunk. It measures 6 ft. 4 in. tall, 32 ins. at widest base and 32 ins., at widest middle area. Original sculpture at price of \$7000.00 email us at dkrede54@gmail.com.

Turrini Claudio MB 50 Waterwall Dust Control Cabinet Stainless steel waterwall dust extraction cabinet. Unit used in natural stone shops to collect dust from the air during sanding. The MB water wall follows the guidelines of HSE Health and Safety Executive. 98.3% Dust suppression. 2 units available. \$5000 per unit. Located in Miami FL. contact via email omar@stoneworksinc.com.

Comandulli Speedy Edge Polishing Machine For Sale – Edge polishing machine for sale \$14K OBO - Must sell! Located in Los Angeles, CA, the machine is in excellent condition, low hours, Model Speedy System, Year 2006, Automatic Tool changer, Pneumatic turntable for piece loading, pre-set programs visualized on "touch-screen" control panel. Contact us at 310-328-8000 or email elizabeth@delorenzomable.com.

INTERMAC MASTER STONE 4000 Used Parts: I have disassembled and salvaged 2 machines. Too many parts to list. Cables, switches, breakers and relays, motors, drives, motor controllers, tanks (1 set custom made), vacuum fittings, pumps, and on and on. Please feel free to inquire about any part you may need, send a picture, and I'll see if I have it. Prices negotiable and reasonable. Buyer pays shipping. Since these are used parts, no guarantees but will refund for returned non-working parts. Contact: Bob Armstrong: (440) 233-9458; Email: largestcanine@gmail.com.

Denver Slot Bridge Saw For Sale: Denver Slot, 230-240 volt, fixed table, rotating head, 15 hp motor, 18" max blade, power x, y & z axis, Manual head rotation, No longer under power. Price reduced: \$6,500. Contact: Jeff

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Business Opportunities

Custom Stone Fabrication Business For Sale– This Central MN business has an excellent reputation for quality work. The owner has been in the business for over 44 years, started this business in 2015 and is selling for personal reasons. Sale includes all the equipment, 16-foot Morgan Box truck, showroom displays, furniture, computers and software etc. Owner will provide help for smooth transition. Real estate is leased and can be purchased. Phone: 320-251-9300; Email: sdevine@warnert.com.

Turn Key Fab Shop for Sale in Connecticut Owner selling for health reasons. Granite fab shop with excellent reputation, with zero negative reviews in 13 years. Very clean shop, Show room, Marmo bridge saw, water recycling system, Scorpion router, Denver JOB CNC machine. Polishing stations, work tables, box truck with frames and shelving, shop carts, Gorilla Grips and lots of miscellaneous tools, Hyster forklift truck, slab racks and A frames. \$105,000. Contact: Bernard Hogan Phone: 860-919-6233 or email: benrhogan73@gmail.com.

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This opportunity is a Florida-based business manufacturer of lightweight exterior cladding panels as well as waterjet-cut natural stone products. In business since 1984, the owner recently passed away and the family does not wish to continue operations. The 25,000 sf facility (owned by family) requires relocation. They have the team and plans to execute a relocation. Over 1m in equipment alone, and proprietary processes included. Contact: Michael Wehl Phone: 786-395-3862. Email: michael@siriusbusinessadvisors.com.

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Stone and Marble Finisher. We are seeking a Stone and Marble finisher to join us at our fabrication facility. **Requirements:** 2 years min. experience in fabrication/ polishing. Experience in work on miters, cut-outs. Compensation according to experience. Reliable and professional with time & schedule. **Benefits:** Health Care plan. Paid time off (Vacation, Sick Days, Holidays). Retirement Plan (401 K-IRA). Life insurance (Basic-Voluntary & AD&D) Contact: Miller Druck Specialty Contracting, 917-855-8053 Email Eliana.bahamon@millerdruck.com.

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BACA Systems Strategic Partnership

Continued from page 18

The collaboration between BACA Systems and D2 Technology marks a significant step forward in the evolution of stone fabrication technology, and both companies are committed to continuing their shared vision of driving innovation in the industry.

About BACA Systems

Founded with a vision to revolutionize the stone fabrication industry, BACA Systems has emerged as a leader in delivering innovative and automated solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of fabricators worldwide. With over a decade of industry experience, BACA Systems is committed to driving efficiency, productivity, and precision through its state-of-the-art robotic systems and cutting-edge technology. The company's extensive product portfolio includes advanced machinery for stone, quartz, and porcelain processing. For more information visit www.bacasystems.com.

About D2 Technology & Horus Software

D2 Technology is a Portuguese company that has been evolving the stone industry throughout its existence. They also have operations in New Jersey to meet the demands of the US market. As a high technology company in the stone sector, D2 Technology is characterized by its production of the most advanced vertical stone slab scanner, the Iris Scanner, which features a 12K high resolution developed exclusively for the stone industry and powered by their Horus Software. The Horus Software is the only company with exclusive all-in-one software for manufacturers with the best 3D and AR technical capabilities.

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