

True Blue Surfaces Finds Key to Growth Through Procedure and Analysis

IN terms of personality, every company is as varied as the person who founded or owns it. At last count there were 8.1 billion humans on earth, and when extrapolating this huge number and its infinite variables to its logical conclusion, not even one personality could ever be exactly the same, right? Likewise, not one company is exactly alike. For example: is the choice of style and image that the new owner wants for his or her new corporate headquarters traditional or contemporary, large or small, spacious interior or compact? Moreover, when the company is up and running, do the personalities of the team members align with the vision, goals and personality of its owner?

by Peter J. Marcucci
Photos Courtesy True Blue Surfaces and Bellezza Artisan Stone Surfaces

One final point: In the past, I've seen many stone companies that were owned by craftsmen who had all the right credentials to fabricate but, to their detriment, started out with little or no knowledge of how to navigate the complicated world of running a business. Conversely, I've seen stone companies founded by those whose skills were developed through attending accredited business schools. These folks came into the stone business world with a slew of tools to grow a company and must now

learn the particular demands of stone fabrication. True Blue Surfaces is one of these companies. Its personality is one of accelerated growth through procedure, analysis and good business sense.

Building a Growth-Machine

The original True Blue Surfaces, located in San Antonio, Texas was founded in 2007, and acquired by Tom Callahan and Eric Cole in 2016. The two men came from well-regarded positions in the business world, bringing their years of business knowledge with them into a totally new challenge, recalled CEO and President, Tom Callahan. "I had spent fourteen years traveling around the world, running the



Blue Bahia granite Island is the colorful centerpiece of this La Vaca Hotel Suites kitchen, with Silver Storm marble perimeter countertops as an elegant, neutral color contrast.



different manufacturing and supply chain organizations that I was involved with. In 2016, I then decided it was time to go back and enjoy my wife and get reengaged with my kids and my life, so my friend Eric Cole and I bought True Blue Surfaces."

Even though Callahan and Cole came to stone fabrication with no prior experience, it was their life experiences that gave them the tools needed to succeed. Yes, making things from stone is different than making things from metal or plastic, but it's basically the same process – sort of – he explained.

"Since college, every company that I was involved with effectively required you to continually improve the product for the end customer. You always had to find ways to take costs out, be more efficient and improve your fill rates. So when Eric and I started looking for a company to buy, those were skill sets that were effectively tattooed into our brains from our prior experience in manufacturing consumer products, and we had to find a business that allowed us to do that."

[Please turn to page 2](#)

True Blue Surfaces

Continued from page 1

And they found one. They saw the same basic processes used to make consumer goods from plastic or sheets of metal, used in making countertops from slabs of stone. Machines that cut and shape were in their realm, both different, yet both the same. “The type of equipment is a little bit different, but the process of converting a slab of stone into a product is very similar to machining consumer products. There is a level of overlap, which then led us to a level of comfort, which then led us to how to sell to the big guys that are volume builders and are more corporate-driven.” Callahan and Cole pursued a strategy of making relationships with onsite builders and their purchasing people who managed housing developments. From then on, sales simply grew by word of mouth. “We could communicate in the same language with those folks, and it was an easy adaptation and a good fit for me and Eric, with only a couple of degrees of separation from where our core skill sets were.”



Bishop Pond development kitchen features White Macaubas quartzite island with waterfall edge and a farmhouse sink. Right: Shadow Storm marble vanity with porcelain vessel sink.

Building a Growth Machine by Serving Lucrative Markets

Since that purchase, Callahan and Cole have added three more fabrication companies to their roster, with locations in Austin, Texas; Birmingham, Alabama and

a second location to serve San Antonio’s Hill Country. Historically, the company has focused on the wholesale builder market as a priority, because typically, when you’re working with builders, they value and reward predictability and efficiency, said Callahan. “Whether it’s the answers you’re going to get from our product management teams, our shops or our installers, we are extremely predictable on delivery, quality, and making our large scale builders successful.”

According to Callahan, the four markets they serve have mostly similar parameters. However, there are slight differences. “Pretty much all the market areas we serve are pro-growth, and a lot of the major builders are either in them or are entering them,

so they are similar in that regard. However, the differences we see between Texas and Alabama is that the growth in Alabama is driven primarily by government investment. Huntsville, in particular, has some of the highest per capita Ph.D. rates, because of the rocket programs, and is exploding with the amount of government investments and necessary support organizations. In contrast, the Texas markets are driven by friendly private business investment policies and the great transportation networks that we have. Additionally, with San Antonio and Austin being only 90 miles apart, you’d think that they would behave like similar markets, but they don’t. The income levels in Austin are much higher than they are in San Antonio. So, the mix of products, builders and what’s driving them are much different, even though D.R. Horton, Pulte Homes and Lennar Builders are major players in both those markets.”

Procedures and Analysis Become the Keys to Growth

It’s truly remarkable how in just eight years, new owners with no prior knowledge in stone fabrication, can expand their market by acquiring viable companies in three key locations. That may sound quite difficult and risky, but not so much, explained Callahan.

[Please turn to page 3](#)



Powdermill development project features Cambria Brittanica Gold wet bar, coordinated with chocolate-colored ceramic tile splash. Below: Calacatta marble double vanity.



Alaska White granite double vanity countertop with undermount sinks was chosen for this spacious master bath in a new construction home.

True Blue Surfaces

Continued from page 2

“I firmly believe that our success is about having processes that create predictable results, and then getting people who are passionate about driving these processes. Both Eric and I learned the ropes at Motorola Semi Conductor, where we had a process for everything and got predictable results if you followed the process. It was fed into our veins, and we’ve taken our processes wherever we’ve partnered or purchased, and implemented those processes. We have great partners in our equipment and stone suppliers, and we’ve cultivated those relationships to make sure we carried them with us wherever we went. We are also big believers of being loyal to partners who have worked with us to improve us and helped us to succeed.”

and there isn’t a better metric in the human resource space than hearing someone say, ‘I want my friend to work for this company, because I like working here, and I respect the team.’ They are great people, and make True Blue Surfaces what it is.”

As for materials, Callahan said that a small portion is brought in by quarry-direct containers and vendor containers. However, the bulk of materials are brought in by the job through local vendors. “Our material purchasing is really a blend of the three to meet our working capital requirements and our pricing requirements. We definitely leverage partnerships, so we make sure that the key vendors who give us great service get a healthy share of our business, even if it is container imported. We give preference to people that we’ve partnered with, who have demonstrated the same commitment to service our end customers as we do.”



Bishop Pond master bath suite with marble double vanity, walk in shower and bathing alcove.

Location is Also Key

With all four locations combined, 90% of True Blue Surfaces’ machines are from Park Industries. All of their shops are fully wet, and dry cutting is absolutely forbidden due to safety concerns, continued Callahan. “Our responsibility and obligation is to always make sure our 210 team members are put into an optimal situation to conduct their job safely. Anyone who works here, we want them to go home healthy, with all their fingers and toes and with no injuries, and we meet that objective every single day. Our people are caring and compassionate, and absolutely committed to doing it right and satisfying our customers. Everyone here is family,

In 2023, True Blue Surfaces produced 1.5 million square feet of natural stone, quartz and porcelain products. Solid surface countertops are also made available to their clients for one big reason, said Callahan. “If you want to do a lot of commercial work and you don’t offer solid surface countertops, you won’t be doing a lot of commercial work! There is still a ton of that being used in government, food and schools.”

Callahan’s Closing Advice

“We are still growing organically, and we are looking at other markets to enter by acquiring or partnering with more companies that have a few criteria that are important to us. We will then bring our processes



Top and above: This Parade of Homes project features matching quartz counters in the spacious, light-filled concept kitchen and bath.

and control methodologies into those companies, build them, improve their quality and build their service. We do a lot of 3, 5 and 10 year planning, and look at various processes, equipment and procedures that we are doing, and sometimes say what we’re doing right now is not going to work with the way equipment or tooling trends are going. We will also be looking for people who are really good at what they do. As awful as it sounds, we look at the education system, and what types of people are available to us in the work force. If a kid comes out of high school, and they’ve been using their home computer to play video games or they are really good on Facebook, but they are not physically capable to work in a fab-shop, what do you do? So you better plan for it now, because in 2028, the work

force is going to be very different than it is now. Plus the boomers are retiring, right? And we are going to have to replace their amazing skills. Where are those skills going to come from? The majority of kids today don’t want to work in a fab-shop or in a trade. So we do a lot of pre-planning to insure that we are doing the things now for what we expect in four, five or six years out. We’ve been quite successfully doing this so far, knock on wood.”

True Blue Surfaces is a member of the Artisan Group, the International Surface Fabricators Association and the Natural Stone Institute. True Blue Surfaces is also a longtime, loyal customer of BB Industries.

For more information visit www.truebluesurfaces.com.

Special Features June 2024 Issue...



SLIPPERY ROCK GAZETTE[®]
The Voice of the Stone Fabricator

True Blue Surfaces Finds Key to Growth Through Procedure and Analysis, by Peter Marcucci	Begins on 1
Firenza Stone: A Legacy Carved in Stone, by Anthony Milia	Begins on 8
Las Vegas Rock: A Rainbow in the Desert, by Karin Kirk	Begins on 13

Training, Safety and Education

Industry Calendar of Events and Training: June to July 2024.....	5
Do You Schedule Your Maintenance Time, or Does Your Machinery Do It for You? by Ed Young ...	Begins on 6
The Logic, Science and Math of Business, by Rick Phelps	7
Navigating the Five Stages of Shop Growth, by Justin Shaw	Begins on 10

Industry Topics, Tips and Featured Columns

How to Beat the \$3 Million Revenue Threshold, by Steve McKenna	Begins on 5
Sometimes, There's Simply No Use Trying to Explain, by Sam Venable	14
The Stone Detective: The Case of the Slippery Slope Lawsuit, by Frederick M. Hueston	Begins on 16
Out of the Mouths of Babes, by Sharon Koehler	Begins on 16
Stone Restoration and Maintenance Corner – More Technical Tips and Tricks, by Bob Murrell	Begins on 17

Industry News

NTCA Announces Elizabeth Lambert as 2024 Tile Person of the Year	4
NTCA Announces Woody Sanders Recipient of 2024 Ring of Honor	Begins on 19
Xiamen International Stone Fair Draws Over 150,000 Attendees	22
International Surface Fabricator's Association June Fabricator's Forum to be Hosted in California	23

Marketplace	20
Classified Ads	21

Contributors & Staff

Rick Stimac	Publisher
Larry M. Hood	Editor and Design Director
G. William Brown.....	Graphic Designer
Mark Anderson	Department of Humor
Frederick M. Hueston	Stone Forensics Investigations
Karin Kirk	usenaturalstone.org
Sharon Koehler.....	Stone Industry Consultant
Rufus B. Leakin	Guru of Urban Folklore
Peter Marcucci	Special Contributor
Steve McKenna	North Star Productions
Anthony Milia	Milia Marketing
Bob Murrell	Restoration Consultant
Rick Phelps.....	Synchronous Solutions
Justin Shaw	Stone Fabricator Elite
Ed Young.....	Fabricator's Business Coach
Sam Venable.....	Department of Irony

Read our online edition at www.slipperyrockgazette.net. Use the Classified drop-down menu to browse ads and to place a classified ad, and the article links to view stories in the current issue. Send advertising inquiries to LHood@slipperyrockgazette.net, and comments c/o publisher@slipperyrockgazette.net. Subscription requests, a classified ad submission form, current and archived back issues and articles are available online at www.slipperyrockgazette.net.

NTCA Announces Elizabeth Lambert as 2024 Tile Person of the Year

The National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) is delighted to announce Elizabeth Lambert, co-owner of Lambert Tile and Stone in Eagle, Colorado, as the recipient of the prestigious 2024 Tile Person of the Year Award. Elizabeth's outstanding contributions to the tile industry and her leadership within the NTCA community have earned her this esteemed recognition, making her the fourth woman in NTCA's 77-year history to receive this honor.



Elizabeth Lambert of Lambert Tile & Stone, 2024 Tile Person of the Year

Elizabeth and her husband Dan have built a thriving contracting business specializing in high-end residential tile and stone installations. Their commitment to excellence and active involvement in NTCA have been instrumental in their success. Elizabeth currently serves as a member of the NTCA Board of Directors in Region 10 and chairs NTCA's Women in Tile Group, a groundbreaking initiative she helped launch in January 2023 to promote women in the tile trade.

Under Elizabeth's leadership, Lambert Tile and Stone has achieved Five Star Accredited Contractor status and garnered multiple awards for installation excellence, including the TileLetter Award in 2010, Five Star Project of the Year in 2013, and Residential Project of the Year in 2023. Elizabeth's journey in the tile industry is as remarkable as her accomplishments. From her diverse career background spanning postal work in Germany to management roles in the hospitality industry, Elizabeth's entrepreneurial spirit led her to found Lambert Tile and Stone in 2000 with Dan. Since then, they have become integral members of the NTCA community.

Elizabeth's dedication to advancing women's leadership in the tile industry is evident through her work with the Women in Tile

group, where she collaborates with industry leaders to drive meaningful change and support for women in the field.

"We are thrilled to honor Elizabeth Lambert for her exceptional contributions to the tile industry and her unwavering commitment to NTCA," said Bart Bettiga Executive Director of NTCA. "Elizabeth's leadership, expertise, and passion have made a significant impact on our community, and we are proud to celebrate her achievements as the 2024 Tile Person of the Year."

Established in 1947, the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) is a nonprofit trade association dedicated to the professional installation of ceramic tile and natural stone. It is widely recognized as the largest and most respected tile contractors' association in the world. For those seeking to improve their tile business, NTCA provides unparalleled educational experiences, supportive peer interaction, unique cost-savings programs, and a commitment to help develop the skills needed to improve your work, recruit, train, and manage your employees, and ultimately, make your business more profitable. Find out more at www.tile-assn.com.

Industry Calendar of Events

June 2024

NSI: Wine & Stone Event

When: June 5, 4:30 PM to 7:00 PM

Where: 10000 E. 40th Ave., Denver, CO 80238

NSI: Colorado Stone Summit – Dynamic Intentionality

When: June 6, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Where: 10000 E. 40th Ave., Denver, CO 80238

Host: Architectural Surfaces; **Speaker:** Tony Malisani, Malisani Inc.

Visit naturalstoneinstitute.org/calendar for more information.

ISFA: Fabricator's Forum

When: June 10, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Where: Cosentino Center, Sacramento, CA

Host: Cosentino, Park Industries, FreePower

Visit www.ISFAnow.org/fabricator-forums for more information.

NSI: Virtual Quarry Tour

When: Thursday, June 20, 11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. ET

Where: Online

Visit naturalstoneinstitute.org/calendar for more information.

Park Industries: Digital Stoneworking Expo

When: Wednesday, June 26, 8:00 A.M. to Thursday, June 27, 5:00 P.M. ET

Where: Hilton, Washington Dulles Airport, Washington D.C.

Visit parkindustries.com/event/digital-stoneworking-expo for more information.

July 2024

NSI: Wisconsin Stone Summit – Know Your Business

When: Thursday July 11, 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. (ET)

Where: 7739 S. 6th St, Oak Creek, WI 53154

Visit naturalstoneinstitute.org/calendar for more information.

NSI: Sustainability Summit

When: Wednesday July 17 and Thursday July 18

Where: Washington D.C.

Visit naturalstoneinstitute.org/calendar for more information.

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

How to Beat the \$3 Million Revenue Threshold

Most stone fabrication shops struggle to grow past \$ 3 million in sales. The main reason? It's not because of the production capacity or output. It's easy to find a new CNC that will make your shop produce another 100 square feet daily. That's the sexy part of the business. Every owner loves a new toy in the shop, and who can blame them?

Stone fabrication shops can't grow beyond \$3 million because most shops fail to systematize the front of the house, specifically their sales and marketing systems. When shops try to grow before implementing sales and marketing systems they hit a glass ceiling.

Steve McKenna
North Star Productions

Speaking from experience, this means key people work extra to compensate for the lack of systems, and that will eventually end poorly.

New equipment doesn't get the owner out of the weeds. It takes well-organized systems that will allow the key person to go from being involved in every transaction, to fine-tuning the systems so that their staff can keep the sales and cash coming in predictably, and the owner can focus on key accounts and running the business.



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

Project completed by Carnevale & Lohr, Natural Stone Institute Accredited since 2014.

As someone who owned and operated a stone countertop shop for 16 years, I know what ups and downs are all about. Hoping that the local economy will continue to grow and business will keep walking in the door is not a strategy. A pretty website where customers can find information about you and your business and see some past projects is not a sufficient marketing strategy.

The key to growing past \$3 million of revenue in 2024 is a sales and marketing strategy that encompasses all aspects of lead generation (we refer to this as **Traffic**), converting leads to sales (**Sales**) and post-sale reputation management (**Referrals and Reviews**). Each stage has a well-defined process (customer journey) with measurable metrics so that you know how it is performing, and can make adjustments as necessary.

Traffic

What is your lead collection system? Most stone shops I talk to have a very ad hoc approach to marketing before they experience rapid growth with consistency. When the local economy is hot or competition is thin,

you can get away with just having a website and a Facebook page that you update twice a month. Most shops I talk to don't even consider these to be primary sources of leads. They have them, and they know they need them, but if you ask them why, it's not to generate leads. You absolutely do need those pieces in place, but they are not the foundation a marketing plan should rely on.

Here are some of the pieces that you should be putting in place before expecting rapid growth: A marketing plan (written!) for the next 12 months, including posting schedules for Facebook and Instagram (yes, they are still the best platforms), budgets for monthly ad spend, and a plan for a few promos for the year. I suggest 2 to 4 promos yearly to help smooth out seasonality throughout the year.

DO NOT RUN ADS

Please, do not run ads that send prospects to your website! Invest in landing pages and funnels for each campaign, and watch your lead quality and conversion rates soar!

[Please turn to page 22](#)

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Do You Schedule Your Maintenance Time, Or Does Your Machinery Do It for You?

The stone industry has come a long way in the use of technology since I worked with my first fabrication shop client over 20 years ago.

Almost every shop I visit today has some or all of the following:

- CNC saws
- Water jet cutting
- Digital templating
- Multi-axis saw-jets.

Unfortunately, the most common form of maintenance I see for this expensive equipment is a break-fix approach – we fix it after it breaks. This creates unnecessary and costly schedule interruptions for the fabricator. It also creates a heavy reliance on the machine manufacturer to supply parts quickly.

A few shops do a decent job of preventive maintenance. This includes:

- Greasing a fitting
- Changing lubricant
- Changing filters

Some fabricators even knock the dust and dirt off their machines from time to time. However, to run a fab shop effectively, a more robust approach to maintaining machinery is needed.

If you don't schedule time to maintain your equipment, your equipment will do it for you. If you don't want surprise maintenance stoppages that always seem to occur during a critical job, then you need to plan your maintenance.

Ed Young
Fabricator's Business Coach

To get the **most** out of a machine you have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in, you need to consider a Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) approach.

TPM is a process that maximizes the productivity of equipment for its entire life cycle and will extend the life of the equipment. Through the participation of all employees, TPM creates an environment that encourages improvement efforts in safety, quality, cost, delivery and creativity.

TPM is the combination of the three types of planned maintenance:

1. Preventive Maintenance

Preventive maintenance is interval-based maintenance. It consists of periodically inspecting, servicing, and cleaning equipment, as well as replacing parts to prevent sudden failure and process problems. This includes changing the oil every 500 hours of run time, applying grease to a fitting every week, and replacing the bearings every 3,000 hours (or whatever intervals the manufacturer recommends). This is the most common type of planned maintenance.

2. Predictive Maintenance

Predictive maintenance includes

Corrective maintenance examples: Use labels and colors to aid in quickly assessing operating conditions.

Gauges labeled with pressure limits



Min/max fill level limits clearly marked



Fill points marked with the proper fluid used



Add markings to flywheels to tell at a glance if it is operating. Add plexiglass so it's easy to access without removing cover.



Daily Operator AM Checklist

1. Check coolant level through clear Plexiglas
2. Check heat exchanger fans (strings should be moving)
3. Check servo drive fans (string should be moving)
4. Check heat exchanger air filter (change when dark)
5. Check servo drive air filter (change when dark)
6. Check way lube reservoir (add when low)
7. Check main motor air filter (change when dark)
8. Check main motor cooling fan (string should move)
9. Check mist collector motor and air filter (change when dark)
10. Check bar feeder hydraulic motor air filter
11. Check bar feeder hydraulic oil level (add when low)



Autonomous Maintenance (AM): Place labels on a machine so any operator can easily follow the daily checklist.

the machine operator performs daily activities to aid in detecting and correcting abnormalities to prevent reduced machine performance. This includes visual inspection, routine cleaning, lubrication, and data collection. The most effective AM

programs have detailed documentation allowing any operator to complete the daily activities.

To gauge the effectiveness of the above activities, TPM uses a metric called **Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE)**. OEE assesses the availability of the equipment, the performance efficiency of the equipment and the rate of quality output.

Unfortunately, the most common form of maintenance I see for this expensive equipment is a break-fix approach – we fix it after it breaks. This creates unnecessary and costly schedule interruptions for the fabricator. It also creates a heavy reliance on the machine manufacturer to supply parts quickly.

There are several key steps to effectively implementing TPM:

Initial clean-up. Clean the machine until it looks like it did the day it arrived from the manufacturer. Cleaning helps you see any obvious areas of lubricant leaks, and since you have to physically touch every area of the machine, you will quickly identify any issues with loose electrical connections, compressed air leaks, broken latches, etc.

[Please turn to page 7](#)

Maintenance Time

Continued from page 6

Assess the condition of the machine. Address the obvious items identified above. Also, assess whether the machine can perform to the original manufacturer speeds and process rates. Repair or replace any component that is needed to meet those original specs. This gives you a solid baseline from which to operate.

Standardize your maintenance procedures. Establish how you will label part numbers for consumables like filters and belts. Determine what corrective maintenance methods you will use (see #3 above). Document these items and train everyone on them.

Implement AM. Develop the daily routines required of machine operators and make these activities easy to perform correctly. Implement documentation for recording these activities and any anomalies found. Audit frequently.

As a shop owner, you have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars (maybe millions) in the critical equipment needed to run your business. To ensure you can consistently produce the quality products your customers expect and meet your schedule commitments, you need to manage the condition of your equipment.

If you don't plan your downtime, your machines will do it for you. Your machinery needs to be kept in optimal condition to operate at the speeds it was designed for. You need the consistent quality your equipment is designed to deliver. TPM is the best approach to ensuring your equipment supports your business goals.

If you need assistance planning for the challenges of a changing economy, reach out to a seasoned business owner and coach at Ed@FabricatorsCoach.com. You deserve to have a business that not only makes you money but also allows you time to enjoy it.

**“I am a great believer in luck,
and I find the harder I work,
the more I have of it.”**

– Thomas Jefferson

TRAINING & EDUCATION

The Logic, Science and Math of Business

Why do seemingly successful businesses struggle to maintain their profitability as they grow?

Could it be hubris? Bad advice? Lack of focus? All of these? None of these?

Many companies struggle due to a lack of understanding of the basic scientific principles and logic that underpin all businesses.

Mathematics

Business is math. Simple math. Adding, subtracting, with a little bit of multiplication and division thrown in during analysis. No advanced calculus, or massively complex formulas. Business requires no more math than what is taught in elementary school.

For example, Marketing is math. If you want 100 new clients, and your sales process converts 50% of your prospects into customers, then you need 200 prospects to reach the target. If your marketing creates two prospects for every 10,000 views of a social media post, you will need an average of 5,000 views on social media to get a prospect. If 1000 views cost you \$10, then each new prospect costs you \$50 dollars and each new customer \$100.

Science

Back in the stone age, we learned the scientific method in 8th grade science. I imagine it is taught much earlier these days.

The scientific method is about how to logically construct an experiment so that you can observe what is happening, draw some conclusions, prove by repetition, and learn from that experience.

Consider this example drawn from a recent conversation with a customer: The sales process above converts an average of 50% of their prospects into clients. How do they do it?

Some analysis suggests that one salesperson converts at 40% and the other at 60% – who knew?! Through observation followed by training, you are able to get both salespeople converting at 60%. That is a 20% improvement in your conversion rate. As a direct result of this analysis and action taken, each new client that before cost \$100 now only costs you \$83.33!

Rick Phelps
Synchronous Solutions

Everyone in your business can have specific measures and goals that show whether they are helping advance the business, or not.

Enjoying how learning about your business makes you money, you decide to look at the marketing process. With your marketing manager you design experiments to test and measure the impact of using different photographs, different headlines, different offers, and different calls to action. It takes time, but as you learn and improve, you decrease the number of views required to get a prospect from 1000 to just 500, and now your attainment cost for a new client is just \$41.67!

But wait, there's more!

Logic

Logic and science go hand in hand! The basis of science is the logical expression **IF** this, **THEN** we expect that... We observe, draw conclusions, learn, and improve. It turns out you can apply logic to your business and set up a whole raft of experiments. In fact, with logic you can explicitly connect EVERY role in your business directly to the specific financial goals of the business.

That's right, everyone in your business can have specific measures and goals that show whether they are helping advance the business, or not. Your teams can come together and define specific projects to work on that will move those measures in the right direction.

You and your leadership team can logically connect all the dots in your business. The connections rarely change, so you need to do it once, and then just tune and adjust quarterly from that point on. We call it 'creating your cascaded operating strategy'.

There is one key insight you need to understand to make this possible, otherwise you will struggle because you will make it more complex than it actually is.

You need to understand that *every chain has just one weakest link* at any given time.

Your business is made up of many chains and sub-chains, so think logically and carefully and you can tease out all the relationships you need to fully understand your business and the impact of those weakest links on your business.

When you have those logical relationships diagrammed out, it's just math...

Do you want to grow from \$5M in sales to \$10M while increasing Net Profit from 7% to 12%? What would it take to accomplish that? What can you afford to invest? What must you NOT do?

It is all calculable and therefore knowable. It's just logic, science, and mathematics. Just do it and gain a competitive advantage in your business. I'll even give you the first logical steps:

IF

The Goal of your business is to make more money now and in the future;

THEN

Sales must fill the capacity of the fabricating process with the right mix of work;

AND

Operations must be constantly working on increasing the effective capacity of the fabricating process.

Just keep building out this logic tree, cascading it to every process in your business, then you, and everyone in your business, will know exactly how to be successful.

If you want help to accelerate the learning process for your business, give us a call. Our Synchronous Flow Operating System is designed to make everyone in your business a successful business scientist, learning and improving every day. Contact us at www.synchronousolutions.com.

Rick Phelps – Synchronous Solutions

Firenza Stone: A Legacy Carved in Stone

Founded in 2004, Firenza Stone Inc. stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Fimiani family, whose lineage boasts four generations of skilled stone masons from Molise, Italy. Today, the company thrives under the stewardship of brothers Jon, Michael, Dominic, and Anthony Fimiani. Their journey from construction to countertop fabrication was fueled by a blend of heritage and necessity, evolving to meet the growing demand for natural stone countertops in new homes.

“I’m very proud to be part of 4 generations of family working in the stone industry. We have come a long way from humble beginnings. Working side by side with my 3 brothers is very rewarding and I know would have made my late father Dominic proud. We look forward to our business continuing on with future generations,” said Anthony Fimiani, Co-Owner of Firenza Stone.

The move into stone fabrication was a natural progression for the Fimiani brothers, spurred by challenges in securing reliable fabricators. Their frustrations echoed those of many builders and remodelers, prompting them to establish Firenza Stone. After intensive training in North Carolina and acquiring essential equipment, they began offering a unique mix of services that quickly set them apart in the industry.

“Going back 20 years, The Stone Detective, Dr. Fred Hueston, (then located in Asheville, North Carolina), gave us a roadmap to success. I vividly remember the hands-on training and classwork which gave us confidence to start a Stone Fab shop in Willoughby, Ohio,” commented Jon Fimiani, Co-Owner with brother Anthony.

Firenza Stone operates from a 30,000-square-foot, climate-controlled gallery and an 18,000-square-foot fabrication shop. The gallery, one of the largest privately owned stone inventories in the state, showcases a wide array of materials, including its proprietary quartz line, Firenza Surfaces. The fabrication shop is equipped with state-of-the-art machinery from Park Industries, ensuring precision and efficiency in every crafted piece.

Firenza Stone’s offerings extend beyond stone fabrication. They provide templating, installation, and a range of complementary products such as semi-custom cabinets,

Anthony Milia

Milia Marketing

Photos by Sam Kline, Firenza Stone

engineered flooring, and innovative cooking systems like the Invisacook induction cooktop. Their showroom, a 10,000-square-foot space featuring functional displays from over ten manufacturers, doubles as a venue for product demonstrations and special events.

As active members of the Stone Fabricators Alliance (SFA), NARI, HBA, and various local business associations, Firenza Stone maintains strong professional ties, ensuring they remain at the forefront of industry standards and innovation. Their clients, ranging from homeowners to architects, often discover Firenza Stone through robust professional networks and word-of-mouth, a testament to their solid reputation.

Unique Offerings and Future Directions

What sets Firenza Stone apart is not just their extensive in-house inventory but also their forward-looking approach to adopting and expanding their range of porcelain slabs and sintered stone products. With ongoing investments in machinery and skilled personnel, Firenza Stone is poised for continued growth, adapting to the evolving demands of both residential and commercial markets.

Firenza Stone Inc. distinguishes itself in the stone industry through its comprehensive range of services and resources, making it both a “one-stop shop” for retail customers and a “total resource” for industry professionals. This unique positioning allows them to cater effectively to a diverse clientele, including homeowners, builders, remodelers, service contractors, and interior designers.

Retail and Consumer Appeal

For retail customers, Firenza Stone offers an all-encompassing solution for home remodeling and building projects. By integrating in-house fabrication with an extensive slab gallery, a variety of cabinet manufacturers, and a full spectrum of plumbing fixtures, appliances, and flooring options, they eliminate the need for clients to coordinate with multiple suppliers. This convenience is enhanced by professional design assistants who help manage the entire



The Firenza Stone slab gallery by Ciot is housed in an 18,000 square foot climate-controlled warehouse.

remodel process, ensuring a seamless experience from concept to completion.

Industry and Trade Client Services

Industry professionals regard Firenza Stone as a vital resource, leveraging their comprehensive offerings to fulfill specific project needs. Whether it’s sourcing materials from the slab gallery, utilizing the custom fabrication services, or integrating various elements from their extensive range of products, Firenza Stone provides flexibility and convenience that are invaluable in the construction and design sectors.

Strategic Advantage

Firenza Stone’s strategic advantage lies in its ability to offer tailored solutions across different market segments. This versatility not only strengthens its market position but also enhances its appeal to a broader range of customers seeking quality, convenience, and comprehensive service under one roof.

This unique blend of services and resources positions Firenza Stone as a leader in the industry, capable of meeting diverse needs while maintaining high standards of quality and customer service.

[Please turn to page 9](#)



The Firenza Stone showroom features several vignette kitchens. This book matched Silver Wave marble reception desk front and wall greets visitors to the showroom.

Firenza Stone

Continued from page 8

Commitment to Quality and Community

A commitment to customer education and satisfaction underpins every interaction with Firenza Stone. From the initial consultation to post-installation support, the team ensures every client is well-informed and satisfied. This commitment extends to their proactive approach to callbacks and adjustments, prioritizing customer needs to maintain trust and integrity.

Building Connections and Relationships

Firenza Stone Inc. not only roots its business in deep historical craftsmanship but also thrives on strong, modern marketing techniques and robust professional relationships. They understand the power of both traditional networking and digital marketing, blending these approaches to create a comprehensive strategy that caters to both business-to-business (B2B) partnerships and



Perimeter Countertops – Blue Pearl Granite. The mitered Island is Calacatta Miraggio Cielo Quartz from MSI. Backsplash: Georgia Blue 24x48 Large Format Porcelain Tile from Soho Studios.

retail customer engagement.

A significant portion of Firenza Stone's business comes from established professional connections with builders, architects, engineers, contractors, and remodelers. These relationships are not just transactional but are built on a foundation of trust and mutual benefit, nurtured over many

years. These long-lasting partnerships help in maintaining a steady flow of projects through referrals and joint ventures, highlighting the company's commitment to being a reliable and integral part of the construction and remodeling community.

Firenza Stone Inc. employs a dynamic digital marketing strategy to widen their

audience and enhance visibility in the competitive stone industry. They leverage Google Ads and targeted social media advertising on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to reach specific demographics.

Their efforts are supported by robust Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and engaging content creation, ensuring top visibility in searches related to stone fabrication and remodeling.

[Please turn to page 11](#)

Enter Your Projects for the 2024 ISFA Awards!



The ISFA Awards is an annual program intended to honor excellence in application design, fabrication and installation of projects using surfacing materials across seven categories.



Submissions deadline: July 30, 2024

CATEGORIES:

- ✦ Residential Excellence in Projects Under \$20K
- ✦ Residential Excellence in Projects Over \$20K
- ✦ Commercial Excellence in Projects Under \$100K
- ✦ Commercial Excellence in Projects Over \$100K
- ✦ Sustainability Project of the Year
- ✦ Fabricator of the Year
- ✦ ISFA Hall of Fame

Seize the spotlight and stand apart from your competition with an ISFA Award!

Don't miss this chance to showcase your talents and gain invaluable exposure.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE GUIDELINES AND TO SUBMIT AN ENTRY, SCAN THIS CODE TO VISIT ISFANOW.ORG/ISFA-AWARDS.



TRAINING & EDUCATION

Navigating the Five Stages of Shop Growth

IF you're working tirelessly in your business but not getting the result you want or growing at the rate you expect, you might be focusing on the wrong things based on the stage your business is at right now.

This is a brief step-by-step guide to navigating the five stages of building a sustainable business that works for you, rather than you working for it.

I find it extremely helpful to identify which of these 5 stages of growth your stone fabrication or countertop company is in. Once identified, your current stage should define your focus.

Here are the 5 stages:

1. **Start-Up**
2. **Survival**
3. **Success**
4. **Scaling**
5. **Sustainable**

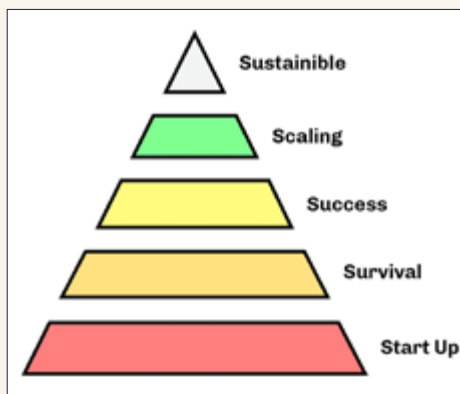
While it's normal to feel that we fit within several stages simultaneously, to build a sustainable business effectively and efficiently, we should aim to minimize overlap for extended periods of time. Especially in our focus and the strategies we adopt and deploy.

Without knowing your current stage of growth, you could easily make two common mistakes that hold business owners back from achieving their desired growth.

1. **Doing things out of sequence.**
2. **Never graduating to new activities.**

Doing Things Out of Sequence

Business growth isn't a linear process; it requires us to adapt to new conditions and challenges. The first pitfall many businesses encounter is doing things out of sequence. For example, a business in the "Survival" stage, striving to keep its sales pipeline healthy, won't benefit from replicating the actions of a \$10 million shop in the "Scaling" stage. It's essential to tailor your strategy to your current stage and maintain a clear path forward for acquiring customers at the pace your business requires.



Never Graduating to New Activities

Often, stone fab business owners fall into a trap of getting busy "enough" where the majority of their time, energy, focus, and money is spent on delivering their product and service – keeping clients happy and doing good work.

If you're in what many call the "grind," it has brought you to where you are now. It's comfortable but it's also burning you out. Staying in this state is not sustainable. Over time, you run the risk of losing your passion, drive, and the energy needed to continue.

As your business grows and evolves, it is equally important to focus on personal growth and development. The skills, capabilities, and leadership qualities that got your business to its current state may not be sufficient to elevate it to the next level. The investment we make in personal development, acquiring new skills and capabilities becomes crucial.

As a business leader, your evolution will directly impact your business's trajectory, enabling you to navigate challenges more effectively and seize opportunities more strategically. In this journey of business growth, who you become is as important as what your business becomes.

I've broken down each of the 5 stages, outlined the unique challenges of specific stages, and what the focus should be in order to advance to the next level.

By focusing on the right strategies for the stage you are in, you'll progress more quickly and easily. Less stress and headaches.

Justin Shaw
Stone Fabricator Elite

Level 1: Start-Up Stage

Your task is to define your target customers and plan a sales and customer service strategy. The main challenge here is balancing the need for positive cash flow with delivering a great customer experience. The primary reason for stagnation at this stage is often a lack of sales volume.

The task at hand here is straightforward, although easier said than done. You're going to define who you want to service, and plan a sales and customer service strategy. Yes, a business plan should be in place. Assuming that's in hand, the priority is to generate the sales required to have positive cash flow and deliver a great customer experience. Balancing the two is the key.

Level 2: Survival Stage

You've moved past the initial stages of starting up and your business has now demonstrated its basic viability. It's like you've survived the harsh winter and spring has arrived! You've been able to maintain a consistent stream of work and it feels like things are beginning to stabilize.

Don't rest on your laurels just yet.

Your focus is still squarely on generating enough cash flow to cover your expenses. You're also looking to fine-tune your business model and ensure a steady flow of projects. It might feel like you're juggling a lot of balls at the same time, and you may still be heavily involved in many aspects of your operations. To advance to the next level, it's critical to make the shift from working *IN* the business to working *ON* the business.

Level 3: Success Stage

In this stage, you are at a crucial juncture in your business journey. It's a crossroads that will determine the future direction of your business. The decisions you make here could lead to significant growth and scaling, or it could solidify your business' current status, focusing on stability and maintaining the success you've already achieved.

This choice will shape your strategies, your resource allocation, and your overall business approach moving forward. It's a turning point that requires careful consideration, strategic thinking, and insight into

your business' capabilities and potential.

If you opt for growth during the Success stage, your emphasis should be on improving operations, devising an effective growth strategy, and investing in marketing and talent. As a company leader, it's essential to cultivate a growth mindset and infuse it throughout your organization, starting from the top.

If you choose to go for stability in the Success stage, your focus should be on maintaining the status quo and ensuring that your business continues to operate successfully. I've included the key areas of focus for both of these pathways in my complete Navigation guide. Contact me for a copy at justin@stonefabricatorelite.com.

Level 4: Scaling Stage

Upon reaching the Scaling stage, businesses are on the cusp of rapid expansion. This point in the business journey is pivotal and exciting, but it also brings its unique set of challenges. It's important to embrace these challenges as they are part of the hard path chosen and usually represent positive growth hurdles.

At this stage, businesses may experience an increase in customer demand, expanded market reach, and a need for more resources. The operations may become more complex, necessitating a more structured approach to manage the growth effectively.

Companies should also be aware of the risk of growing too quickly without the necessary infrastructure to support that growth. This can lead to challenges such as overworked employees, substandard customer service, operational breakdowns, or even financial issues.

The quote I often share is "You can't fire a cannon from a canoe." When applied to business and its various stages of growth, there is a need to stabilize at different points in the journey.

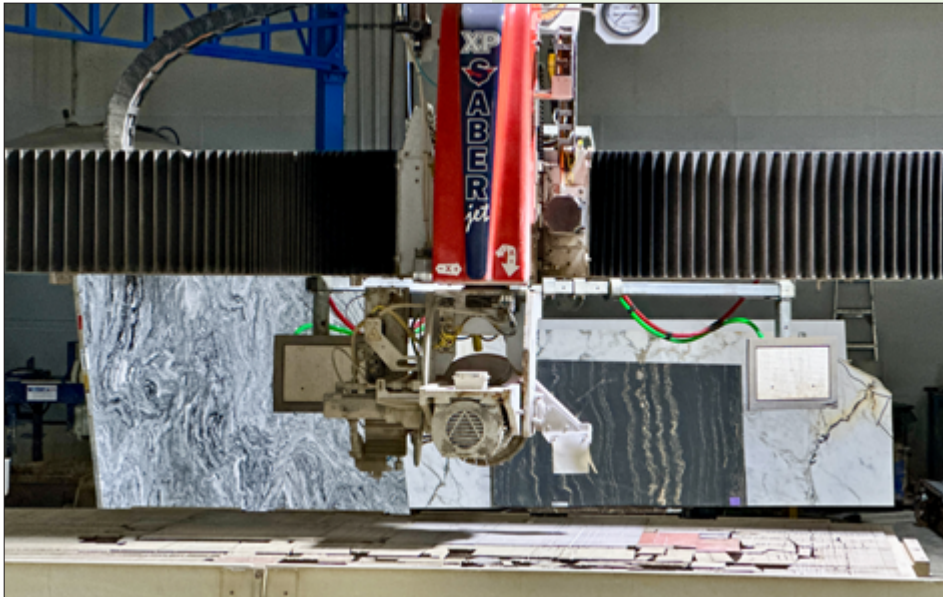
Level 5: Sustainable Stage

Welcome to the summit – the Sustainable stage. Here, your business enjoys a significant market presence and a steady flow of new business. It's become a self-managing entity, no longer heavily dependent on your day-to-day involvement. Operations are streamlined, and your team delivers exceptional quality and customer experience.

Please turn to page 12

Firenza Stone

Firenza Stone uses state-of-the-art Park industries machines in its fab shop.



Continued from page 9

White Horse granite kitchen for builder partner Petros Homes features a stunning, one-of-a-kind island.

Additionally, Firenza Stone prioritizes reputation management and utilizes referral strategies to maintain a positive brand image and attract new customers. Advanced techniques such as look-alike audiences and behavioral targeting further help them identify and reach potential clients similar to their existing customer base. They also employ call and form tracking to refine their marketing tactics, enhancing effectiveness and return on investment. This comprehensive approach not only broadens their reach but also underscores their commitment to growth and customer satisfaction, catering

to both individual homeowners and large-scale contractors.

Firenza Stone Inc. not only respects its rich heritage but actively builds upon it, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation. As they continue to expand their product lines and services, Firenza Stone remains dedicated to delivering unmatched quality and customer service, ensuring their place as a leader in the stone industry for generations to come. For more information visit firenzastone.com.



Kitchen vignette in the spacious Firenza Stone showroom. Their headquarters includes a 30,000 square foot climate-controlled gallery housing slabs and samples, and an 18,000 square foot fabrication facility.



A photographic mural in the Firenza Stone showroom documents the Fimiani family history of skilled stone masons. Four generations of the Fimiani family have worked in the stone industry, including the four brothers in the current generation.

“If once you forfeit the confidence of your fellow citizens, you can never regain their respect and esteem. It is true that you may fool all of the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all of the time; but you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.”

– Abraham Lincoln

Navigating the Five Stages of Shop Growth

Continued from page 10

After building your business to this stage, it may be worth more and appear more attractive to potential buyers than it would have been in the successful or scaling phase.

This might be a good point to consider exiting, especially if you're planning on retiring or passing on the business to the next generation.

If you are going to forge ahead, you are now in the unique position of leading the business as the visionary, focusing on high-level aspects of the business and team development.

=====

I hope you found this article to be useful. It's a summary from a complete guide I created to help our program members to navigate their journey and growth efforts. If you would like a copy, please reach out to the author directly at justin@stonefabricatorelite.com.

Justin Shaw has been helping stone fabricators and countertop companies since 2017 to implement the systems, strategies, and playbooks to grow their businesses more easily. He also has a coaching program and private community called "Driven For Growth" to learn more visit: <https://justinshaw.com/> and <https://stonefabricatorelite.com/>.

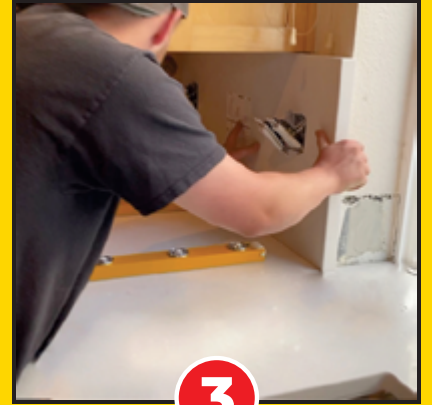
FULL HEIGHT SPLASH MADE EASY!



1



2



3



Set of
3
\$495



**Full Height
Back Splash Sliders**

**Made with No Lift
Cart Technology**

**Buy Now & Get
FREE Carry Case!**

Offer ends 5/31/2024



Scan the QR code
for direct access
to this offer!

**NOLIFT
INSTALL SYSTEM**

NOLIFTSYSTEM.COM



© MARK ANDERSON. www.andertoons.com



"Frankly, we're stumped. So, we'd like to try turning you off and then on again."

"Character is like a tree and reputation is like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing."

– *Abraham Lincoln*

"The manner in which women are treated is a good criterion to judge the true state of society. If we know but this one feature in a character of a nation, we may easily judge the rest..."

– *Benjamin Harrison*

Las Vegas Rock: A Rainbow in the Desert

Las Vegas isn't known for its subtlety. But just beyond a city defined by glitz and sparkle, one can experience a whole other color spectrum—one dictated by nature rather than neon lights. The desert offers a dramatic interplay of hues and textures, as canyons and cliffs in shades of russet, mahogany, and bronze echo across the landscape. These iconic rocks are ancient sand dunes that have become frozen in time; a vast deposit of richly-colored stone that has a myriad of uses.

Sweeping Sandstone

The American Southwest is currently a desert, but in the Jurassic Period, it was an even more inhospitable place. A huge area of windblown sand dunes stretched across hundreds of desolate miles, similar to the Sahara Desert today.

Wind makes an especially beautiful signature in the rocks it creates. Coaxed by the persistent breeze, sand grains pile up into ripples and dunes. Over time, dunes migrate and shift, stacking new layers on top of older ones. Older layers are buried and bathed in silica-rich groundwater, which binds the sand grains tightly together, yielding a solid, dense rock.



by **Karin Kirk**

Graphic and Map by Karin Kirk

Photos Courtesy Las Vegas Rock

The layers inside sand dunes are made up of graceful curves that are only visible once erosion – or a quarry saw – cuts open the deposit to reveal the beauty within.

Las Vegas Rocks quarries into a layer called the Aztec Sandstone. The stone is 180 to 190 million years old, and it formed as dinosaurs were wandering the region. The Aztec Sandstone is the same rock as the famed Navajo Sandstone that defines beloved landscapes such as the massive cliffs of Zion National Park, the deep canyons of Canyonlands, and the iconic stone arches of Arches National Park.

“A World Away” from Vegas Strip to High Desert

The quarries of Las Vegas Rock sit about an hour's drive southwest of Las Vegas. Following a dirt road north from the tiny settlement of Goodsprings, the road enters a narrow valley flanked by ridges of desert sandstone. “It feels a world away when you're up at the quarry,” says Jeremy Adams, CEO of Las Vegas Rock.

Atop a rocky knob, the quarry opens up layers of brilliant rock which have been nicknamed Rainbow Quarries. The region was once home to 17 different quarrying



Desert Blend
Goodsprings, NV

Quarried by
Las Vegas Rock

Colors

- A rainbow of warm tones including red, purple, yellow, and mahogany
- Available in three variations of color and pattern

Products
Exterior cladding, tiles, veneer, blocks, gravel

Applications
Building exteriors and interiors, walls, landscaping, art pieces.

From the dinosaur era

- Formed in the Jurassic Period
- A pure sandstone that was part of a vast area of desert sand dunes



American stones series

Graphic by Karin Kirk
Background image © Las Vegas Rock
used with permission

sites which produced more than 20 different colors of stone.

The original quarry was started in the 1940s by a Syrian immigrant named Peter “Pop” Simon. The colorful sandstone was used in enigmatic Las Vegas buildings such as the original Flamingo Hotel, the Desert Inn, and the Thunderbird Hotel. As development boomed, use of the stone expanded beyond the local market and found its way to primetime architecture in Los Angeles, Hollywood, Carmel-by-the-Sea, and Honolulu.

The quarry went dormant in the 1980s, and was reborn in 1991 as Las Vegas Rock, Inc.

[Please turn to page 15](#)



The beautiful Aztec sandstone is the same distinctive rock that makes up the massive cliffs of Zion National Park, the deep canyons of Canyonlands, and the iconic arches of Arches national Park.



The PREMIER TRADE GROUP of the Stone Fabrication Industry

ELEVATE YOUR BUSINESS



Best Practices



Benchmarks



Group Purchasing

Gain valuable business intelligence, find cost-saving opportunities and collaborate with some of the best-in-class within our industry by joining our elite group of surface fabricators. We have all of the tools in one place to help you grow your business and margins.



Rich Katzmann
Executive Director
richk@rockheadsusa.com
815.210.1006

APPLY NOW AT ROCKHEADSUSA.COM



Sometimes, There's Simply No Use Trying to Explain

IT was a textbook case of failure to communicate.

Sam Venable

Department of Irony

Mary Ann and I recently took a two-day road trip. Among our luggage was a 48-quart cooler filled with packs of frozen meat — meat that needed to remain frozen until we reached our destination.

Day One didn't present a problem. Before leaving home, I wrapped each pack in paper and lined the cooler with frozen chemical "blue boxes." But I knew this arrangement wouldn't last through an overnight motel stay, plus long hours on a hot interstate the next day.

Easy-peasy, I figured. When we stop at the motel, I'll pop into a grocery store for dry ice.

I didn't realize, however, that dry ice appears to be unknown in certain rural South Carolina towns. Like unicorns or pixie dust, maybe. The tipoff that something was amiss came when a worker at the first store I visited said this to my request: "Dry what?"

"Dry ice," I repeated.

Blank stare.

So I played my second card: "Is there an ice cream store anywhere around here?" (Ice cream stores were my go-to source for dry ice when I regularly hunted in Louisiana and headed back to Tennessee with frozen ducks and venison.)

The guy thought deeply. "Way-yel," he finally offered, "you might try Dippin' Dots down at the fillin' station. I know they got ice cream sam'iches."

I thanked him just the same and drove to our motel. After checking in, I posed my question to a lady behind the counter.

I got the same "dry what?"

"Dry ice."

"What's that?" she asked, a quizzical look on her face.

Like a fool, I said, "Frozen carbon dioxide."

She cut her eyes in one of those "Son, don't mess with me" looks.

An assistant clerk chimed in: "I've heard of dry ice. They sell it in cans."

"No, ma'am," I continued. "It comes in blocks, inside thick plastic bags. It's colder than regular ice. If you don't wear gloves, it'll burn your hands."

Their collective looks spoke volumes:



"Son, don't make us both come across this counter and slap th'hell outta you."

I beat a hasty retreat for the elevator.

Safely inside our room, I deployed Mary Ann's laptop computer to locate a supermarket couple-dozen miles down the road. The clerk fielded my request like I'd asked if they sold Rice Krispies or Diet Coke: "Of course we've got dry ice. Plenty of it."

Perfect. All's well that ends well.

But I sho' would love to be a fly on the wall when those two motel clerks regaled their friends and families about some lumatic tourist looking for a cold bag of carbon dioxide that burns your hands.

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.

"Laws are made for men of ordinary understanding and should, therefore, be construed by the ordinary rules of common sense. Their meaning is not to be sought for in metaphysical subtleties which may make anything mean everything or nothing at pleasure."

—Thomas Jefferson

Las Vegas Rock

Continued from page 8

One of the original goals of the new operation was to produce landscaping rock that could help local residents adopt drought-tolerant outdoor environments that are evocative of the desert region, rather than thirsty lawns and lush plantings. The palette of vibrant red, orange, purple, and rich brown evoke a natural, native feel that connects the human-built environment to the natural one.

A Rainbow of Color Options

The presence of several colorful layers of sandstone allows for multiple products from a single operation. Stone is produced in three different palettes.

- Sierra Smoke is a red color range, including burgundy, pink, and purple, with some yellow and white.
- Tupelo Honey covers the golden end of the spectrum. This blend contains yellow, tan, camel, and mustard with some pink, purple, white, and brown.
- Desert Blend offers the full spectrum of colors produced by the quarry. It's a lively blend of browns, oranges, reds, burgundies, yellows, and more.

In addition to the colors, the stone has beautiful layered patterns formed by wind-blown sand. The layers can be horizontal, diagonal, or curving — or sometimes all



The World's Only Cradle to Cradle Certified Stone

Las Vegas Rock is the only Cradle to Cradle (C2C) certified stone to date, and the company obtained the certification in 2007. Some of the forward-thinking attributes of the operation are their use of environmentally safe and healthy materials, the use of renewable energy, efficient use of water, and strategies for social responsibility. Impressively, the company's stone production generates zero waste, as everything that's extracted is put to good use, from massive blocks down to pure sand.

Up to 10 LEED points are possible with the use of Las Vegas Rock, and the company intends to pursue the Natural Stone Institute's sustainability certification in the coming year.

American Values

Adams exudes enthusiasm for his work and has a clear-eyed vision for the strengths of his company. "What customers love about our stone and our company is first that we are easy to deal with," he says. "We are easygoing people and are looking to help and provide solutions."

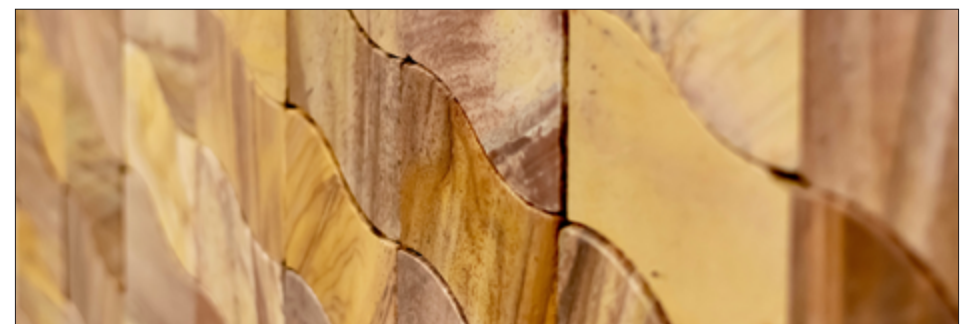
"Being an American quarry in the southwest is appealing for most people, but not for all," explains Adams. "For the customers that are price conscious, the appeal of American is not the deciding factor, price is. Being an American quarry with American labor and wages is tough trying to compete internationally. The projects that come to fruition are the ones that value the American-made aspect and our unique natural stone."

three in a single piece. The intricate patterns make the stone much more expressive than a typical sandstone, appealing to those who seek a one-of-a-kind aesthetic.

Customers are invited to visit the quarry and select their blocks. Adams notes that people enjoy the hands-on, personal process, like the "farm to table" concept, but with natural stone.

Adams is excited for the growth of both the company and its people. "I like to train and educate people about stone and all the possibilities," he says. Despite the challenges of a tough industry, Adams is undaunted.

"The strength of the stone industry and the strength of our company is the same, and that is in its diversity," he says. "There is a seat at the table for all of us."



The Stone Detective

The Case of The Slippery Slope Lawsuit

I had just walked into my favorite diner when Flo, who was in a particularly good mood, began singing a tune I didn't recognize. As she poured my cup of joe, I smiled at her and placed my usual order for ham and eggs. Sitting next to me The counter was the Admiral, who started reminiscing about his old Navy days. Just as my order arrived, a woman entered the diner, slipped, and nearly fell. I checked to see if she was okay, and she nodded in affirmation. I turned back to my meal, and after finishing my breakfast, I headed to my old Woody. Wouldn't you know it – as I was getting in the car, my cell phone rang.

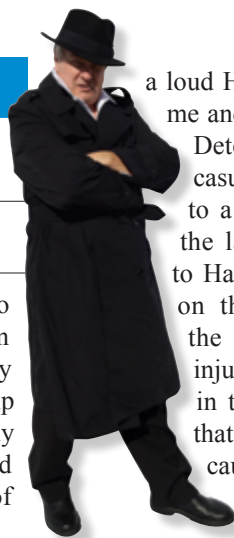
The caller introduced himself as an attorney who had a puzzling slip-and-fall case: a lady had slipped on a marble floor in a Las Vegas casino. He only had to mention Las Vegas once for me to be interested,

Dr. Frederick M. Hueston, PhD

hoping it was a project I would need to inspect. He explained that she had fallen in a hallway leading to the main lobby and asked if I could come out, take a slip reading, and test the stone. I immediately agreed and began to book my flight and hotel, grabbing some cash for a bit of gambling on the side.

Upon arriving at the casino, I checked in and resisted the temptation to hit the blackjack tables. After unpacking and ensuring my slip meter was charged, I waited for the attorney's call in my room. It didn't take long. Of course, the moment I took my shoes off and got comfortable, he called, and said he was waiting for me in the lobby.

Unsure of what he looked like, I speculated he'd be the one in a suit, given that most visitors to Las Vegas wear casual clothes. Surprisingly, a man in jeans and



a loud Hawaiian shirt approached me and asked if I was the Stone Detective. It turned out to be casual Friday at his office due to a party celebrating one of the law firm's partners move to Hawaii. He then briefed me on the case, explaining that the woman claimed she had injured her back after slipping in the hallway. She asserted that the floor was slippery and caused her to fall.

We went to the scene, and I took several slip meter readings, both wet and dry, all of which returned within the safe range. I then inquired about security cameras, but there were none in that hallway, which meant I had to begin a thorough investigation.

I started by requesting a list of potential witnesses from Mr. Aloha and soon noticed a security guard near a jewelry store. He confirmed seeing the fall on the day it happened. He even helped the woman up, and she thanked him. I probed further and

asked about her footwear. After a moment, he vividly remembered her wearing very tall high heels and struggling to walk in them. The attorney, concerned, pulled me aside and revealed that she had claimed to be wearing sneakers.

Realizing someone was lying, I suggested checking the lobby cameras to see what she wore there. The security footage confirmed the guard's account: she was indeed in tall high heels and indeed seemed to be having trouble walking in them. Can you say insurance fraud?

Another case solved, and unfortunately for the attorney, it seemed he wouldn't have much of a case to pursue. Now I can hit the blackjack tables. Wish me luck!

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.

Out of the Mouths of Babes



The topic of this article is something that I have written about before. However, something happened recently that drove home how important this topic is and the fact that the issue isn't going away. So, if you've ignored it before, you might as well just get on board, accept it, deal with it and do it.

Sharon Koehler

Stone Industry Consultant

Recently, my whole family gathered together for a celebration and there were six or eight of us sitting out on the deck. My youngest granddaughter walked

outside and said, "I want to play salon. Who wants a tattoo?" (She had several sheets of those temporary tattoos that go on with water.) Since we all love and adore my youngest granddaughter, we all said "Sure!"

In an effort to be as realistic as possible, she brought out a piece of paper and a pen so we could all "sign in." Again, in an effort to be realistic, she had us look over the tattoo designs, pick the ones we wanted and show her where we wanted them. Once we were all signed in and designs selected, she proceeded to give us all multiple tattoos.

As will happen in real life, she made a mistake. She put the wrong tattoo on the arm of my oldest grandson. He pointed it out to her. She excused herself, saying she needed to talk to her boss and went inside. When she came back out, she told my oldest grandson that she talked to her boss, and they decided he could have another design of his choice for free. He agreed, and in this fantasy salon, in the mind of a child, everything was right in the world.

When she was done giving everyone their "tattoos," she announced that it was closing time at the salon, but please don't leave just yet. She went inside and came back with a notebook and pen and

announced (and this is what floored me): "I would like it if y'all would each be nice enough to give me a 5-star Google review. Please review my politeness and service. Good reviews will help my business get bigger."

Now, my youngest granddaughter isn't 37, or 27 or even 17. She is 7. My youngest granddaughter is 7 years old and already understands the importance of reviews! What the heck?! (Heck was not my first choice of words, but it is a printable one.)

The point here is that she is the next generation of money spenders and decision makers. If she already understands the impact and importance of reviews on business, it is safe to say that the need for reviews isn't going away anytime soon.

Don't groan. It doesn't have to be hard work. It is easier now more than ever to collect reviews from your clients and customers, and there are so many ways to collect them, you just need to select the one that is right for your company or business.

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

Stone Restoration and Maintenance Corner

More Technical Tips and Tricks

I know I do these technical tips fairly often, but hopefully they will help someone bypass learning “the hard way.” Maybe I’ll even get a technical tip from a reader that’ll help me going forward, and I’ll pass it along. This article will be a hodge-podge of tips in different areas.

Hand tool work is most always the toughest part of any restoration project. Expensive stand up model edgers are great for commercial concrete work, but nothing gets the job done better than a skilled craftsman and a right-angle polisher. It is the way of the stone restoration contractor, for sure.

So, what can be done to make this daunting task manageable? A roll-around mechanic’s cart certainly helps me in this situation. I am able to roll across the floor with ease and move down the wall and around corners, all while keeping my diamonds and other tooling handy in the tray below. I use a small garden pump-up sprayer for my water distribution. This works very well and will last for awhile before refilling is necessary. For my hand tool of choice, I use both a Makita (which they’re getting very proud of) and a DeWalt. I know the Flex is also a good choice but they are also pricey. Just make sure that the tool is capable of slow speed (will get below 1,000 rpm, and preferably to 800 rpm) and has a 5/8 (inch diameter) – 11 (threads per inch) spindle so that all of the necessary miscellaneous accessories and tools will fit.

Edgework Tips and Tricks

Edgework is very important and should be completed in sequence with the floor machine work. Basically, the edgework, for each grit or step, should be completed prior to overlapping that same grit with the floor machine. Overlapping the floor machine work to the edgework will help to blend the entire floor better. For instance, if you are starting at a 220 grit diamond, do the 220 grit edgework and then overlap with the 220 grit floor machine work. If you completed the edgework after the floor machine work, you could very well end up with an unsightly “picture frame” around the floor. It does get pretty tedious,

Bob Murrell
M3 Technologies
Photos by Bob Murrell



Using a larger drive plate on a smaller machine helps to get under cabinet overhangs. I use a 20-inch drive plate under a 13-inch M3 machine.

especially when you’re doing something more complex, likelippage removal. The edgework can make or break the project, so get it right.

In some edge work operations, the hand tool may be insufficient (even with a 7-inch drive pad) and may not reach under overhangs sufficiently – for example, a cabinet overhang. In this case, I have found using my 20-inch drive plate on my 13 inch floor machine works very well. Just remember, you will probably not be able to use a splash guard, so you will be slinging slurry on the cabinet base. Protect with Tape & Drape as necessary.

Using Polyester Adhesive

When using polyester resins, like Akemi, K-Bond, and others, it is important to get it right the first time. These resins are a two-part (resin and hardener) system. They come in various base colors and consistencies. The most commonly used are the transparent versions in both the flowing (thinner like syrup) and knifegrade (thicker like peanut butter) consistencies. Knifegrade is typically used for repairing



Edge work is the backbone of the stone restoration professional. I use a mechanic’s cart to help make getting around the edges easier.

two pieces of broken stone back together, whereas flowing is typically used to fill some sort of void.

Both of the transparent adhesives (and any base color) can be colored to match the stone by adding tint to the resin. Coloring tints are available in many different colors. My rule of thumb is to get the resin to the color you want before adding the hardener.

The hardener to resin ratio is about 1 inch to 2 inches of hardener to 1/2 cup of resin. You can vary the amount of hardener to resin, some. Just remember, the faster the resin sets up, the more risk of an adhesive failure. When the hardener and resin are mixed, the chemical reaction creates heat. When something heats up, it expands. When it cools back down, it contracts. And well... you get the picture. It is best to use just enough hardener to get the resin to set up in a relatively slower amount of time, say 15 minutes or so. If your resin is



I keep my diamonds clean and dry after each use. I hang mine up on an electrical cord. This helps them last longer and not deteriorate as fast too.

setting up in a couple of minutes, it will get very hot. Use paper plates and plastic knives for mixing to reduce the mess. Spread with the yellow adhesive spatulas.

Please turn to page 18

Stone Restoration Corner



Knifegrade adhesive is great for repairing pieces of stone. Here I am using it on vertical breakage issues that has occurred due to years of settling.

Continued from page 17

Adjunct services will become necessary when working in stone restoration situations. Take for instance, exterior work. Environmental contaminants can take away from the appearance of many stone installations. A good pressure washer can come in real handy for these projects. We do have to be careful with these pieces of equipment though. The 3,500 psi machine can easily blow out grout, if you're not careful. A lower psi (say 1,500) machine can also be useful in certain situations where grout or mortar may be questionable. But when it comes to removing environmental staining like mold and mildew, nothing beats the 3,500 psi machine. Once the biological matter has been removed, any restoration and/or honing can take place.

Caring for Your Diamond Pads

How do you store your diamonds? I use a piece of 12 gauge electrical wire and slide them on, in grit size order, and attach wire nuts on the end. I then hang them up in the van. I most always keep them clean and by hanging them up, they dry quickly, so as not to weaken any adhesives for the Velcro. You probably have your own way to accomplish this, but I thought I would share my way with you. Never throw dirty wet discs in a bin or tote. They will mold and mildew, and the glue holding the Velcro on may loosen and let go.



Color your adhesive resin and then use about a 1 inch to 2 inch line of hardener for about 1/2 cup of adhesive. I use a paper plate as a palette.

My biggest tip for you hard-working stone restoration contractors is to enjoy life. For me, it is relaxing on the lake. I love taking family and friends out for a great day on the water. Work hard and play hard too!



Organic contaminants accumulate on exterior stone over time.

Makita® VC4210L 11 Gallon Wet/Dry Vacuum

Includes:

- Main Flat Nano Filters (Pair)
- Fleece Nano Filter Bag
- Disposal Bag
- 1-3/8" x 16' Anti-Static Hose
- Crevice Nozzle
- Cuff Adapter

Item# 5146



**GUARANTEED
BEST
PRICES!**

Makita® XCV04Z Cordless HEPA Filter Dry Vacuum & 5" Dust Shroud

Vacuum Includes:

- 2 Anti-static hoses
- Crevice tool
- Nozzle
- Curved pipe
- Straight pipe
- Main filter
- Damper and pre-filter

Item# 1146



Item# 11492



Available at



800-575-4401 • www.BBIndustriesLLC.com

Take Control with Makita
Makita Vacs and Shrouds for Dust Management on the Job Site

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.



Careful use of a pressure washer will help remove most contaminants.

GOCLIPS

5 Second Anchors®

The #1 Patented Sink Anchoring System in the Stone Industry

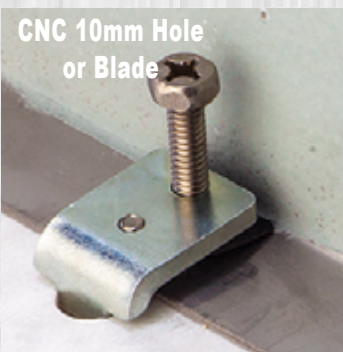
9,828,754

10,378,193

D855,477



STD HD - 7/8" Rim



SS HD - 1/8" Rim w/Torque Caps



XL HD - 1 1/4" Rim w/Torque Caps



Slot-based Anchors for Diamond Blades or CNC 10mm Holes



OUR EXCLUSIVE USER-FRIENDLY FEATURE-PACKED DESIGN

- Fits sinks up to 1 1/4" - No special tools
- Fastest anchor vs other methods = \$\$\$
- 1-2 minutes per sink vs 10-15 minutes with lead anchors and epoxy = less labor



- 7x less cutting than butterfly method
- 100% less epoxy - NON-Toxic
- Professional results every time

SS - 1/8" Rim w/Torque Caps



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CALL 404-433-5310 OR EMAIL SALES@GOCLIPS.COM

www.GOCLIPS.com

Direct Bulk Sales are Available for High-Volume Companies and Large Projects. Samples Available Upon Request

Please notify us of any knockoffs or counterfeit GoClips® products

Copyright 2023 GOCLIPS LLC. All rights reserved. PO BOX 22553 CHATTANOOGA TN 37422. GOCLIPS is a registered trademark of GOCLIPS LLC AND Z KEEPERS LLC

NTCA Announces Woody Sanders Recipient of 2024 Ring of Honor



Woody Sanders, 2024 NTCA Ring of Honor

The National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) is thrilled to announce Woody Sanders as the recipient of the prestigious 2024 NTCA Ring of Honor award. This recognition is bestowed upon individuals who have made significant contributions to the tile industry, and Woody Sanders is undoubtedly a deserving recipient.

A titan in the tile industry, Woody Sanders founded DW Sanders Tile and Stone in 1994, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, A.W. Cook, who established his own tile contracting business in 1929. With a lifelong immersion in the tile industry, Woody became a journeyman tile and stone setter at a young age, laying the foundation for his future success.

As a Certified Tile Installer, Woody Sanders has dedicated himself to advancing the industry's technical and educational standards. He serves on NTCA Technical and Educational Committees and is a Regional Evaluator for the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation. Woody's passion for nurturing and educating the next generation of tile professionals is evident in his commitment to workforce development initiatives.

[Please turn to page 23](#)

THASSOS WHITE MARBLE

Buy factory direct. We ship all over the U.S.

- Factory direct Thassos White Marble slabs & tiles cut to size
- Specializing in Thassos White & Premium White Greek Marbles
- Celebrating 34 years supplying the U.S. stone industry



Call for more information
T. 713-521-1414
nick@eurostonemarble.com
www.eurostonemarble.com
 2502 Dunlavy • Houston, TX 77006

JUST HOW CHAOTIC IS YOUR BUSINESS?

Is your business consuming you?
 Ready to put an end to the madness?

Discover Your Starting Point in Just 10 Minutes



THE CHAOS INDEX QUIZ
<https://fabricatorcoach.com/chaos-index>

ALL THINGS LIGHT & STRONG, STONELYTE™ HAS YOU COVERED.

Stone^{lyte} Panels by 

OUR LIGHTWEIGHT NATURAL STONE ARCHITECTURAL COVERINGS WILL SAVE YOU TIME AND MONEY ON ANY PROJECT.

BACKING OPTIONS:

- F300AH F1000AHAL
- PET200
- FTL-10
- Aluminum Honeycomb
- PET Foam Core
- Fiberglass Translucent Panel
- USA
- ULTRA-F
- ULTRA-X
- Infused Fiberglass
- Infused Carbon Fiber

LIGHTER & STRONGER
EASIER & FASTER INSTALLATION
 2X THE YIELD



APPLICATION:

- Building
- Furnishing
- Elevators
- Marine
- Backlight
- Pre-Fab Homes/ RV

The Slippery Rock Marketplace

Get the Latest in Industry News

STONE UPDATE MAGAZINE Twice-monthly

Hard-Surface REPORT Monitoring U.S. Imports Every month

Slab & Sheet Every 1st & 3rd Wednesday

Radio STONE UPDATE Every 2nd & 4th Wednesday

Scan the QR code



or go to www.stonemag.com/srg

WOOD'S POWR-GRIP
WPG.COM
 THE EASY & POWERFUL WAY TO HANDLE STONE



SUPPORT USA MANUFACTURING

COUNTERTOP MARKETING CO.

Grow the Retail Side of your Countertop Company

- ✗ You only get retail countertop jobs from word-of-mouth leads and referrals.
- ✗ You've tried marketing in the past and it didn't work to bring in jobs.
- ✗ You don't have a system to follow-up with homeowners in order to close more jobs.

BOOK A FREE STRATEGY CALL TODAY
 to find out how we can help
<https://countertopmarketingco.com/>



Quality Polyester, Vinyl Ester, Enhancers

STONE SHIELD®

BBIndustriesLLC.com 800-575-4401

Makita

The unmatched quality and durability of Makita products have earned the trust of professional users worldwide.

Makita 9565CV SJS 5" Industrial VS Grinder

www.makitatools.com



BBIndustriesLLC.com 800-575-4401

Save BIG on Hercules stone transport solutions.

HERCULES

MATERIAL HANDLING • AIR TOOLS • ELECTRIC TOOLS

BBI Closeouts



Everything on this page has been discounted for your benefit.
 Grab 'em while supplies last!

"Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On!' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

— Calvin Coolidge

To submit a print or online classified ad, use the online form at www.slipperyrockgazette.net/listing-form – you will be sent a confirmation email. Send other ad inquiries to: publisher@slipperyrockgazette.net.

2024

CLASSIFIED AD DEADLINES

JULY 2024 ISSUE

FRIDAY, MAY 31, 2024

AUGUST 2024 ISSUE

FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 2024

Classified Ads not meeting guidelines will not be published.

For Sale

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. Asking \$10,000. Contact Jeff Kohmann, 330-575-3871, jeff@rocksolid-cutstone.com.

Granquartz Stone Cycler for Sale. Selling for \$16K. Machine was purchased in 2014. Works perfect. Comes with several shapes of dies. Paid over \$25K originally. Rochester Hills – You Pick Up. Phone: 248-564-2148; Email: lauren@earthstonesgroup.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@delorenzomarmble.com.

2007 Sawing Systems Gantry Saw. \$10,000 OBO. Thunderhead 541-CS Diamond Gantry Saw with a 20 hp motor. Originally purchased new for \$31,000. One-owner, selling because of an upgrade. Disassembled and located in East TN. Estimated 35,000-40,000 hours and around 40,000 slabs cut. Features a 12 foot cut capacity, Powered blade raise & lower, Blade guard that fits up to an 18 inch blade, 14 inch Milling blade. Replaced Parts: 20 hp motor Spindle Dry shaft Drive belt. Call 423-323-2722, Elliottentprise1@gmail.com.

Fab King. Fabrication Center including tools, Under power for inspection. \$8,000 or best offer. Contact Steve Hardesty, 231-838-9603, steve@petoskeygranite.com.

2005 DENVER QUASAR TECH

C-frame edging machine. Been sitting for a few years. Good condition, need the space. \$12,000 obo. Located in Paso Robles, CA. Call Dave @ 805-423-8564.

The Slippery Rock Classifieds



Glo-Aide
HIGH GLOSS

ALL FLOOR RESTORER

Give A Brand New Look To Your Floor

BEFORE



AFTER



Specially designed for all surfaces including:

- Vinyl • Linoleum • Marble
- Slate • Engineered Hardwood
- Terrazzo • Hardwood
- Porcelain Tile • Ceramic Tile
- Terra Cotta Tile

BUILT-IN APPLICATOR

LASTS FOR MONTHS

SKM Call For More Details
(570) 383-3062

STEINEX
WE SPLIT IT IN A SECOND

EXW Whitehall, NY

IGLOO 480 X 450 120t w/SHERPA T4R*



- 132 TON SPLITTING FORCE
- CHOICE OF CONVEYOR DIRECTION
- 18.9" BLADE LENGTH
- 17.72" SPLITTING HEIGHT
- 11 KW PUMP UPGRADE
- 4.44" PER SECOND DESCENT
- 4.98" PER SECOND RETRACT
- REINFORCED 13.12' LONG CONVEYOR w/ HIGH SIDEBORDS
- 39.37" WIDE, 37.4" HIGH, 3.94" PER SECOND SPEEDS
- TESTED and PRESSURES SET PRIOR TO SHIPMENT
- AVAILABLE w/o CONVEYOR

(518) 499-0602
ApexEquipIntl@aol.com

www.ApexEquipmentInternational.com

Business Opportunities

Delaware Marble Sculptor Retiring & Selling Business After 60 Years

Selling 40 tons of granite, marble, precious stones like onyx and jasper, and some finished sculptures! Also lapidary equipment, diamond saws, and 300+ tools are for sale. Marble man has sold over 700 stone sculptures. Please call for more information: Richard H Bailey (302) 399-9777 or (302) 653-4810. Located in Smyrna, DE — 30 miles from Wilmington, DE. Website: www.richardhbailey.com.

Turn Key Shop For Sale Looking to get out of the business. Shop is located just outside Buffalo, New York. I am willing to take monthly payments, with some money down. We have 2 Intermac master 43 CNCs, a Yukon 2 bridge saw, overhead crane with vac lifters— everything you need to get started. Maybe some help, too – owner willing to stick around for the change over. Email stonetech45@gmail.com.

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' 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, sdevine@warnert.com.

Help Wanted

Machine Operators / Fabricators / Installers. We are seeking to add experienced stone workers to our team. **European Marble** has been in business for over 55

years. We are seeking a machine operator with a minimum of 2 years' experience for a Genya 600 Bridge Saw. These positions are for full time experienced workers only. Compensation is based on experience. If interested, please contact John Stewart at 941-955-9536. Email: mary.european.marble@gmail.com.

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 to 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, 718-585-7084 (Eddie Moreno), Eliana.bahamon@millerdruck.com.

Stone Countertop Fabricator. We are seeking a Granite Fabricator to become an integral part of Black Rock Design-Build Firm in HIGHLANDS, NORTH CAROLINA. We are searching for proactive, motivated, skilled, team-players to join our successful and growing business experienced working with a bridge saw a plus. This position requires fine attention to detail in a fast-paced environment. Minimum of 2 years experience with Granite fabrication and installation. Drivers license required. Contact: Black Rock Granite and Cabinetry, Ltd, 828-482-4424, gerri@blackrockdb.com.

Shop Foreman. Looking for a self-motivated person to assist in building our company. Must have CNC experience and Auto Cad would be an added feature. Must have experience using a Donatoni CNC bridge saw, and a Flow Water Jet. Must be able to communicate with customers along with motivating and directing 4 employees. Compensation will be equal to your experience. Health and

BECOME A STONE & TILE INSPECTOR

Stone Forensics is now offering its popular Stone Inspection Correspondence Seminar as an affordable, self-guided PowerPoint presentation.

Take Dr Fred's Stone and Tile Inspection course and learn how to take your skills to the next level as a certified stone inspector. Evaluate installations, understand crack propagation, troubleshoot failures, learn problem solving for stain removal, efflorescence, lippage, and more.

- Live 2024 Seminar Recording
- Complete Class Curriculum
- Self-Paced, Cost-Effective Learning

CALL 321-514-6845



Visit the Stone Forensics website/training page & see what attendees say about the class!

Visit www.stoneforensics.com

Selling 2 Saws

16 foot for \$15,000 and 13 foot for \$10,000 OBO

Sunshine Granite & Marble
907 Back Water Drive
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

Please email, call or stop in
Mon-Fri, 8 am to 3:30 pm
727-463-0654

Ask for Sy or Maribeth
sunshinemarblegrinito@yahoo.com



Yearly bonus included. Contact: Michael Germono, 1-408-431-8033, mike@bayside-commercialcaseworks.com.

STONE FABRICATORS IN PA Currently we have openings for Stone Fabricators in our Fabrication Facility. We will train the right candidates. NO experience required however if you have experience this will put you in front of the line. Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania. 18103. Contact: JC STONE FABRICATION Phone: (484) 538

6402 Email: solanojc@icloud.com.

STONE CARVER OPPORTUNITY

Immediate opening for skilled and accomplished stone carvers for marble carving (bas-reliefs, moldings) as well as lettering/engraving projects in both sandblasted and hand cut letters, must have experience in marble and limestone. This is a full time position and salary will be based on experience. Must be able to relocate to Northern Virginia. Contact: sam@rugostone.com Ph:607-651-8585.

Xiamen International Stone Fair Draws Over 15,000 Attendees

The 24th China Xiamen International Stone Fair successfully concluded its March 16-19, 2024, run by drawing more than 150,000 attendees to more than 2 million square feet of exhibits.

The world's largest stone-industry event Xiamen Stone Fair 2024 attracted 151,845 visits during the 4-day show. Trade buyers from 120 countries and regions flocked to Xiamen to make contacts, develop business and place orders.

In the constantly changing economic environment, face-to-face communication plays a significant role in accelerating the industry development.

Laizhou city in Shandong province, Sui County and Macheng in Hubei province, Jiaohe city in Jilin province, and Taiwan. The array of exhibits from raw block, slab, engineered stone to finished stone product; from heavy equipment, gang saw, abrasive to adhesive and care product could be found in the many aisles, making Xiamen Stone Fair a one-stop center for global buyers.

Of special notice was the Design Area in Hall D1 where the two theme exhibitions – Habitat Interior Design Exhibition and Stone Infinite Product Design Show – were presented. Eighteen top designers and architects in China teamed up with leading



Among the presenters at Xiamen Stone Fair was Emerson Schwartzkopf, Stone Update online magazine editor. Photo courtesy Xiamen Stone Fair

With the theme “SAY HI,” Xiamen Stone Fair 2024 expanded to 191,000 m² (more than 2 million ft²) where more than 2,000 exhibitors from around the world gathered under one roof. Among the vendors were 350 international exhibitors came from Italy, Turkey, Brazil, Egypt, Portugal, Iran, Pakistan, Greece, India, Vietnam, and beyond.

There were 8 exhibition areas in 25 halls – Domestic Stone Area, Machinery & Tools Area, International Area, Artificial Stone Area, Outdoor Area, Design Area, Media Area and Natural Stone Varieties Collection. The newly opened Hall B8 and Hall D1 were planned as Machinery & Tools and Design areas respectively.

Industrial clusters in China also organized delegations to participate in this annual event, including Guizhou province,

stone brands to present the fabulous beauty and diversified application of natural stone, leaving profound impressions on visitors, design enthusiasts and stone lovers.

The 3rd Natural Stone Varieties Collection became the first step to have a quick overview of the market trends in 2024. While Launch Out @XSF – New Product Releasing and WSC – Educational Sessions contained a series of conferences, forums, and lectures to give insights into the stone industry. With all the support and trust from the whole stone community, Xiamen Stone Fair 2024 made another major achievement.

The 25th China Xiamen International Stone Fair is set for March 16-19, 2025.

Reprinted courtesy of Stone Update.

Beat the \$3 Million Threshold

“Good fortune is what happens when opportunity meets with planning.”

– Thomas Edison

Continued from page 5

Also, be prepared to test a few different offers simultaneously to see what performs the best. Every local market is a little different. **Do not run ads if you are not offering something of value.** Your offer should compel people to visit your showroom because of something valuable that nobody else in your local market is offering! Once you have these offers dialed in, you can expect a consistent flow of traffic in the showroom and quotes being sent out.

Sales

We are quoting more jobs, but why aren't we selling more? Converting leads consists of 3 phases: Engage (warm up the relationship), offer (quote/bid), and close (ask for the sale).

You've invested money to generate the leads but your sales team isn't closing them? Do you know what your cost per lead or conversion rates are? Your cost per lead is usually a lot different from Google to Facebook to other sources, but the close rate should also be different because the quality of the leads generated by each channel is different!

Automate your follow-up and watch your close rates explode!

Most small business owners have heard that leads need to hear your message 7-12 times before they buy. Do you know how to achieve that many touches without being annoying or “salesy?” Very few small businesses spend enough time to engage their leads before or after they make an offer. Making an offer over the phone without a “design consult” (sales presentation) is a sure way to end up in a race to the bottom.

Map it out and measure each step for the best results. Optimizing your close rate starts with having a well-defined sales process where all your traffic can be measured. This sounds complicated, but it can start very simply and grow as your team gets better at it. Using a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) strategy is highly recommended rather than tracking in a spreadsheet or on a whiteboard, or worse, relying on operating software not built to manage this process. A good CRM should allow you to automate several steps in the follow-up process and drastically improve your close rate. It can also allow you to see

every communication that your team has had with the prospect so that you can coach and continually improve your process. CRM software can be very inexpensive to start, many now offer a free, basic version which is sufficient to get started. This can become a large change management project, so be prepared to start slowly and plan for long-term success. Many experienced sales staff will resist at first, so it is very important that they understand how much the project will help them and make their jobs easier while benefiting the company as a whole.

Reviews and Referrals

Your best salespeople are not on your payroll. Believe it or not, Reviews and Referrals are the most important part of your sales and marketing process... and almost nobody in small business gets it right. Having a system to capture reviews after a successful installation is a no-brainer for stone shops. You can't have too many reviews... EVER! The business with the most positive reviews gets the most new business. This isn't a new concept and it doesn't matter if you're selling countertops, pizzas, or baseball gloves. Most new customers' journey still starts at Google. By the time they arrive at your showroom, they've already started researching your business, and many have an idea of what they are looking for.

The best way to get a referral? Just ask.

In addition to automatically capturing reviews, you need to have a referral program in place for your happy customers. The funny thing is, many customers are happy to give you a referral when you ask them, but do you ask them? This can be as simple as a couple of automated emails that start a week after the job is invoiced.

After all that... Don't disappear.

Finally, after completing the job and the reviews and referrals have been requested, please, keep in touch with your clients. This doesn't need to be annoying or pesky. It doesn't need to cost much, either. A monthly newsletter is more than most businesses do to stay top of mind with their past customers. I still get birthday cards, Christmas cards, and a new calendar from a realtor I used 12 years ago! I'll never forget who we used because he's hanging on my wall. It probably costs him \$10 a year to stay in touch with me but I've given his name more than 10 times since our positive experience. That's 10 warm leads – think of the ROI!

Steve McKenna is CEO of North Star Productions.

Woody Sanders Recipient of 2024 Ring of Honor

Continued from page 19

In recognition of his outstanding service and support, Woody was honored with the Dan Hecox Service Award by the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation in 2021. This award celebrates his financial and volunteer contributions to the organization, underscoring his dedication to advancing tile education and training.

Under Woody's leadership, DW Sanders Tile & Stone has earned widespread acclaim for installation excellence, receiving numerous NTCA Five-Star Contractor Awards. Woody's company is highly regarded in the Atlanta market, where they consistently deliver exceptional results and uphold the highest standards of professionalism.

Beyond his professional achievements, Woody Sanders is deeply committed to giving back to his community. He has partnered with NTCA First Vice President Rod of CC Owen Tile to support the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia (CEFGA) and the SkillsUSA Program, providing valuable resources and mentorship to area high school students pursuing careers in tile.

As the current 2nd Vice President of NTCA, Woody Sanders has authored numerous documents for the NTCA Technical Committee and Methods and Standards Committee, advocating for adherence to TCNA and ANSI Standards.

The National Tile Contractors Association is honored to recognize Woody Sanders for his outstanding contributions to the tile industry. As the 2024 NTCA Ring of Honor winner, Woody joins a distinguished list of industry leaders, and we commend him for his remarkable achievements and unwavering dedication to advancing the tile industry.

Established in 1947, the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) is a nonprofit trade association dedicated to the professional installation of ceramic tile and natural stone. It is widely recognized as the largest and most respected tile contractors' association in the world. For those seeking to improve their tile business, NTCA provides unparalleled educational experiences, supportive peer interaction, unique cost-savings programs, and a commitment to help develop the skills needed to make your business more profitable. Find out more at www.tile-assn.com.

International Surface Fabricator's Association June Fabricator's Forum to be Hosted in California

The International Surface Fabricators Association (ISFA) is hosting a series of Fabricator Forums in 2024, the first of which was held April 10-11 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The next event will be held June 11-13 in Sacramento, California. Registration is now open.

These regional events, formerly known as Industry Roundtables, include expert-led presentations, peer-to-peer discussions, facility tours and networking opportunities. Educational topics include silica safety, fabrication and repair techniques for porcelain and other sintered materials, using artificial intelligence to tap into growth opportunities, carving out additional lines of revenue and other business best practices. Sponsored by Cosentino, FreePower and Park Industries, the Sacramento Fabricator Forum kicks off at Cosentino Center, where attendees will have a peer-to-peer discussion about recent changes to California's silica safety regulations.

Photo courtesy of the International Surface Fabricators Association



Attendees at the Charlotte Fabricator Forum take part in educational sessions including OSHA compliance, using artificial intelligence and more.

Attendees can also get a tour of the facility, which is designed to support, promote and educate trade professionals by combining exhibition areas, workspaces and classrooms for continuing education. A welcome reception will follow.

On subsequent days, the event will include presentations and roundtable discussions about:

- Cal/OSHA's ETS for silica and California's AB3043, a bill that prohibits



using dry methods and requires licensure, among other things.

- Understanding the lifecycle of a project: a panel discussion with architects, designers and fabricators.
- Using artificial intelligence to tap into growth opportunities.
- The power of upselling: carving out new lines of revenue.

ISFA will also take the show on the road for two fabricator shop tours, during which they'll have an OSHA overview designed to identify common oversights and live demonstrations featuring FreePower's award-winning wireless charging solution

that helped me identify some places we might have exposure. I recommend these fabricator forums; there were so many great takeaways at the Charlotte event."

ISFA Fabricator Forums are open to all fabricators, including nonmembers, and registration starts at \$300. Registration includes all programming and meals listed on the agenda. Space is limited, so those interested in attending are encouraged to reserve their spot as soon as possible by visiting www.ISFAnow.org/fabricator-forums.

"The Charlotte Fabricator Forum was a huge success," said Marissa Bankert, executive director of ISFA. "The content is curated to help fabricators improve their businesses in multiple ways, including actionable insights they can use immediately. And with concerns about silica on the rise — especially in California — we're looking forward to educating fabricators about developing regulations and helping them break down barriers to compliance. Silica safety is worker safety, and ISFA is here to help all fabricators learn about the issue and develop a plan of action."

ISFA's third Fabricator Forum will be held September 11-12 in St. Louis. Registration for that event will open this summer.

For more information about the International Surface Fabricators Association, membership and ISFA's events, visit www.ISFAnow.org.

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.

for countertops and repair techniques for sintered materials, including Dekton. Fabricators can get a firsthand look at what makes these shops so successful and discover ways to improve their upselling game with sessions curated to expand their horizons and arm them with powerful solutions that meet their customers' needs.

"We first learned about silica at an ISFA event nearly ten years ago," said Troy Page of Ellis Page Company. "The silica presentation and overview included some updates

SLIPPERY ROCK GAZETTE
4100 APPALACHIAN WAY
KNOXVILLE, TN 37918

PRSRT-STD
U.S. Postage Paid
Knoxville, Tn
Permit #255

HERCULES **MATERIAL HANDLING SOLUTIONS**

Your complete source for storing and transporting stone



Hercules 8 Ft. Kitchen Transport Rack with White Rubber #6731

Capacity: 30,800 Lbs.
(Also available at 6 Ft.)

“Hercules A-Frames are very sturdy, nice looking and professionally-built. I was surprised that they came with the wooden inserts, to keep the slabs from sliding off, which was very much needed. We stock around 3,000 slabs, and now all of them are on display for ease of viewing.”

– **Terry Bortolotti, G.M.S. Werks/ Universal Terrazzo & Tile Co.**



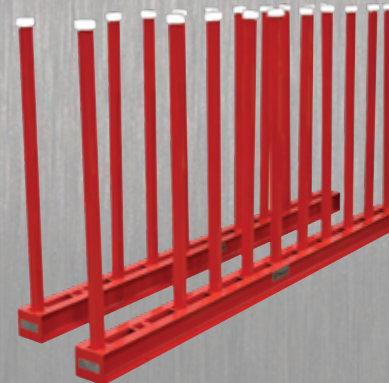
Hercules A-Frame Slab Storage Racks #6698

Capacity: 15,400 Lbs. Per Side



Hercules Shop Cart #6706

Capacity: 2,200 Lbs.



Hercules Slab Rack #6741

10' Length



Hercules Fabrication Work Table #6717

85" x 30-11/16" x 39" H



Call 1-800-575-4401
or Order Online www.BBIndustriesLLC.com

YOUR COMPLETE SINK DISTRIBUTOR



Same-Day Shipping
Faster Service Guarantee



Shop Envy Sinks
BBIndustriesLLC.com



Quality Stainless Steel, Porcelain and NEW Composite Sinks
Call NOW for the Industry's BEST Pricing!



Call 1-800-575-4401
or Order Online www.BBIndustriesLLC.com