

# concrete DECOR<sup>®</sup>

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**good times**  
ahead



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On behalf of everyone at McKinnon Materials, our hearts go out to all those impacted by COVID-19 — this includes not only those diagnosed with the virus, but also their friends and family. We keep those whose jobs, businesses and schools that have been severely impacted in mind. Our focus is, as always, on the health and safety of our employees, customers and communities.

The situation involving COVID-19 is changing rapidly. **However, we are following state, federal and CDC guidelines during this time. We will continue to ship materials across the country as we are classified as an essential business.** Please stay up to date with real time information pertaining to McKinnon Materials operations through our Facebook Page @McKinnonMaterials.

There is no question this is a time of great uncertainty. While we don't know exactly what the future may hold, we feel confident that by sticking together and supporting each other, we'll emerge from this stronger than before.

*Kenneth McKinnon, President of McKinnon Materials*

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## Publisher's Letter



### Dear Readers,

Recently my youngest son, Kannen, and I were driving by Cabela's and I said, "Wow! That parking lot is empty!"

His response: "I wish I was back at school. This situation sucks. I just want things to be normal again."

That conversation led me to think about how this pandemic (a first for our generation) is affecting everyone's lives. Kids are finishing the school year with online classes, normally interactive businesses are either closed indefinitely or there's a phone number on the door for customers to call to speak with someone inside. Banks look more like gas stations during a fuel shortage. Hospitals aren't allowing any visitors. We spray disinfectant on mail and packages before we touch them. All the while, people close to home and afar are struggling to survive this virus.

Fear is a big motivator, and historically it's had a profound ability to influence and even control our lives. As human beings, we're designed for human interaction. We need each other. We require time together as friends, family, neighbors, lovers and industry colleagues. Life without personal contact deeply impacts who we are, how we think and how we live our day-to-day lives.

I can see this pandemic going away but not the virus. Worldwide, we're going to have to decide how we'll live our lives now. How will we live together while ensuring a happy, healthy existence personally and professionally? Our government is going to tell us that it's OK to go back to work soon, but those words will be girded by a set of conditions on how we must interact to protect one another.

At home, we'll need to establish similar rules. We're going to find a new normal, but it'll be different than before. For some of us life may not look too different, but for those in big metropolitan areas, change will be noticeable. Regardless, we'll survive these times and we'll figure out how to turn lemons into lemonade.

Let's embrace today's world. Strive for ways to demonstrate love for yourself, your loved ones and the people in your life. Make thoughtful decisions for your business and employees. Look for the silver lining in this era of upheaval. And, most importantly, spend time on your knees praying for those you love because when we're spending our time looking after the needs of others, our problems start to fade away. Love ... it's what binds us all together.

Enjoy this shortened version of *Concrete Decor*, as we too are affected by the world around us.

Your friend in concrete,

Bent Mikkelsen  
Publisher

### Attention Readers:

Due to the pandemic, the May/June issue of *Concrete Decor* may be postponed. Sign up for our free newsletter at [ConcreteDecor.net](http://ConcreteDecor.net) to get updates.



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**On the cover:** Although we can't get together now, let's plan on celebrating once this pandemic is behind us.

Photo courtesy of Caleb Lawson of Price Concrete Studio



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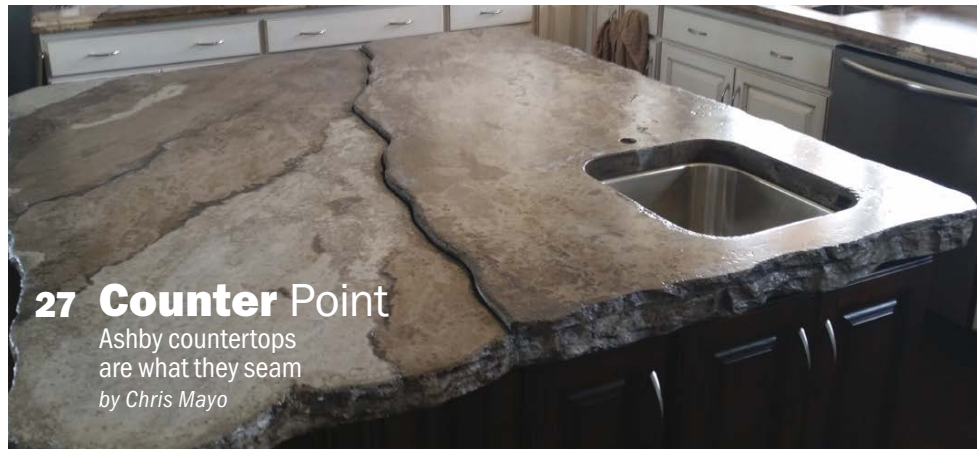
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## EXPERTS



**Danny Barrera**, owner and founder of Concrete Marketing Crew, has more than 10 years in the digital marketing space. He specializes in helping residential and decorative concrete contractors grow their business online to their maximum potential by integrating proven internet marketing to their business. He can be contacted at (305) 902-4888 or [danny@concretemarketingcrew.com](mailto:danny@concretemarketingcrew.com). See Danny's article on page 12.



**Jennifer A. Faller** has been in the surface preparation and concrete chemical and polishing industries for going on 25 years. A decorative concrete contractor, technical consultant, trainer and owner of a distribution company, Jennifer has held polishing positions as a brand, product, project and business development manager, as well as vice president of operations, director of technical services and global account manager. Recently, she's an independent technical consultant at her firm, Concrete In-Site LLC. She also consults on behalf of other firms. Contact her at [concreteinsite@gmail.com](mailto:concreteinsite@gmail.com). See Jennifer's article on page 24.



**Chris Sullivan** is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. and a member of the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Reach him at [questions@concretedecor.net](mailto:questions@concretedecor.net). See Chris' column, "Concrete Questions," on page 30.

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// be mindful of how you use your power

**ADJECTIVE**  
/'min(d)fəl/

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# 2020 PRODUCT GUIDE

## COMPANY INDEX

Use this guide to identify contact information for manufacturers that provide products and equipment. Search for companies by product category in the guide that starts on page 6.



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**Applicators**

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**B**

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**Burnishers**

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**C**

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Nox-Crete Products Group  
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**D**

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**E**

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**Grout**

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**H**

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RetroPlate by Curecrete  
Superabrasive  
Z Counterform / Concrete  
Countertop Solutions

**Polyaspartics**

Euclid Chemical  
Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete  
Laticrete International  
McKinnon Materials  
SpeedCove Inc. 

**Polyurea**

RetroPlate by Curecrete  
SpeedCove Inc.   
Sulzer Mixpac USA Inc.

**Power Trowels**

Kraft Tool Co.  
Runyon Surface Prep  
Superabrasive

**Pump Sprayers**

Quikspray Inc.

**R**

**Reinforcing Mesh & Lath**

Trinic

**Release Agents**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Euclid Chemical  
McKinnon Materials  
Sika Scofield  
Walttools

**Retardants**

Sika Scofield

**Rock-making Materials**

Trinic  
Walttools

**Rollers**

Midwest Rake

**Rollers – Spiked**

Kraft Tool Co.  
Midwest Rake

**S**

**Sand – Decorative**

Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete

**Scrapers**

Kraft Tool Co.

**Screeds**

Kraft Tool Co.

**Scrubbing Machines**

Aztec Products 

**Sealers – Countertop**

McKinnon Materials  
Nox-Crete Products Group  
SpeedCove Inc.  
Sulzer Mixpac USA Inc.  
Walttools  
Z Counterform / Concrete  
Countertop Solutions

**Sealers – Flooring**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Convergent Concrete Technologies  
Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete  
McKinnon Materials  
Nox-Crete Products Group  
RetroPlate by Curecrete   
Runyon Surface Prep  
Sika Scofield  
SpeedCove Inc.  
Sulzer Mixpac USA Inc.  
Walttools

**Sealers – Pigmented**

Convergent Concrete Technologies  
Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete  
McKinnon Materials  
Nox-Crete Products Group  
Sika Scofield  
SpeedCove Inc.

**Sealers – UV-cured**

SpeedCove Inc.

**Shotblasting Equipment**

Quikspray Inc.

**Shotblasting Machines**

Quikspray Inc.

**Shotcrete**

Poraver North America  
Quikspray Inc.

**Slip-resistant Additives**

Convergent Concrete Technologies  
Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete  
McKinnon Materials  
Nox-Crete Products Group

**Spiked Shoes**

Kraft Tool Co.  
McKinnon Materials  
Midwest Rake

**Sprayers**

Kraft Tool Co.  
McKinnon Materials  
Quikspray Inc.

**Spreaders**

Kraft Tool Co.  
McKinnon Materials  
Midwest Rake

**Squeegees**

Kraft Tool Co.  
McKinnon Materials  
Midwest Rake

**Stain Block**

Convergent Concrete Technologies  
Nox-Crete Products Group

**Stains – Acid & Reactive**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Euclid Chemical  
Sika Scofield  
SpeedCove Inc.  
Walttools

**Stains – Solid Color**

Convergent Concrete Technologies  
RetroPlate by Curecrete  
Sika Scofield  
SpeedCove Inc.  
Z Counterform / Concrete  
Countertop Solutions

**Stains – Translucent**

Convergent Concrete Technologies  
McKinnon Materials  
Nox-Crete Products Group  
RetroPlate by Curecrete  
Sika Scofield  
SpeedCove Inc.  
Walttools

**Stains – Water-based**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Convergent Concrete Technologies  
McKinnon Materials  
RetroPlate by Curecrete  
Sika Scofield  
SpeedCove Inc.  
Z Counterform / Concrete  
Countertop Solutions

**Stamps & Texturing Tools**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Euclid Chemical  
Sika Scofield  
Walttools  
Z Counterform / Concrete  
Countertop Solutions

**Stencils**

McKinnon Materials

**Step Liners**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Walttools

**Strippers**

Nox-Crete Products Group  
RetroPlate by Curecrete  
Walttools

**Structural Concrete Insulated Panel (SCIP) Systems**

Poraver North America 

**Surface Protection**

Convergent Concrete Technologies  
RetroPlate by Curecrete  
Sika Scofield  
Skudo LLC  
Trimaco Inc.

**T**

**Tampers**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Kraft Tool Co.

**Terrazzo**

Convergent Concrete Technologies  
Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete  
SpeedCove Inc.

**Testing & Measuring Equipment**

RetroPlate by Curecrete

**Texture Rollers**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
Walttools

**Toll Blending Services**

Convergent Concrete Technologies

**Trowels**

Kraft Tool Co.  
McKinnon Materials  
Midwest Rake  
SpeedCove Inc.

**U**

**Underlayments**

Laticrete International  
Quikspray Inc.  
SpeedCove Inc.

**Urethanes**

Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete  
McKinnon Materials  
SpeedCove Inc.   
Sulzer Mixpac USA Inc.  
Walttools

**V**

**Vacuums**

Superabrasive

**Vapor Barriers**

Laticrete International

**Vertical Overlays**

Butterfield Color Inc.  
McKinnon Materials  
Walttools

**Vinyl Chips**

Key Resin Co. / Flowcrete

**W**

**Wall Forms**

Fox Blocks ICF by Airlite Plastics Co.  
SpeedCove Inc.

**Water Drainage Systems**

SpeedCove Inc.  
TrueGrid Pavers by  
Airlite Plastics Co.


**Water Repellents**

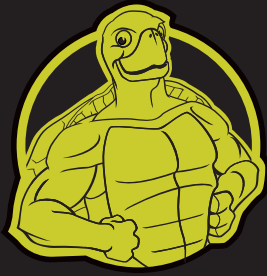
Nox-Crete Products Group

**Waterproofing Systems & Membranes**

SpeedCove Inc. 

The 2020 Product Guide is also available online:  
[www.ConcreteDecor.net/Product-Guide](http://www.ConcreteDecor.net/Product-Guide)

 indicates company provides environmentally friendly product.



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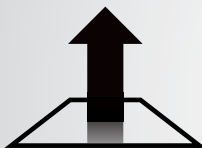
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# À la King's Cart

## Artisan's invention opens possibilities for bigger and better pieces

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**B**EFORE concrete artisan Josh Thiel of Thiel Studios in West Palm Beach, Florida, changed his career path, he was a mechanical engineer. From building combat robots for television and designing Power Wheels with Fisher-Price, he was involved with one intriguing project after another.

One that serendipitously prepared him for future concrete endeavors involved his former employer the International Chimney Corp., a company well known for its capabilities to relocate large-scale structures such as mansions, museums, theaters and even the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

During Thiel's employment, the company was hired to renovate and expand the Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Lewiston, New York. Thiel served as project engineer.

Among other things, he and his crew were tasked with relocating the basilica's Peace Mural, a curved 7,000-pound sgraffito artwork created in 1975 by Polish professor Joseph Slawinski. The sgraffito technique involves carving thin layers of colored concrete and mortar to reveal different colors at different depths.

The 24-foot-long, 7.5-foot-tall mural, which was 5 feet off the ground behind the church's main altar, was to be relocated to a new sacristy where it could be better displayed. To prepare for the move, the mural first needed to be structurally reinforced and braced. A specially devised jacking-and-cribbing system was then used to lower the mural a quarter inch at a time onto a custom dolly system engineered by Thiel and his team.

With great care and precision,

"We lowered it down, rolled it through small openings, raised it back up and secured it in place," says Thiel.

This painstaking procedure didn't go unnoticed. The feat landed him an award from the International Association of Structural Movers for the most unusual move of the year ... and laid the groundwork for his patent-pending invention he's calling the King's Cart.

### Not putting the cart before the horse

After he got into the decorative concrete business, Thiel says he initially designed a cart to transport a walk-in concrete bathtub he fabricated for HGTV's "The Vanilla Ice Project."



## Peace Movement

Seen here, Jenny Thiel admires the Peace Mural in the National Shrine Basilica of Our Lady of Fatima in Lewiston, New York. Years ago, her husband, Josh Thiel, was instrumental in relocating the sgraffito artwork created by Joseph Slawinski during a renovation.

The left side of the mural depicts a mushroom cloud and the aftermath of an atomic bomb. The right side paints a much rosier picture of a tranquil world where peace prevails.

In the center is a pregnant young woman, a symbol that peace has not yet arrived but may soon. Four figures representing the world's four races surround her. Above the group, a symbolized Holy Trinity draws the two hemispheres together.





◀ To watch a demonstration video, scan here.

“The tub weighed 800 pounds and I needed to maneuver it in and around the site,” he says. “I designed a cart specifically for the bathtub. It wasn’t meant to be adaptable.”

Over the course of about four years, he says he used the same base and “Frankensteined” the cart to serve the project at hand. “I had cut and rewelded it so many times, it was a monstrosity. Its extensive modifications were limiting my ability to continue to reshape it,” he says.

He realized he was always facing the same obstacles and concerns — namely he needed a means to move oversized, heavy, awkward and potentially bulky items without damaging them or the property or injuring the crew.

“So I decided to finally engineer a new cart based on my four years of wish listing and utilizing this thing,” he says. It would be a modular cart that you could easily take apart and add things so it could transport a variety of shapes and sizes.

Enter: The King’s Cart. “There’s nothing like it on the market,” Thiel says.

### Seemingly endless capabilities

“I’m hoping this cart enables artisans to produce larger and more complex pieces and not worry about how they’re going to get them in place,” he says. “I really feel this tool will open up many more (opportunities) for artisans like it has for me!”

With very large pieces, Thiel says, going through a doorway with just manpower becomes a complex task.

“The cart takes that out of the equation. It allows you to breathe easier.” For his test delivery with the latest transport cart design, Thiel maneuvered a one-piece 850-pound U-shaped countertop through doorways and through the home into the kitchen. He says he’s also used it — solo — to deliver a pair of 24-foot-long bar tops.

The cart is also a godsend to small business owners who don’t have a full-time staff and have to hire people to help with the heavy lifting that some installs require, he says. “Installs can get pricey.”

*“The whole thing is on a pivot point.”*

But with the aid of his King’s Cart, “I’ve loaded, transported and installed projects alone, and never had to lift the piece.” In most instances, he adds, the King’s Cart can be operated by one person, but it’s easier to steer with two.

Although the King’s Cart can be used by those in the marble and granite sector, Thiel specifically designed it to accommodate the needs of concrete artisans who don’t like seams in their creations and who often need to transport complex 3-D shapes.

The cart functions as a rolling system and each leg lifts independently. They can be tilted, rotated up to 360 degrees and locked in place.

“I also built in a design which allows you to adjust each workpiece’s center of gravity and ease the labor of the person

moving it.” These endless adjustments let the cart and its contents get through doorways, around corners, and up and down steps with control, Thiel explains. “The whole thing is on a pivot point.”

### Pricing and availability

Right now, carts can be purchased directly from Thiel, who says he’s working on distribution venues.

A complete functioning cart — which comes with the standard 8-foot 6-inch gantry span or an optional 10-foot 6-inch gantry span — is fully outfitted with outriggers, swivel casters and hydraulics. Optional accessories include extensions that can be attached at either or both ends of the base platform to increase the overall carrying capacity by up to an additional 4 feet.

The King’s Cart, fully welded and powder coated, comes with a one-year warranty. It’s rated to transport up to 2,000 pounds. Pricing starts at \$4,795, plus freight shipping.

Kits are also available starting at \$1,795. They come with all the critical steel CNC parts, custom hardware, fasteners, assembly instructions and a cut list that can be taken to a local welding shop. “You can do your own fabrication and assembly and then buy the remaining components, casters and hydraulics locally for about \$500,” Thiel estimates.

“I really want people to push the boundaries on what they can do and achieve with concrete,” he says. “I think this cart will help with that.”

 [www.TheKingsCart.com](http://www.TheKingsCart.com) 

# Flood Your Business with Leads from Facebook

## The 4-Step Action Guide

by Danny Barrera

Is Facebook really listening to your conversations? While you may want to read your Facebook app's fine print in the terms of service, Facebook — owner of Instagram and WhatsApp — thrives to become one of today's most prolific interests and behavioral engagement platforms. If you can pinpoint who you'd like to have as a client, you can most likely target them on Facebook.

Imagine showing an ad of your decorative concrete services to anyone who lives in a desired service area, who drives a specific vehicle, who has a specific career title or business acumen, and is interested in decorative concrete. You can do that with Facebook ads.

The advertising platform is so powerful and filled with so many options, that it overwhelms most contractors when they first open Facebook Ads Manager. Many incorrectly think that boosting a post is the equivalent of running an ad campaign.

While they both get you impressions, boosting a post tends to get engagement but inconsistent leads, if any. With a properly structured ad campaign on Facebook, you can expect to dial down your cost per lead and quickly take control of lead flow.

If you want to generate leads with consistency and predictability it comes down to understanding your numbers. Facebook's advertising platform is an impression bidding platform that determines cost per impressions based on how many other businesses are advertising to your prospect at the same time. In the beginning, you'll have to test to determine your sweet spot in your service area.

Starting with a realistic budget and expectations will help you speed up momentum.

### Step 1: Setting up

There are three things you'll need to properly set up a Facebook ad campaign:

- Own a Facebook Business Page for your decorative concrete company.
- Set up a Facebook Ad Manager Account for your business page.
- Set up a Facebook Pixel dedicated to your specific business page and ad account.

To learn how to set those up step-by-step, go to [facebook.com/business/help/](https://facebook.com/business/help/)

### Step 2: Determining your objective

Next you need to determine what your marketing objective is from three categories: Awareness, Consideration or Conversion.

If you're running any type of lead generation campaign on Facebook, the top three objectives you'll need to focus on are listed under Consideration:

**Traffic:** Sends more people to a destination such as a website or Messenger conversation.

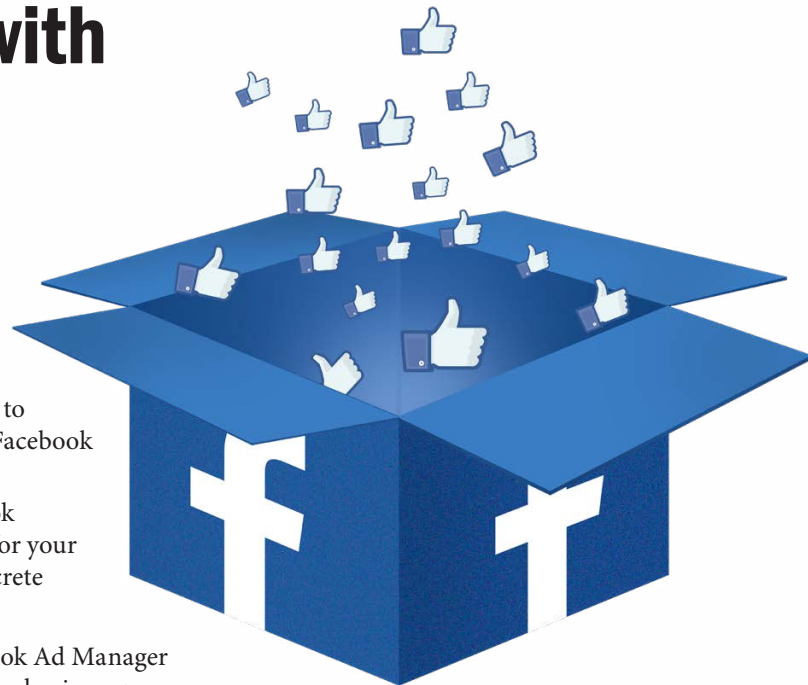
**Lead Generation:** Allows you to capture an individual's information within Facebook.

**Messages:** Allows you to start conversations with individuals interested in what you're offering.

What about the other objectives, Awareness and Conversion?

The "Conversion" objective is better suited for those with an advertising budget of \$1,000 or more per month.

Under Awareness, "Brand awareness" and "Reach" objectives may be valuable to product manufacturers or brands that just want to get more eyeballs to their



Facebook business page. They aren't effective to generate leads.

Under Consideration, the "Engagement" objective is suitable for companies that want to get more Page Likes, Post Likes or Comments, or Event Responses. The "App installs" objective only applies to businesses that are advertising to encourage application downloads from the Apple App Store or Android Apps on Google Play.

The "Video views" objective is designed to get engagement for video content. If you want to get more views of a specific video, you can select this ad objective. It will display in the best places where people are most likely to watch your video.

After you determine your objective, you need to set a budget. At a minimum to generate enough impressions per day, contractors should budget \$10/day for advertising. Ideally, \$25 or more will provide the greatest reach and ability to get data faster.

After a campaign has spent \$90, you should have a good idea which ads are working and which ones aren't. At this point, end those campaigns that aren't producing results and focus on the ones that are.

### Step 3: Targeting

#### Choose who you want as clients —

If you have an active Facebook business page with existing videos that have been viewed by hundreds of local residents, one of your best options is to target a custom audience based on anyone local who has watched your videos in the past 60 days.

**Target locals** — If you want homeowners as clients, consider targeting cities or ZIP codes where homeownership is prominent. Select “People living in this location.” If you’re targeting ZIP codes, select “Current city only.” You can also target specific areas.

#### Finding the perfect prospects —

Now that you’ve selected your service area, it’s time to include and exclude those you want and don’t want to show your ads. Enter a general age range of the clients you want to target. Do you want to target men, women or both? Married, single or both? With or without children? Owners of a certain car brand? If you want clients that share certain interests — such as remodeling or watching HGTV — include that.

There’s no right or wrong answer here! Sometimes you can leave the interests open for Facebook to figure out, as long as you have the right target locations and age ranges in place.

When it comes to excluding people you think wouldn’t be interested in your services, you have options to further narrow your audience. For instance,

you can exclude employers who offer remodeling services or individual concrete contractors and subcontractors. You can also exclude people who rent rather than own their home.

**Placements** — You can have your ads shown everywhere within Facebook’s owned platforms such as the Facebook News Feed, Facebook Messenger, Facebook Marketplace, Facebook Video Feeds, Instagram Feed, Instagram Explorer, Stories on Facebook, Instagram or Messenger, Facebook Search results, Facebook Instant Articles or the Audience Network.

By default, Facebook will want you to run “Automatic Placements,” which targets every ad placement available on Facebook, Instagram and partner sites. If you go with this automatic option, your ad budget will drain and most likely won’t generate many results.

A better option for beginners is to select “Manual Placement” and choose Facebook as the platform where you want to show your ad. Select all devices and select “Facebook News Feed” for placement. Facebook News Feed is where most of the clicks turn into leads.



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# THE BROADCAST



A lead-generating ad can offer a special discount.

## Step 4: Ads that get leads

This is the fun part — the ad creation, where you get to create what everyone sees!

The one advertising formula that works great for Facebook ads is the AIDA formula. It stands for “Attention, Interest, Desire, Action.” This formula is about helping the scroll stop, engage users and, if they’re motivated enough, help them take action.

There are two ways to get attention with lead-generating ads:

**Your ad message:** The opening line of your ad must make the reader stop scrolling and read to see what the ad is about. By using emojis, you can make the same ad pop and be noticeably different from the rest of the Facebook Feed.

☀️ Hey CITY NAME Homeowners! ☀️

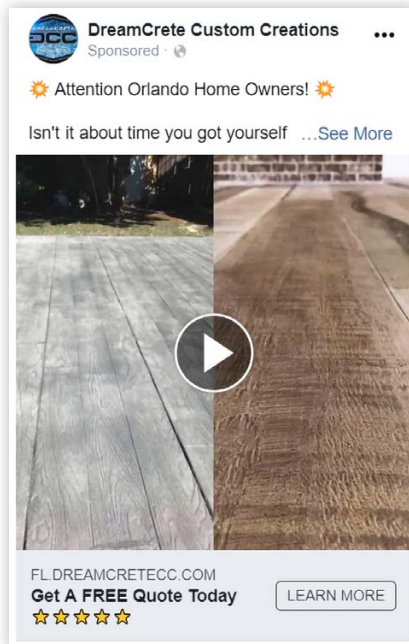
Isn't it time to transform your old, cracked concrete floors into amazing usable space?

- Our floors are backed by our limited lifetime warranty!
- Installed in as little as a single day!
- Slip resistant, stain resistant and 100% antimicrobial!

★★★★★ “Amazing 5-star review from Google or other credible source”  
– Name

Click “Get Quote” now and save 15% off your estimate today!

(Expires 4/30/20)



Traffic ads are used to maximize video views and landing page clicks.

**The video or image:** The more realistic and authentic the images and videos look in your ads, the higher the response. If they look like stock photos or are overly enhanced, users will just pass over them and not engage with the ad.

Here are a few tips to increase the interest, desire and action in your video.

- Talk about the benefits your clients will experience when they hire you for your decorative concrete services.
- Use testimonials of customers via video, images or text. The more real, the better.
- Have a special offer with a deadline for anyone who acts now.



A messenger ad is used to target anyone who left the website without requesting more info.

**Follow up is key!** A messenger ad should be sent to anyone who:

- Is local in your service area, visits your website and doesn't take action.
- Engaged with your ads but hasn't requested more info.
- Has watched a lot of your videos.

Whether you're starting with a small or large budget, you can make Facebook ads work for your decorative concrete business. It's a matter of understanding your objective, knowing who you're targeting, delivering a concise message and showcasing your best work to motivate them to contact you. 📱

*Danny Barrera, owner and founder of Concrete Marketing Crew, has more than 10 years in the digital marketing space. He specializes in helping residential and decorative concrete contractors grow their business online to their maximum potential by integrating proven internet marketing to their business. He can be contacted at (305) 902-4888 or danny@concretemarketingcrew.com.*



## Lightweight mortars contain no respirable silica

Laticrete, a leading manufacturer of construction solutions for the building industry, recently launched 3701 Lite Mortar and 3701 Lite Mortar R.

The formulas, crafted from carefully selected polymers, portland cement and lightweight aggregates, only require you add water, not a latex admixture.

The mortars also have no respirable crystalline silica, which is known to be harmful when inhaled. They have excellent performance in vertical and overhead applications such as concrete repairs or wall renders, and can be used for interior or exterior applications. Additionally, their versatile formulas make them freeze/thaw stable.

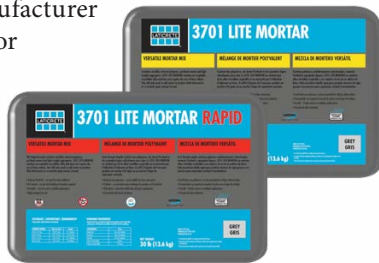
The mortars are available in 30-pound bags (13.6 kilograms) that offer the same amount of coverage as traditional 60-pound bags. The products are ideal for tight locations such as bathrooms, where mortar beds would be applied.

3701 Lite Mortar R is the rapid cure formula and allows for a quicker installation, drying in approximately two hours.

Earlier in March, Laticrete introduced Spectralock 1, a premixed, stain-proof grout with true epoxy performance. It offers superior strength at 3,500 psi, can be submerged and has an extremely fast cure rate. Available in a wide variety of colors, it meets and/or exceeds the ANSI A118.3 specification.

This grout is ideal for bathrooms, steam showers and kitchens as well as pools and patios. No sealing or mixing is required.

[www.laticrete.com](http://www.laticrete.com)



## Ardex appoints new U.S. general manager

Ben Mack has been promoted to the U.S. general manager of sales and marketing for Ardex Americas. He was previously the company's director of marketing.

In that role, Mack managed teams focused on marketing communication, technical services, product development, business development and general strategy. For the last three years, he has also been acting as the corporate unit leader for global marketing at Ardex, helping to drive critical global initiatives related to communications, digital marketing and product development.

In his new role, Mack will oversee the departments of U.S. Tiling and Flooring Sales, Corporate Marketing and Technical Services.

[www.ardexamericas.com](http://www.ardexamericas.com)

(888) 512-7339



## Topcoat offers quick return to service

Coatings for Industry Inc. has introduced WearCoat 3015, a new water-based, aliphatic urethane topcoat for commercial and light industrial floors including office, restroom and retail applications.



Offering quick return-to-service, this versatile coating features high UV stability for color retention without yellowing, so it can be used in both indoor and outdoor applications. It also resists abrasion from foot and light-wheeled traffic.

For projects needing increased abrasion and chemical resistance WearCoat 3015 Hardener Additive is available.

The topcoat is available in clear or pigmented formulations in any CFI standard color in either satin or clear-gloss finishes. Custom-color matching is available. Its low-odor formula allows for versatile application, even in occupied buildings.

[www.cficoatings.com](http://www.cficoatings.com)

(215) 723-0919

## Hospitals specifying quick and sanitary floors

With hospitals, medical centers and doctors' offices scrambling to accommodate an influx of patients afflicted by COVID-19, the Sisters of Mercy at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland, are transforming the 17th floor into 32 new patient rooms. The floor had previously been used for storage.



RHI Flooring in nearby Elkridge has been subcontracted to install Laticrete's Spartacote Flex Pure Clinical Plus in each of the rooms' new bathrooms, in

A preformed cove base system from SpeedCove will be used along with a polyaspartic polyurethane to floor 32 new bathrooms at Mercy Medical Center.

conjunction with a 6-inch cove base system from SpeedCove. Laticrete's fast-curing polyaspartic aliphatic polyurea combined with SpeedCove's eco-friendly product with zero VOCs offer one of the quickest solutions to a seamless, more germ-free floor that's easy to maintain. Vortex Supply in Blackwood, New Jersey, supplied the materials for the project.

Subcontractors across the U.S. are tasked with "changing and modifying the hospitals to better meet the challenges of this pandemic," says Doug Standal, president of SpeedCove. "Our portion is to help them build the most sanitary floors available and build them as fast as possible."

In addition to the cove base system, SpeedCove is supplying preformed custom sills for the doorways, says Dale Stevens, president of RHI. Typically, these are made from marble but will complement the coves and help maintain a more sanitary environment.

Stevens says his company will begin work April 15 and expects to finish up by April 30. The project should be completed and the floor ready for occupancy no later than mid-May.

[www.speedcove.com](http://www.speedcove.com)

# ARTISAN IN CONCRETE



Photos courtesy of Price Concrete Studio

## Caleb Lawson Price Concrete Studio, Orlando, Florida

By Chris Mayo

**C**ALEB Lawson, owner and president of Price Concrete Studio in Orlando, Florida, didn't picture himself as a concrete artisan when he was growing up. Unlike many in the industry, his background isn't in concrete or construction. In fact, his life seemed preordained for something far different.

"My father was an attorney and now sits as a justice on the Florida State Supreme Court," Lawson says. "I always thought I was going to be a lawyer and maybe a judge someday myself."

Lawson took all the steps to become a lawyer: majoring in political science at the University of Central Florida and then taking the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test). It was only when he'd completed the LSAT that he realized he didn't want to be a lawyer. What he

really wanted was something more hands on.

"I always enjoyed working with my hands," says Lawson. "When I was younger, I refurbished a lot of different cars, and I loved the challenge of making something work at its ultimate capacity. It wasn't just the labor part though. I liked the mental challenge just as much."

So, the logical path for Lawson to take would have been to find some way to make his passion for cars his livelihood, right? He didn't go in that direction either.



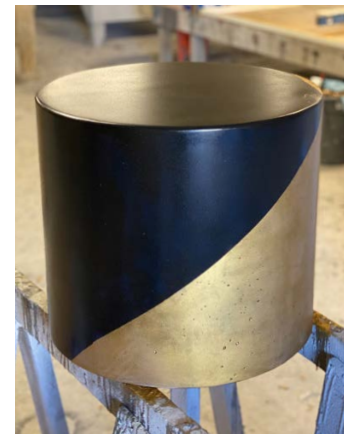
### Sold on education and GFRC

It happened that Lawson was friends with a successful concrete artisan who was planning to get out of concrete and concentrate more on building a high-end general contracting business. Lawson asked Chuck Price, the founder of Price Concrete, if he could mentor under him with an eye toward buying the business.

Lawson bought the business in 2013 and was on his way — well, kind of.

"At first everything we were doing was wet cast," says Lawson. "It turned out to be harder than I thought. Our products broke a lot when we pulled the forms or tried to move them. It was frustrating. I asked Price for help, but he was too busy with his new business."

Price suggested that Lawson investigate attending some training



classes at The Concrete Countertop Institute owned by Jeff Girard. Lawson took the advice and attended the institute. He really hasn't looked back since.

"I can't say enough about how learning at CCI transformed my business," he says. "First of all, once I saw the potential of using GFRC (glass fiber reinforced concrete) I was sold on it. GFRC is far stronger than the wet cast countertops, and the potential for artistic expression was mind-blowing. It allows us to be far more innovative."

In fact, Lawson believes so much in the power of education that he teamed up with CCI and hosted and co-taught the "Ultimate" class in February at his Orlando institute. He says he's humbled to teach alongside Girard, whom he

considers a pioneer in the industry.

Lawson says that using GFRC has allowed Price Studio to more than double the size of the pieces they make in the shop. He says it's so much stronger that breakage is no longer a problem. In addition to that, the creativity they can now incorporate sets them apart from their competitors.

### Lunch, learn and whiskey

But it's not all about GFRC. Lawson has a clear understanding of what it takes to build and develop relationships with architects, contractors and customers.

"When I noticed the potential of what we could offer to customers, it was frustrating that they couldn't always see it too," says Lawson.

Lawson decided to find a way to

educate prospective customers about the potential of what Price Studio could offer. He opted to offer education outreach to architects, designers and contractors by hosting "lunch and learn" events. At those events, Price Concrete Studio provides lunch for groups of potential clients. In exchange, Lawson gets an hour to tell attendees about what custom concrete can add to their projects.

Lawson does the same thing with individual customers. He understands that a lot of people don't understand the full potential of custom concrete.

"A lot of people still view concrete as a product used for flat work, like patios, driveways and maybe basic countertops," he says. "It's my job to introduce them to new ideas and



encourage them to collaborate on outside-the-box design ideas.”

That approach has yielded some amazing results, from a lounge chair design bathtub to a whiskey-bottle shelf incorporated into a countertop’s waterfall leg design.

Speaking of whiskey, Lawson is something of an aficionado. He contends that good whiskey is like snowflakes — no two bottles are exactly alike.

“Everything good has a story,” he says. “I just happen to believe that good whiskey and good concrete go well together. Each product is unique and special.”

## Really special but simple

One thing a lot of concrete artisans run into is the question of business sustainability — how to slow down the pressure of having to find the next project. Lawson has come up with a plan for that, too.

“We’re working toward developing a line of standardized products that we can produce with reusable forms. Once we do that, we can take orders and ship products anywhere,” he says.

Price Concrete currently offers a Leah Vessel sink with an optional matching center shelf, a drum table and custom whiskey glasses bearing the company brand. Lawson intends to



expand on this side of the business.

To that end, Lawson is expanding certain products to a separate company, Tub Brand, where he will offer standard size bathtubs in a variety of colors, shapes and finishes. His first tub, “The Craftsman Edition,” was featured in the 2019 show home for the Southeast Building Conference. That same tub is now for sale on his website and also should be featured in the 2020 SEBC show in Kissimmee, Florida, in July.

“I really believe that if we can develop enough products, with enough demand, that will allow us to work on projects that are really special.”

“Really special” is kind of a mantra

for Lawson. He says he gets a great deal of joy from working with customers who allow him to explore his full range of artistic license. His goal is that his pieces always make a statement for each client’s home or business.

Some of Lawson’s work can be found at the new Galaxy’s Edge area of Disney’s Hollywood Studios in Orlando, and they will soon be unveiling an intricate sculpture base for a piece outside the entry of Orlando’s new soccer stadium. He says they’re using some “really out-of-the-box” colors for that one.

All the steps Lawson has taken to build Price Studios are paying

dividends. “Business is just crazy,” he says. “Things come in waves and we just do them all.”

Lawson believes in three basic principles and sticks to them:

- Only excellent work will do.
- We’re all created to create things of beauty.
- Nothing less than the best effort is acceptable.

Simple beliefs, but they work. 📱

🌐 [www.priceconcretestudio.com](http://www.priceconcretestudio.com)

🌐 [www.tubbrand.com](http://www.tubbrand.com)

# Big Fish in an Oregon Plaza

*Downtown revitalization, Milwaukie, Oregon*

By K. Schipper

There's nothing new about mosaics. Excavations of Pompeii show it was a popular form of decoration in upper-class Roman homes around the time of Christ.

But those were mostly on the small side and set in plaster. Something larger than a pickup, set in concrete and sturdy enough to be driven on is another matter entirely.

However, by finding the right concrete contractor and mosaic artist, that's exactly what the Portland suburb of Milwaukie, Oregon, did to add a little extra magnetism to a community gathering place.

### Drawing from nature

Jennifer Garbely, assistant city engineer and the official overseeing the project, explains that a master plan for the community's downtown dates to 2008. Much of it lay dormant, though, until Garbely took over the project almost three years ago.

While some of the delay was due to funding, the project also benefited from the extension of a light rail line which allowed Milwaukie to close off a street which became a walkway.

#### Project at a Glance

**Project:** Downtown revitalization, Milwaukie, Oregon

**Scope:** To design and install a drivable, easy-to-maintain concrete plaza reflecting elements of the Northwest as part of a community project.

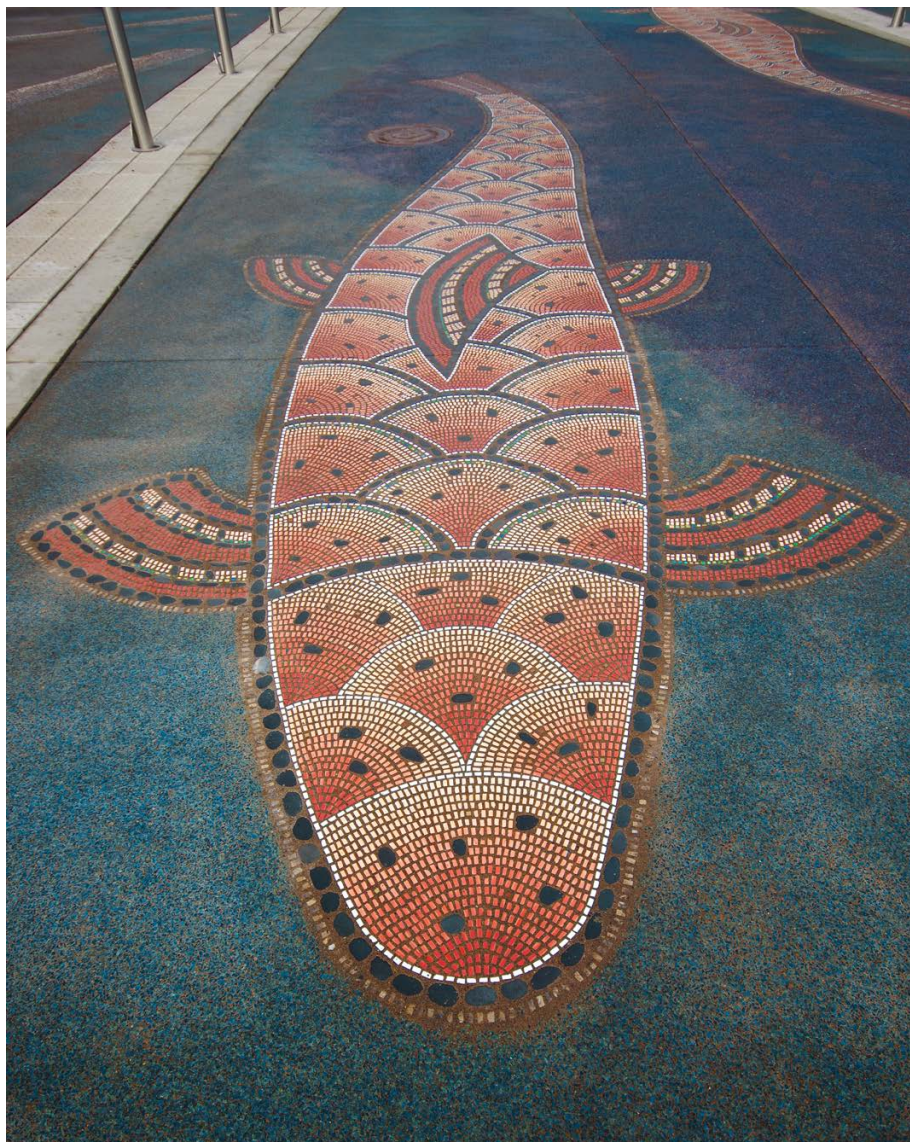
**Decorative Concrete Contractor:** Belarde Co., Snohomish, Washington, [www.belardeco.com](http://www.belardeco.com)

**General Contractor:** Granite Construction Inc., Watsonville, California, [www.graniteconstruction.com](http://www.graniteconstruction.com)

**Mosaic Artist:** Amanda Elizabeth Mosaics, Rancho Santa Margarita, California

**Concrete Materials:** Approximately 2,300 square feet of Lithocrete (for the colored "water" background) and the LithoMosaic Coho salmon and logs, surrounded by a 2,100-square-foot concrete band.

**Challenges:** Weather and a hard deadline.



Photos courtesy of Belarde Co. except where noted

"Once that came through, we needed to redo the sidewalks and bring them up to code," Garbely says. "We also had other infrastructure that needed to happen. We needed a new storm line, a new water line. Once those were in place, we could actually build the plaza."

Working with the Portland office of Environmental Science Associates (ESA), the city hosted an open house to get feedback on what people wanted to see in the plaza. Almost 80 percent said they wanted a nature theme.

"From there, we started creating concepts of what the plaza might look like, including drawings," Garbely says. They had to decide how they were going to create the plaza and what kind of materials they were going to use.

As an engineer, she adds, she wanted something that would be easy to maintain and last a long time while being a drivable surface.

"At the same time, I was wondering how we could create the things in the design," she says.

To find out the answer, the city hired Granite Construction as its contractor before the design was finalized. The contractor, in turn, brought in concrete contractor Belarde Co. of Snohomish, Washington.

### Stained concrete wouldn't do

"We'd done a lot of work with Granite Construction and they reached out to us knowing we would be capable of doing the project and giving the owner the highest standard of work possible," says Jacob Belarde, who oversaw the project.

Garbely was certain simply staining the concrete wouldn't provide the look she was seeking. Belarde agreed and proposed a mix of Lithocrete (a concrete surface-seeded with anything from crushed aggregates and glass to seashells and minerals) with LithoMosaics (a patented mosaic system) to create the Coho salmon and logs the area was known for.

"We were helping the landscape architect with the design," explains Belarde. "They gave us their intent of what they were trying to achieve, and through a process of discussion and showing photos of work we'd done, it steered toward the LithoMosaics."

"I saw the advantages right off the bat," says Garbely. "They presented multiple projects they had worked on, and we spent time talking about how to maintain (a LithoMosaic), its lifespan and the artistic aspects we could achieve. I was really excited about the capabilities of the system."

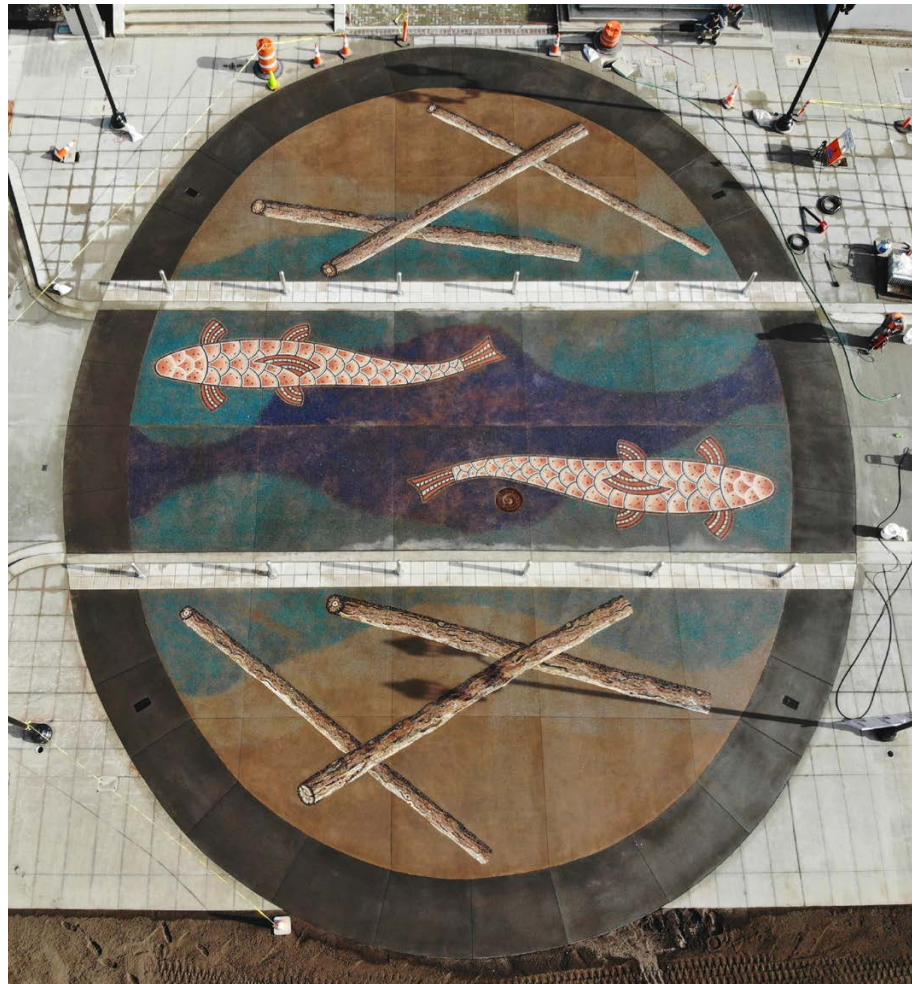
Once the city was sold on the idea of LithoMosaics, Belarde brought in Amanda Seibel, a Rancho Santa Margarita, California-based mosaic artist and owner of Amanda Elizabeth Mosaics. She had worked with Belarde on mosaic projects in the past.

"This is the largest project we've done with Amanda," says Belarde. "She's an amazing artist."

### Salmon and logs

Coming up with a final design for the plaza was a collaborative process. Belarde says the salmon-and-logs design came from the city and ESA.

"They had landed on the idea of keeping it Northwest and the



riverscape, but the size and shape of the fish and the logs went through several renditions," he says.

"We got recommendations from Amanda on what the mosaics would look like," says Garbely. "The one major change was that (actual) Coho salmon are more of a yellow color, but it didn't stand out, so I switched to a bright orange. Rather than being realistic, they're more art."

Additionally, Belarde worked with Garbely on the water effects around the salmon, as well as the river and shore surrounding the logs, says Chris Klemaske, Belarde Co.'s decorative concrete specialist.

"Jacob did a lot of samples with the Lithocrete, finding the right recycled glass to create those effects," Klemaske says. "He really worked hand-in-hand with Jennifer on those colors."

A final design was agreed upon in late June 2019, and Seibel had the mosaics ready to go by September. They were shipped to Milwaukie by truck.

### Prepping for the install

Garbely and Tyson delos Santos, Belarde's project manager, both say additional prep work needed to be done at the site before the mosaics could be installed. For her part, Garbely says that included making sure all the utilities were outside the plain concrete band that would enclose the project.

"The only thing left was a manhole I couldn't move," she says. "Instead we changed the design of the fish to make sure it would go around the manhole."

Additionally, four 9-by-9-foot foundations were poured as part of the bands to allow for the future installation of large posts on which to install lights, shade structures or possibly vertical art elements in a subsequent phase to the project.

"There were also a lot of layouts to get the orientation accurate," says delos Santos. "We had to do the broad layout and then get the transitions between the different colors of Lithocrete from one pour to the next. It looks easy when

# Heart and soul make project a success

**A**manda Seibel didn't set out to be a LithoMosaic artist. A trained landscape architect in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, she first used the process in one of her own projects. After that, opportunities just kept coming in.

A specialist in designing parks and playgrounds, she was hired about eight years ago to design a skatepark in Venice Beach, California. As part of that, the clients wanted a large, colorful logo that said "Venice" and incorporated the ocean, the sun and a crowd of skateboarders.



Photo courtesy of American Society of Concrete Contractors

"I knew I couldn't do it with stains or anything like that," Seibel says. As fate would have it, her parents, Byron and Chris Klemaske, big proponents of decorative concrete who have been in the industry for decades, had just started including LithoMosaics in some of their projects.

"They explained that it's like a regular mosaic, except in concrete, and suggested I do it myself since I already knew what the clients wanted."

Seibel liked the idea well enough to contact Robin Brailsford and her partner, Wick Alexander, to teach her how to create and work with the mosaics. The San Diego-based Brailsford developed the LithoMosaic concept and patented it with Shaw & Sons.

Contractors that install LithoMosaics must be licensed. The system requires special tools and a special mix because of the possibility of an alkali-silica reaction with the mosaic's products.

Seibel's first LithoMosaic was such a success it won awards. And in the years since, her company, Amanda Elizabeth Mosaics, has had a hand in projects all over the United States.

## Milwaukie calls

Seibel's involvement with the Milwaukie, Oregon, downtown plaza project came because of previous work she'd done for concrete contractor Belarde Co. of Snohomish, Washington.

"They [the city] had a concept, and they wanted me to help them develop it a little further," she says. "I think they just needed to understand that mosaic tiles would be used to elevate the colors, and what the fish (two Coho salmon) would look like. I put together some renderings and some sample boards so they could see and touch some of the materials."

Seibel describes the process as highly collaborative from start to finish, first working with city officials to finalize the designs and materials, and then in getting the mosaics assembled.

"For this project we used the most durable materials possible because it's a plaza to be driven over, as well as host a farmers' market," she says. "I used high-fired glass mosaic tile from Italy and Mexico and sourced stone from all over the world."

Ultimately, the project incorporated eight different colors of glass and two types of stone for the salmon – as well as gold leaf under some of the glass – and 40 different colors of glass and a dozen different types of stone for the logs. Pieces ranged from  $\frac{3}{4}$ -by- $\frac{3}{4}$  inch to 5 square inches.

Seibel then mustered a crew of helpers to get the mosaics assembled.

She says the design of the fish – which measure 30-by-5 feet – came easily, but the logs were another story.

## Log in

Seibel says she needed some help there, so she called one of her mentors, Kim Emerson, who's a well-known mosaic artist in San Diego. "I had her work with me for about 10 hours, just working with the materials and trying to figure out how we were going to make it look like a log. Then, we made a sample, which set the stage for fabricating the rest of it."

Once that was done, the mesh was put on the floor, marked out and the gluing of pieces began. Seibel, her assistant and four other people that she hired spent between 800 and 1,000 hours creating the mosaics.

"It was a lot of late nights," she says, adding that the finished logs are also 30 feet long, and anywhere from 18- to 24-inches wide.

The finished mosaics were then crated and shipped to the client. Seibel says shipping is one of the most-stressful aspects of the job, along with simply getting it done on time. However, she's very proud that so many people were involved.

"My heart and soul are in this project, so it was great to see other people having their hearts and souls in it, too," she concludes. "When you're surrounded by people who care as much about a project as you do, it makes it so much more special."

– K. Schipper







you look at the final product, but there's a lot of planning involved."

Some of that work had to be done between pours, delos Santos adds, and the work wasn't done under ideal weather conditions. Consequently, the work spanned several weeks.

### Installing the mosaics

When the time arrived to install the mosaics, Seibel was brought in. That was to make sure the mosaics weren't damaged, delos Santos says, as well as to get the proper alignments for each piece.

"We did the mosaics in four pours," he says. "Each fish was a separate pour and each section of logs was a separate pour. We tried to keep things as manageable as possible."

The actual installation is straightforward, Belarde says.

"We placed the concrete and did our typical screeding and bull-floating," he

says. "We then placed the LithoMosaics and hand-seeded all the glass aggregate around them. Once embedded, we removed the mesh and did our typical finishing. The next day, we came back and washed off the top layer of the matrix, which exposes the glass aggregate and mosaic tiles.

"From there, we put in the relief joints and let it cure," Belarde adds. "The week prior to the ribbon cutting (which occurred Nov. 21) we went back and applied a sealant."

### All's well

Part of the secret to his company's success with these special projects, Belarde says, is that while his crews are experienced in highly decorative work, for special projects the company does mock-ups in-house. In this case, the crew did three mock-ups before working on the site.

Even so, delos Santos says, it took

eight men to handle the installation of the salmon. That number grew to 10 for the logs.

"The logs were a little bit trickier because of the span," he says. "Everything had to be done off platforms. Each section of the logs came in 16 individual pieces that all had to line up with each other perfectly. And, to make sure everything matched up exactly, we felt they had to be placed together in one single pour, despite the added complexity."

The results are spectacular, Garbely says. Not only do her children enjoy "balancing" on the in-street logs, but the mosaics only need occasional power-washing to maintain.

"There was a little leap of faith," she concludes. "The challenging part was not knowing exactly how it was going to turn out." 📱



Kodiak High School in Alaska is one of many educational institutions across the country that have chosen to use polished concrete in their facilities because of its ease of maintenance and durability.

Photo by Ken Graham Photography, courtesy of Concrete Restoration Inc., Seattle, Washington

# Put the Polish on Productivity

Business owners should improve communications, create vision statements

by Jennifer Faller

**D**URING the past year as I was firing up my independent consultant firm once again, I found myself wondering what would be “the” thing to make the biggest contribution for my clients, now that polishing concrete is well on its way?

Let me explain. There are now actual polished concrete brick-and-mortar supply houses (distributors) with inventory, training programs and helpful in-house sales staffs. We’ve come a long way!

Polishing contractors who are less than 10 years into this business may not realize that wasn’t always the case. Manufacturers are now ready and able to offer high-quality training and have technical departments that can field project and product questions and offer

real-world suggestions and solutions. Today we have traveling surface prep specialists with vans full of an array of diamond choices, demo equipment and repair parts to meet a polishing contractor’s needs whether in person or by quick delivery.

Finally, in today’s industry, we have consultants and other professionals on the periphery whose knowledge and advice can be valuable assets for our polishing contractors. With so many resources available to us, again I asked myself what is “the” thing I can do to make a vital contribution to today’s polished concrete contractors and their business growth?

I’ve come to find out that this question was the answer. I learned that even the most successful, well-respected

and profitable polishing contractors are still searching for a way to articulate their company’s goals. One of many things that stood out during my initial two-day assessments/meetings/conversations with new clients was a general lack of a true north, a vision that guides and informs their business decisions.

Mostly, their decisions are influenced by their recent thoughts — not a vision and a plan — and how full the job board and the bank account are. On-the-fly decisions are solely dependent upon who is available, how many days are left on the project and what will make them the most money.

Clearly, businesses are in business to make money, but that’s not a vision and certainly not a unique proposition.

Now that concrete polishing is a proven type of flooring and an industry that can no longer be written off as a fad, it's time we treat our businesses like the truly unique businesses they are and can become.

### You need a vision statement

Without a vision statement, true leadership, inspiration, motivation and communication, businesses can lose their way amidst the constantly changing conditions. They can lack the focus, direction and passion to keep going because the truth is nobody knows where they're trying to get to.

If you've ever wondered why employees keep leaving even when they're paid well, treated well or "fill in the blank," it's time to think about the bigger picture. Maybe they simply want to feel motivated/inspired to perform for something bigger than making another paycheck and another concrete floor shine.

Challenge team members to grow together, give them a clear direction (vision statement) and a reason to dream big: they'll want to be part of it! Having a singular team/company vision will become the motivation!

So, what is your vision? Make it an anchor point of your company's strategic plan. State what your company wants to achieve and describe what specific "way of being" your company values. Give the communities around you — i.e., construction, architectural, engineering, general public and employees, to name a few — a clear understanding of why you want to do what you do. Letting them know who they'll be working with will help potential and existing team members and communities articulate a reason to work for or with your company.

These examples from corporations tell us the purpose/vision for their business.

**Apple** – "To produce high-quality, low-cost, easy-to-use products that incorporate high technology for the individual" (internal vision statement); "We believe that we are on the face of the Earth to make great products and that's not changing" (public statement).

**Disney** – "To make people happy."

**Microsoft** – "Empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more."

**Nike** – "Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete\* in the world."  
(\*If you have a body, you're an athlete.)

**W.R. Grace** – "Strives to be a premier specialty chemical and materials company. We provide innovative technologies and value-added products and services around the world to enhance the quality of life."



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Your vision statement's goal is to inspire and give a clear targeted direction. Beta test your vision statement with your key employees, the ones you want to retain.

Let them tell you if it inspires and gives direction. Listen to their questions and you'll receive your answer. Ask yourself, "How do I become my vision?" and then start setting goals that'll get you there. You may be surprised just how much your employees will help if you let them.

### Communication ... or lack of

This brings me to one of the other big obstacles I consistently find — lack of communication.

What does that mean? To dig in a bit deeper, I've asked many crew members, "Who is the person you talk with about an idea or when you have a problem?" Sadly, a frequent response is, "I keep it to myself. No one takes the time to listen or ever does anything about it anyway. All they care about is finishing the project on time and on budget."

But when discussing project issues later, upper management is frustrated that their foreman didn't tell them about the problems or ideas. Instead, the foreman just puts his or her head down and makes it happen. Both examples of lack of communication result in possible rework, uninspired people, unhappy customers and loss of job satisfaction.

To support your new vision, set up communication channels, rules, frequency and content. Assign each person a direct report and reinforce that he or she only reports to that person. The direct reports will now learn about everything going on and won't be second-guessed by their boss because someone on a break called him or her instead of them. Once people "in charge" experience feeling knowledgeable and in control, they'll step up and start taking responsibility and be proud of what they do. Team pride and community will blossom.

Next, meet with those who report to you and set up communication expectations.

**Example 1** – A foreman must hold a meeting at the start of each shift and assign crew members a specific area/task to work on and a goal for them to meet. At lunch, the foreman must communicate with all crew members to find out how they're doing on meeting their goals. Find out if there are any issues and, if so, what can be done to resolve them. Address problems right then, not at the end of the shift. Done daily, this can have a large overall impact on productivity and quality.

As important or possibly more, when crew members are exceeding their goals, praise them and find out what made it go so well. Credit them and use that idea to help other team members. Let the team

benefit and learn from this success! Celebrate the successes, acknowledge great work and more great work will follow.

**Example 2** – Each day within 30 minutes of arrival, the foreman must call the boss and let him or her know the game plan for that shift. This includes discussing production goals, issues, personnel problems and job site problems. The foreman also must have a completion meeting each day and learn who accomplished what and ask what the team needs for their next shift.

Afterward, the foreman must call the boss and report what happened that day and what support they need to be productive again tomorrow. These phone calls shouldn't be displaced by the crucial daily report. Rather, they'll enhance understanding and allow for appreciation and creativity and ensure each person will be heard.

### Sharpen big picture with small details

So many things in your business can be positively impacted when your business creates a vision statement and uses it to guide its decisions and adopts communication standards.

Understanding polished concrete inside and out gives me both a 50,000-foot view, while at the same time lets me see the nuances that — when followed — will start a ripple in the water which can eventually create a tidal wave of change.

Most polishing contractors have the "big" items — equipment, chemicals, diamonds and employees — in place. Let's shift the focus: I'm certain you'll be amazed. 📱

*Jennifer A. Faller has been in the surface preparation and concrete chemical and polishing industries for going on 25 years. A decorative concrete contractor, technical consultant, trainer and owner of a distribution company, Jennifer has held polishing positions as a brand, product, project and business development manager, as well as vice president of operations, director of technical services and global account manager. Recently, she's an independent technical consultant at her firm, Concrete In-Site LLC. She also consults on behalf of other firms. Contact her at [concreteinsite@gmail.com](mailto:concreteinsite@gmail.com).*

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# Counter Point

Ashby countertops  
are what they seam

Ben Ashby's countertops with a unique marbledized finish feature seams with uneven rock-like characteristics rather than straight edges.

Photos courtesy of Ben Ashby

by *Chris Mayo*

**G**ENERALLY speaking, you've got to be really good at what you do to have your methodology named after you. That's the case with Ben Ashby, creator of the Ashby Countertop System line of products that are marketed by StoneCrete Systems in Orem, Utah.

Ashby, who is a member of the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame, grew up in the concrete industry. His father was a concrete contractor and his mother was a professional artist. When the younger Ashby was a teenager, he worked as a full-fledged form setter and finisher.

His father's influence shows in his work, he says, but so does his mother's in equal measure. The combination of the two skill sets is how this artisan comes up with his remarkable countertops.



This bilevel top is formed with two pieces joined at a seam about midway.



Ashby developed his bilevel design so he could pour his countertops in a controlled shop setting rather than on-site. Although most of his oversized tops are two pieces joined by an uneven seam, this is all one piece.

## A bilevel is born

Ashby's concrete countertops are distinctive for a few different reasons: They all feature a marbled finish unmatched in the industry. His sealers look different than most others. And, most revolutionary, he's perfected a way to make award-winning bilevel concrete countertops.

To explain bilevel, it's best to picture a normal flat countertop. Countertops are supposed to be flat and one level, right? Well ... not so much, once you see Ashby's design. Picture a countertop that's flat until about midway or so when the surface is interrupted with a defined raised edge (that looks a little rocky) and marks the beginning of another flat surface ... just slightly raised. That's an Ashby bilevel.

Ashby says he didn't come up with the design because he had an eye toward being super innovative. "It was really born out of necessity as a result of my desire to pour all my countertops in the controlled environment of my shop," he says.

Because his counters aren't poured in place and some are really big, "There were countertops that I simply couldn't fit through the doors of a house," he

says, and he needed to make them in two sections. He figured no one would want a seam running down the middle of their kitchen counter, so he had to come up with a way to make one attractive.

His solution was to position the seam — not a straight-edged seam but one that had rock-like characteristics — where the surface elevation would change.

Some of his bilevel counters are one piece, with the height difference built into the form. Others are two pieces that vary in thickness and are joined during the installation process. The offset from one level of a countertop to the next is generally about three quarters of an inch, but Ashby says he can easily adjust that to fit a customer's desire.

## The need for control

Part of the unique aspect of his countertops is in the colors and textures he uses. He achieves these partly because he developed his techniques in static conditions. Plus, Ashby says, "That's just the way I've always preferred to do it. I like the additional control I have with precast versus poured in place."

Ashby says the last thing he wanted to do was pitch countertops with

seams down the center to customers. "I couldn't imagine that customers would want that. Instead, it occurred to me that a bilevel countertop with about a three-quarter inch differential might work. It's not necessarily to hide the seam, though it functionally does that."

He admits that selling a customer on the idea of a bilevel concrete countertop wasn't all that easy. People balked at the idea at first. For instance, they questioned whether there would be problems with glasses spilling.

Somehow, Ashby talked the fledgling bilevel countertop customer into the idea. "Even I was surprised at how happy she was with the design and how it didn't affect the way they would normally use their countertop in the least. No extra care had to be taken to avoid spills or to avoid any other concerns. She was especially happy with what a conversation piece it was.

"A countertop as a conversation piece? Imagine that," says Ashby. "Every customer I've done a bilevel counter for has been pleased with the result."

The concrete countertops are suggestive of water-worn rock in a riverbed or patterns in beach sand at low tide, but without the ridges and unevenness



Some of Ashby's one-piece bilevel countertops have unique edge treatments made with a form.

of real riverbeds or beaches. Ashby's system mimics that look primarily with colorants and a proprietary product called Marbleizer. The bilevel aspect simply enhances the effect.

### Product reveals

StoneCrete has developed some additional products that Ashby uses in the countertops. There are three admixes available. All three work for precast and one works for pour in place if needed. Two are GFRC, while the other requires steel reinforcement such as rebar.

Ashby points out that one advantage is that you don't have to spray the counters, so the time and labor of cleanup is eliminated. Plus, it's a much faster process than other methods. As for colorants, Ashby almost exclusively uses Davis Colors dry pigments.

"From an artist's standpoint, I've found that I can do things with dry pigments that I can't do with liquid colorants," he says. "We can get amazing color bursts simply by manipulating the ratios of different pigments. You just can't get the same effect with liquid pigments."

Speaking of art, the edge molds Ashby has designed are truly distinctive. The mold he likes to use on most of his countertops is Broken Flagstone, which is available in two sizes. It isn't really a pattern, he says. It perfectly mimics the look of a broken edge of stone, accentuating the look of stone influenced by the forces of nature. For his forms he uses melamine board as he's found that it releases well from GFRC.

Ashby says there are two reasons he uses Davis Colors. The company has been around forever, and its products are readily available at many local concrete supply stores.

"I've used Davis Colors for so long that it makes it easier to explain coloring questions to students in my classes. If a student asks how I achieved a certain color, I can explain it in Davis Color terms," he says.

Ashby uses exclusive sealers to finish his countertops: Ashby Super Seal (it pops the color, he says) and Counterseal 3. Both are water-based and can be found on the StoneCrete website.

Even though Ashby's techniques are unique and could be considered proprietary, he enjoys teaching others how to achieve the same results. He holds three-day seminars at

his shop in Farr West, Utah, teaching his methods to fellow contractors. He also offers a series of videos so artisans can learn off-site.

Advanced courses are offered twice a year. Part of the curricula in the advanced course is teaching concrete contractors how to make countertops using materials that can be found in nearly every local hardware center. StoneCrete Systems sells Ashby's specialty products that aren't available at local centers. 🛠️

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# Stamped and Textured Concrete

## Lest we forget the foundation of the decorative industry

*The hardest part about writing a regular column is coming up with relevant subject matter. I try not to repeat topics too often as you can only read so many articles about sealer issues.*

*As I begin year 12, new ideas are harder to come by. I often find myself stressing as the due date approaches, still searching for a topic to address. This time, a recent conversation with*

*John Anderson, a friend and the former business development manager for Solomon Colors, was the spark I needed. He mentioned how the decorative industry can't forget what got us to where we are today — specifically stamped concrete.*

*This immediately presented itself as a good topic for an article.*

by Chris Sullivan

**S**TAMPED concrete, also known as textured or embossed concrete, is the most recognized decorative concrete finish and is often the first thing people think of when the term “decorative concrete” is used.

A case can be made that in 1970 the decorative concrete industry truly began when the Bomanite Co., using Brad Bowman's patents, franchised the process of stamped concrete. It's been 50 years since those first pioneering companies colored and textured concrete. A lot has changed since then.

Stamped concrete might not make the front page of magazines anymore, but it remains a large part of our industry. With that in mind let's have a look at a few of the biggest changes and innovations in the stamped concrete market over the last five decades.

### Integral color versus color hardener

“Color hardener was for years the only way to color concrete when it came to stamping,” says Karen Keyes, owner of The Art of Concrete in Denver, Colorado.

For decades, throwing color hardener was just part of the stamped concrete system. Aside from the added strength and vibrant colors, many installers claim the imprint they achieved with a color-hardened surface was cleaner and more defined. That all changed when automated color-dosing systems were introduced in the early 2000s.

The ease of automated color dosing reduces inventory and labor, not to mention the mess of dealing with color hardener on the job site. Today a vast majority of colored concrete, including stamped concrete, is produced using integral color.

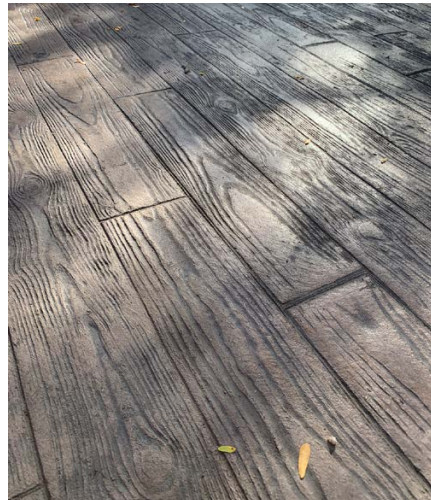


Photo courtesy of The Art of Concrete

For decades, color hardener was a staple when coloring stamped concrete, but it went out of favor when automated color-dosing systems entered the picture in the early 2000s. However, Karen Keyes of The Art of Concrete in Colorado says she's seeing a resurgence of color hardener in specialty applications.

Keyes adds that she's seeing a resurgence of color hardener in specialty applications. “When customers want a custom color, or a blend of colors, we use color hardener as an alternative method to color concrete.”

### Post coloring progress

“Highlighting” or “antiquing” stamped concrete is what gives the product its characteristic realism. Without these secondary color highlights, stamped concrete would lack authenticity or natural appeal.

Early stamped concrete didn't require any secondary color highlights, as the patterns comprised basic tile, cut stone or brick that had no texture. With the advent of textured stamp tools, the need was born for secondary color highlights.

The original method, still used today, was to cover the surface with a contrasting colored powder that was hydrophobic (repels water). This colored “antiquing release powder” allows textured stamp tools to be placed on green concrete to emboss the surface with a pattern, but not stick when removed.

In the process, the stamp tools' texture physically forces some of the colored release into the concrete paste creating a secondary color highlight. Excess release powder is removed, resulting in a realistic multicolored, textured and patterned surface. As with color hardener, this can be a messy process, as the color is usually hand broadcast on the concrete surface before stamping.

About 10 years ago, liquid-applied post-coloring systems appeared, eliminating the need for release powder. These systems let the installer use a clear liquid release to stamp the concrete and then come back and post-color the surface with a liquid color system.

This process has significantly changed the way concrete is stamped and post-colored, cleaning up and streamlining the process significantly.

### The evolution of tools

Over the last 50 years the single biggest area of innovation and change in the stamped concrete market is the stamp tool itself. Originally made from wood and aluminum, the first stamp tools of the '50s and '60s were designed to impart only a pattern, no texture. They were rigid and heavy, limiting patterns to squares and rectangles.

In the late 1970s, Joe Nasvik developed the first rubber urethane concrete stamp tools. These new-generation tools were



# Cabin fever and COVID-19

As I write this article, I'm on day 11 of a 15-day self-quarantine. On a recent ski trip, I was in close contact with people that had come from a known virus hot spot. In an abundance of caution, my family and I went into a self-imposed lockdown.

In a matter of days, the country went from a booming economy to mandatory shutdowns, shelter-in-place situations and an economic slowdown. We've all been impacted by COVID-19, and almost overnight the world has become a very different and scary place.

So far, my family and I haven't exhibited any symptoms, but what I'm experiencing is cabin fever! I won't lie ... I desperately miss face-to-face interaction, as I know most all of you do, too. It brings into focus what I've written many times.

The decorative concrete industry is a very personal business. Relationships matter, more so than other trades. Installers establish relationships with their suppliers, suppliers have relationships with vendors, and everyone in between knows and works with each other. This is one of the things that makes this industry different and special from others.

The good news is for the most part, the construction industry – both install and supply – has been deemed essential, and many in our industry are still working. I firmly believe construction will be the economic engine that brings us through this.

In time, this will pass. Like 9/11 and the global financial crisis of 2009, we'll learn from it and become stronger. We have to. There's no other option.

I remain optimistic and confident that the best days are ahead. As Americans, as humans, we are resilient. We'll come together, support each other and in time be back better than before.

Mark Cuban, billionaire entrepreneur says it best: "I truly believe in American exceptionalism." I hope by the time you read this, the worst is over and the world is well into recovery mode. Stay safe and I look forward to seeing you all back at work in the near future.

flexible, had rounded edges and imparted textures as well as patterns into the concrete. This revolution in tooling opened up the industry to the endless number of patterns and textures used today.

In the 2000s another expansion took place as multiple companies developed and marketed specialty tooling for step risers, countertop edges and vertical work. This allowed stamping to grow into new markets and increased a project's realism and level of detail.

The most recent innovation in stamp tools — magnetic seamless pattern stamps — was developed by Proline Concrete Tools a few years ago. This patented system uses magnets in large seamless stamp tools to make alignment easier and the whole stamping process more efficient.



Photo courtesy of Salzano Custom Concrete

This stamped patio in Northern Virginia was created by Salzano Custom Concrete with magnetic seamless stamps and the company's proprietary post-coloring method.

"We like that the mats are larger than traditional ashlar mats, so moving mats less frequently, and stamping larger areas faster," was the feedback from C.J. Salzano of Salzano Custom Concrete in Aldie, Virginia.

As with any new system, there's a learning curve, he says, and he had to make some "creative adjustments" to the tools to accommodate their stamping process.

"Most of the disadvantages are growing pains and getting used to something different" was how he summed up his experience with the magnetic seamless pattern stamps.

## Past should be part of the present

What we as an industry can't do is forget our past, specifically the finishes that are the very foundation of who and what the decorative concrete industry is. Stamped concrete, while not the only decorative finish, arguably is the cornerstone of our industry.

To sum up Anderson's point, stamped concrete has become a mainstream hardscape finish, no longer as exciting and new as it was back in the early 2000s. However, it remains the lifeblood for so many installers, suppliers and manufacturers. We should neither forget stamping nor ever take it for granted. 🛠️

Chris Sullivan is vice president of sales and marketing with ChemSystems Inc. and a member of the Decorative Concrete Hall of Fame. He has led seminars and product demonstrations throughout North America. Reach him at [questions@concretedecor.net](mailto:questions@concretedecor.net).

# A Shell of a Bench

by Stacey Enesey Klemenc

**B**ENCHES these days come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Add the element of decorative concrete to the mix and practically anything is possible. Take the cluster of benches that graces the courtyard of the Stamp Student Union at the University of Maryland – College Park, for instance. They resemble a turtle’s shell ... specifically a testudo, a diamondback terrapin that’s the university’s mascot.

The testudo benches, designed by Floura Teeter Landscape Architects, are made from GFRC (glass fiber reinforced concrete) that’s topped with the exotic ipe hardwood from South America. They range in weight from 200 to 300 pounds. Eight benches comprise the shell formation while an additional five curve around part of the courtyard’s perimeter.

“We were really pleased with how well the ipe tops and concrete bottoms came together,” says Greg Hryniewicz, owner of Hyde Concrete in Pasadena, Maryland, the company that built the benches in 2019. His fabricator made the wooden tops with CNC templates. To complete the center pedestrian portion, his company cast four oversized matching concrete pavers.

The single-use forms for the concrete bodies were made of extruded polystyrene foam cut with hot wire.

“Technically, our hot wire cutter is only capable of cutting two dimensions of foam and we needed to have a



three-dimensional shape,” Hryniewicz says. “We overcame this challenge by fabricating different templates to use as guides. These allowed us to cut the bevels in the bench faces by hand using a homemade hot wire cutter.”

These bevels on the vertical faces give the benches a customized elegant look. “The finish on the pieces has a nice tactile feeling to it. It is a light acid etch that gives a very clean but textured surface,” he says.

Merging the overall vision with the landscape grading in a way that preserved the design intent that ensured the eight benches fit together cohesively was probably the project’s biggest challenge, Hryniewicz added.



“Every architect we have shown these photos to greatly appreciates the clever use of concrete for this application,” he says.

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Photos courtesy of Hyde Concrete

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