



## Intertech Commercial Flooring: Growth Through Marketing, Innovation

Several years after starting Intertech Flooring in 1988, Bill Imhoff, founder and president, realized effectively marketing his business was a key to its long-term success.

"In the early years, I knew our quality work in project management and installation was the reason for Intertech's success," Imhoff said. "However, I also knew to reach our longer-term goals we needed to differentiate our company from the competition and to broaden our customer base. I knew we needed to get the message out on the strength of our work, our team and our expanding and diverse service offering."

In 1991, the addition of access flooring gave Intertech a decided edge over its competition, Imhoff noted. "Tech business was booming in Texas and these companies needed access flooring to push cool air to cool down mainframe computers and provide flexible access to constantly update the data wiring necessary to the tech industry."

It was through this specialized flooring product, Intertech got into the planning and specification process earlier than a traditional dealer. It also made it easier for general contractors and specifiers to depend on Intertech as their one-source with unlimited

resources. This shift resulted in a greater volume of business being specified to Intertech. Even today, access flooring represents a significant percentage of its annual business.

This same year, Intertech joined the Starnet Commercial Flooring Cooperative, giving the company a national voice with manufacturers and increased buying power clout. Starnet also provided an invaluable platform for commercial flooring dealers such as Intertech to network with like-minded people and where problems and solutions could be shared, in both business and field operations. "Joining and helping build Starnet

raised the game for the regional market of each members," Imhoff explained. "Perhaps more importantly, Starnet membership clearly distinguished the independent commercial flooring contractor as the No. 1 channel of distribution vs. the single dimensional, mill-aligned [contractors]."

Another engine for growth for Intertech has been acquisition. The company purchased the Invironmentalists operations in Austin and San Antonio in 2004 and, in 2009, Intertech acquired fellow Starnet member RWA Flooring, allowing the company to expand into the Dallas/Ft. Worth region.



### Apprenticeship Program

Intertech also started an apprenticeship program to train its own labor force, giving it a decided advantage over competitors who relied on the inconsistencies of sub-contracted labor. The company's apprenticeship initiative is now a U.S. Department of Labor certified program.

To help generate awareness and direct contacts for his growing operation Imhoff invested time, resources and energy into many business leadership positions, including chair of the construction sector of Austin @ Work;

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Being different can pay dividends if done properly and professionally, and Intertech Flooring has proven that by winning its fair share of awards and recognitions.

Bill Imhoff, far left, founded Intertech Flooring 25 years ago with the knowledge if he wanted to stand out from the crowd he needed to differentiate himself and his staff by offering unique services as well as the way he marketed the company.



chair of the Starnet advisory board on marketing and business development; an original author of Starnet's Code of Ethics, and chair of Worksource, the Greater Austin Area Workforce Development Board.

Leveraging the awards and professional certifications, which acknowledged both Imhoff and the entire Intertech team, further differentiated and elevated the Intertech brand. Notable achievements in this area include a 2002 finalist designation in St. Edwards University Ethics in Business Awards; establishing a University of Texas at San Antonio Interior Design Endowment; winning the 2007 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, and being recognized by Texas Construction magazine as one of the state's top specialty contractors. In addition, Intertech has won several Starnet Design Awards; completed the Austin Dell Children's Medical Center, the first-ever LEED Platinum Hospital, and was named by INC magazine to the

INC 5000 List of fastest growing private companies in the U.S. All these accomplishments have been well publicized, both locally and nationally, and each helps to leverage Intertech's professional brand awareness.

### Reaching the A&D Community

Intertech has been able to reach a key target audience, the A&D community, by creating fully stocked product showrooms at each branch and staffing these showrooms with design consultants who provide consolidated, one-stop flooring design resources. Because these professionals are recruited directly from the A&D community, they know what services designers need, thereby saving time and providing unbiased recommendations. The goal is to find the right product that will perform in the environment while fulfilling the designer's aesthetic vision.

Once a project is specified, Intertech supports the designer by

identifying the optimum installation plan and timeline to meet budget goals. This partnering has strengthened relationships with key customers and with manufacturers who see the collaboration with Intertech as a reciprocal channel of quality business.

The most recent Intertech innovation is developing the expertise and product solutions to moisture and high alkalinity. It is widely recognized that flooring failures due to moisture in the subfloor are the No. 1 issue faced by general contractors, facility managers and end-users. It is the bane of wear-surface failures too. Intertech has addressed this on-going and insidious problem by creating a Concrete Moisture Solutions division led by Rick Kercheval, using his 25 years of experience. In addition, Intertech is the exclusive applicator in Texas of the Laticrete Supercap Mobil Blending Unit System, a revolutionary new slab capping technology.

"Getting involved with the underlayment construction of

the floor has given us another opportunity to collaborate early with general contractors to provide a near perfect flat floor that is moisture-free," Imhoff said. "This technology is a breakthrough, a game-changer. We've always believed that doing it right the first time is better than doing it over."

This kind of longevity, expansion and growth would not be possible without an excellent and loyal team. "Our first priority is our people," he points out. "We believe in training and support and we believe in hiring experienced team leaders who know what they are doing. We are very fortunate to have this kind of commitment from our staff. We hear it from our customers who recognize the difference our people make, especially how we address problems that inevitably arise. For us, marketing starts with the quality, sincerity and longevity of the relationships we have."

Now celebrating its 25th anniversary, Intertech has prospered through an early focus on marketing supported by expansion in the business scope, both geographically and in the services offered by the company. Supported by a strong and loyal team and committed to quality service to produce excellent results for its large customer base, thus allowing Intertech to continue to grow and thrive. **ft**