

LIMITING TILING DEFECTS BY IMPROVING POINT OF SALE ADVICE

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SYNOPSIS

Much money, technical expertise, and effort goes into producing, testing and guaranteeing tiles and other materials that go into a tiling system. The image of a product takes time and effort to establish and is jealously guarded by the manufacturer. The particular attributes of hardness, slip resistance, frost resistance of tiles, and suitability of adhesives, is not easily determined by visual inspection, especially to the untrained eye.

All this effort to ensure satisfaction with the finished surface by the manufacturers can be undone by poor advice at the point of sale. Sales personnel possessing inaccurate or insufficient technical knowledge are likely to influence consumers of tiles into choosing a product which may not perform satisfactorily in the expected service conditions.

This paper firstly reports on the development of an industry devised list of the skills required to be a competent ceramic tile showroom salesperson. It then compares the competencies required, to those actually held by showroom sales staff in tile shops in the Dallas/Fort worth area of Texas U.S.A. using a "critical incident" survey. The survey revealed a serious lack of technical knowledge on the part of most of the 22 tile showroom sales staff surveyed.

It goes on to list the possible negative effects this lack of knowledge may have on the industry and suggests the type of training most likely to reduce problems that lead to customer dissatisfaction and litigation over tile work.

It concludes by outlining how Tile Industry Associations can benefit from providing showroom sales staff training courses for their industry.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the culmination of several years work analysing the training needs of ceramic tile showroom sales staff, mostly in Australia. Much of this work was carried out in collaboration with Dr. Geoffrey Saville.

The need to study tile showroom sales staff performance is evident, as they are often key players in guiding tile consumers in their choice of tiles, fixing materials, accessories, installation methods and tile maintenance systems. Sales staff are often directly involved in the selection and specification of tiles and related products, and offer advice on the installation procedures to be followed.

They are involved in the critical areas of advising on the need for products or processes which may directly effect the service life and aesthetics of the tiling installation. Problems may also arise if, during the decision making process, critical products are omitted.

Such decisions include;

- The need for surface preparation, priming, separating layers, waterproofing membranes.
- Selecting suitable and compatible adhesives grouts and bedding systems
- Determining the suitability of particular tiles for situations regarding slip, wear, stain, frost resistance etc.
- The need for incorporating movement control joints
- In the case of "Do-It-Yourself" customers, technical information on how to properly set-out and install tiles
- Selecting appropriate pre-sealing and maintenance products and procedures

Failure to provide adequate and accurate advice to customers can have serious consequences for those involved. There is a broad perception in the market place of ceramic tile being a virtually permanent finish. The industry thrives on this perception, and there is no doubt the right tile, correctly installed in the appropriate situation provides excellent aesthetic and functional performance. However, the service life of a tiling project can be dramatically reduced by the selection and use of inappropriate materials, or installation and maintenance procedures.

The advice given to the consumer by the sales staff of a ceramic tile showroom is taken as "expert". Advice given regarding tile showroom products and their use, needs to be correct. This has been determined in court cases in Australia.

The defence by a tile shop owner in Melbourne, against a claim that goods he sold were not appropriate for the service conditions, was, "that the same tiles were also available from a general self service hardware outlet nearby, where no advice on the suitability of tiles was available. He maintained that if the tiles were purchased there, the consumer would have no redress, therefore there should be no redress against his tile store." The court ruled against the tile store owner on the grounds that, as a specialist shop, he should have provided specialist advice on the products he sold.

The consequences of tile showroom staff failing to provide adequate and accurate advice can be serious, and include:

- Post sale disputes. This could involving goods returned for credit, replacement of

materials, and/or labour, rectification work, litigation, damages, etc.

- Time wasted, loss of face, loss of goodwill and damaged reputation, all leading to loss of business
- Lowering of the image of tiled finishes, leading to consumers choosing alternative surface coverings
- Financial losses

If the advice of the sales staff is good then the retailer can look forward to;

- happier customers, repeat orders, referrals and an enhanced reputation
- greater likelihood of the tiles being sold as a “value added” package, with fixing materials, expansion joints, accessories, maintenance products etc.
- customers being moved “up market” to better performing tiles and systems,
- an increase in the market for tiles as a result of good product performance
- an increase in profits

The quality of this advice is even more critical in the case of “Do-it-yourself” DIY customers who may have little or no professional knowledge of tiling systems, materials or methods. The chance of these customers making mistakes if they do not receive accurate and detailed advice, is high.

It is clear that tile showroom staff possessing adequate and up to date technical information on tiling products and systems, is of great importance. It was therefore decided by the N.S.W. Tile Industry Training Committee, to determine the range of technical knowledge required and also the depth of understanding necessary to provide sound advice.

This was done by the use of the Collaborative Workplace Identification of Competencies (CWIC) method. It involved bringing together 8 widely experienced tile showroom sales staff to determine the skills and knowledge required by an adequately trained, but not widely experienced tile sales representative. This process is similar to the DACUM process which aids the development of training curricula.

The resulting CWIC Profile is very detailed and can be seen as **attachment 1**. It is read by selecting a general area of competence from the left hand column, and reading the skills that make up that competency in the line to its right.

The profile provides a list of competencies determined by the tile industry in NSW. Australia as those needed by tile showroom staff to be able to provide an **adequate** level of technical advice.

The profile also provides an excellent framework for designing training courses to meet the tile industry's need for skilled showroom staff. In fact it has been used for this purpose, with over 20 courses now successfully run by the tile industry, for members of the Australian Tile Council Inc. in different states of Australia.

Having established the competencies needed by tile showroom staff, it was decided to measure the skills of some existing staff to determine if there were any major

areas of skill shortfall. If such a shortfall was detected, targeted training could be implemented.

To measure the level of skill held by the existing salespeople, a strategy was developed to conduct a survey based on a critical incident in specifying tiles. At the time Dr. Saville and the author were working on a project in the USA. It was decided to conduct the survey in the Dallas - Fort Worth area of Texas, as it appeared to have a cross section of tile showroom types found in the United States.

METHODOLOGY

The data was gathered by interview with the outcome to the questions recorded on a specially designed survey form immediately after leaving the showroom (see attachment 2).

To conduct the survey it was necessary to assume the persona of the owners of a two storey office building, located in Dallas, Texas, which was to be renovated to improve the appearance and to obtain higher rents. A "prestige look" was desired.

The exterior entrance had 5 steps and an access ramp for disabled persons. The entrance led to a foyer of 50 square metres with a central reception desk. From the foyer there were four doorways to professional office suites.

Assistance was required to select a tile suitable for interior and exterior application that would perform satisfactorily and had an "executive" or prestige look. It was preferable to have the tiles the same size and colour both inside and out.

As the salesperson proceeded with their assistance in leading us towards selecting a suitable tiling system, they were prompted with a series of predetermined questions. These questions were only asked if the particular selection criteria appeared to have been overlooked. The prompt questions asked during the survey were:

What other products do you have that could be used?

Are the products frost-proof?

How slippery is the tile? How is this measured?

Does the tile comply with the Access for Disabled Americans Act regarding ramps?

Will the installer require special instructions for the project?

Should colour grout be used inside and out? Will it fade?

Are expansion joints needed in a project of this type and size?

What maintenance is required? Should the tile be sealed?

What is the wear and scratch resistance of the tile? How is this measured?

Is there any one type of tile that can be used on the ramp, the steps and is suitable inside too?

How are the steps finished at the nose?

Do you have brochures and specifications for the tiling system?

Presentation of a full range of suitable but competing products was judged to be a key element in the tiling system selection process.

Therefore, being offered products with various attributes such as differing aesthetics, price, availability, inherent characteristics and technical performance, was seen as a critical indicator of good sales staff performance.

The three main types of tile judged to be suitable for our application were;

Quarry tiles - the down market or cheap option

Slate - the moderate option with wear and maintenance problems, and,

Porcelain (Rock face for the exterior with matching plain [possibly with polished decals] for the interior. We provided clues for the salesperson that we were willing to pay for this expensive "up market" look.

In all, 25 stores were surveyed, of these 3 surveys were discarded for the following reasons;

- One was a wholesale "cash and carry" where no advice was given. Customers simply self selected tiles from priced pallets and took them to a check-out.
- One where, even though the sales person had significant knowledge and skills, the result was discarded as the store sold only unsuitable tiles (mosaics, decorators and trims) We were advised to go elsewhere.
- One where the store was a "complete floor covering supplier" with a very small range of (unsuitable) ceramics.

This left 22 stores from which results could be tabulated.

The stores included branches of American Tile Supplies, Ceramic Tile International, American Olean, Dal-Tile and Marazzi, as well as independent stores.

The performance of the sales staff was recorded immediately on leaving the showroom on the form marked **attachment 2**. The survey team had to reach agreement when rating personnel for each competency.

The criteria for assessing the level of competence regarding technical knowledge and selling skills are explained below, and the results are tabulated on **attachment 3**. The column numbers refer to the table on attachment 3.

Column 1 Store Classification:

The store were classified under 3 headings;

1. Size

Large = over 200 square metres of display space

Medium = 100 to 200 square metres of display space

Small = Less than 100 square metres of display space

2. Range

Single manufacturer = the store carried only tiles from one manufacturer

Multi = the store carried tiles from many different manufacturers

3. Style

Up market = Prestige showroom selling on high quality and style to architects and the more expensive end of the market

Standard = Some full bathroom and kitchen displays plus sample boards, and some tiles on special, standard tile showroom

Discount = Showrooms selling predominantly on price and quantity.

Column 2 Type of Showroom

Showrooms were either part of a specialty tile store, or,

General floor covering stores, One store sold only natural stone tiles such as marble, limestone and granite

Column 3 Name(s) of Salesperson

The name of the staff involved have been deleted for reasons of confidentiality

Column 4 Title(s)

The title of the personnel involved was included as this may indicate superior knowledge held by persons in particular positions

Column 5 Gender

Gender of the salesperson was recorded to see if there was any significant difference in performance of saleswomen or salesmen.

Column 6 Knowledge of Products (from questions 4, 10, 11, 12, & 19 of attachment 2)

In this column the staff were rated on their ability to establish the customers project parameters and suggest suitable products for consideration. They should explain the features, benefits and price of the various products, ensure suitable finishes such as treads, trims and coves were included for evaluation, and give advice on the type, level and cost of maintenance of the system if relevant.

Column 7 Knowledge of Installation Methods (from questions 13 & 14 of attachment 2)

In rating this element of sellers competence we were looking for an explanation of the relative advantages and disadvantages of thick bed and adhesive fixing systems. Items such as the impact of the different thicknesses of the systems, suitability for interior and exterior, the level of expertise required by the installer, etc. We wanted to know if an additive was necessary to ensure good bonding of porcelain tiles, and if sealing was recommended. We asked if expansion joints were necessary, why, or why not? What types of joint were available, and where should they be fitted?

Column 8 Selling - General (from questions 1,2,15 & 16 of attachment 2)

Selling skills were included in this survey as they are seen as important by the survey team. (They were not included in the CWIC profile [attachment 1] after considerable debate with the expert committee in Australia, as they wished to concentrate on technical skills and knowledge.)

Some basic selling skills were rated such as engaging the client, determining the size of the prospective sale, attempting to "close" the sale. Demeanour and enthusiasm were also assessed along with the level of rapport attained. Points were awarded if follow-up details (names, address, phone number) were requested when samples were provided.

Column 9 Product Specific Selling (from questions 3, 5a) & 5b) of attachment 2)

Here the aim was to rate the effectiveness of the showroom staff to establish the needs and wants of the client. What were our expectations and feelings? What effect were we trying to create with this tiled installation, dark, light, plain, patterned, functional, aesthetic, the importance of price, etc? What was their ability or willingness to clarify, reflect and respond to what the client said?

Column 10 Understanding of Technical and Slip Standards (from questions 6, 7 & 8 of attachment 2)

Relating the customers requirements to relevant codes and standards for features such as wear, frost and slip resistance is clearly important if miss-specification and litigation are to be avoided.

Sales staff were asked (if the information was not given)

- What standards apply for wear, frost and slip resistance?
- What did the ratings mean?
- How were the tests conducted and by whom?

Column 11 ADA Act and related standards (from question 9 of attachment 2)

This specifically involved questions related to the “Access for Disabled Americans” act and their knowledge of requirements related to ceramic tile installations. For example; slip ratings for tiles on access ramps, grip on stair treads, discontinuities in floor surfaces, visual marker tiles for the visually impaired, etc.

Column 12 Display of Product Range (from question 17 of attachment 2)

While the display of products and showroom layout could reasonably be said to be beyond the scope of assessing a sales person’s technical knowledge, it has been included for the following reasons:

1. Showroom owners wishing to use this survey to improve sales need to be aware if the showroom layout had an affect on the performance of sales staff.
2. The quality of the maintenance of the display may indicate a professional, or less than professional attitude by staff and management. Poor layout, clutter or dustiness may detract from the ambience of quality generally present when higher profit margin sales are made.

Column 13 Use of Display to Sell (from question 18 of attachment 2)

This set out to assess how well the staff used the display available to assist clients to picture their completed project. Were the showroom and sample boards used to advantage? Did they use the displays they had, to maximise the potential of gaining the sale?

Column 14 Total / Rank

Here the percentage score for each store is recorded beside the overall rank out of the 22 stores.

RESULTS

The results can be found in **attachment 3**.

When tabulated the total scores (column 14) were added and divided by the number of showrooms assessed (22). This gave an average of 40 points. The line placed to delineate those stores above average from those below average has been marked with a double line. The line shows 11 stores above, and a further 11 stores below the average line.

Interpretation of the results and general findings:

Firstly the results are discussed on a column by column basis with some analysis, secondly the conclusions are stated.

Interpretation of column 1. Store Classification:

- 9 of the 10 “small” stores scored in the bottom half of the survey
- of the thirteen stores carrying multiple ranges of tiles and other products were in the top half of the survey
- Large showrooms were spread evenly through the scores

Interpretation of column 2. Type of Showroom:

- Whether the store was a specialist tile store, or a general floor covering store appeared to make no difference as the 3 general stores were spread evenly through the survey

Interpretation of column 3. Staff Name:

- Not applicable

Interpretation of column 4. Title(s):

- Being a manager did not seem to improve the quality of technical knowledge as half of the time when the manager was making the sale or was called in to help, they failed to improve the ranking of their store. Five managers were involved with the sale in the above average group, the same number were involved in the below average group. This indicates the shortage of technical knowledge is widespread, and not just confined to sales staff.

Interpretation of column 5. Gender:

- In all, 13 males and 15 females were involved with the survey. Where a male and a female were involved as a team, they have been discarded from gender related analysis of the figures.
- Women clearly out performed men in knowledge, selling and use of the showroom. Seven of the top 11 stores had women only involved in the sale, while only 3 of the bottom 11 stores had women only involved with the sale. In fact there were only two females involved in the sale from the bottom 8 locations
- Women were involved in the transaction in all 6 of the “up market” stores
- The 4 male / female teams appear to have no advantage, and were evenly spread throughout the survey results

Interpretation of column 6. Knowledge of products:

- It was surprising that females had a significantly higher product knowledge than the males. The aggregate score for the 10 stores where females alone were

surveyed was 119 points (11.9 each) while the corresponding 8 stores with males only surveyed scored a total of only 67 points (8.4 each)

- It is of concern that in 8 out of the 22 stores surveyed, sales staff scored less than 10 out of 25 for product knowledge
- That there were scores of 1 and 2 for product knowledge leads to the conclusion that these people should not have been left with the responsibility for a specialist sale
- Only 1 person in the top 11 stores scored less than 10 for product knowledge (4). She scored almost top in selling; this highlights the probability that a good salesperson could sell products unsuitable for the particular installation
- Most sales staff appeared unaware of the qualities of porcelain tiles

Interpretation of column 7. **Knowledge of Installation Methods:**

- Once again it was surprising to find the females were able to tell clients more information about tile installation methods than the males. Female sellers scored 38 points while the males scored only 25 points. It would appear that women giving advice for a male dominated process, go to the trouble of learning what is involved in tile installation
- Knowledge of type and placement of expansion joints was very poor with 16 of the 22 sales teams surveyed not scoring more than 2 points out of 5. The others scored 3,3,4,4, & 5.

Interpretation of column 8. **Selling - General:**

- General selling skills were a very important indicator of overall sales competence, as all but one of the top 11 stores scored above 13 points out of 30, while all of the bottom 11 stores scored below 13 points. This indicates "good sellers" know their products.

Interpretation of column 9. **Product Specific Selling:**

- Product specific selling skills were almost identical to general selling skills, in that only 2 of the top 11 stores scored less than 7 points, while none of the bottom 11 stores scored more than 7 points
- Combined selling skills showed women were clearly ahead with the top 5 women totalling 147 points while the top 5 men scored only 90 points
- It was apparent that showroom staff, when confronted with a question they couldn't answer either tried to bluff their way through by making up an answer, or they referred the question to someone with greater knowledge. This was sometimes someone within their own organisation, sometimes a well known expert. On one occasion the manager involved offered to fax the manufacturer in Italy to establish the PEI rating for a particular tile, despite the PEI rating being on the back of the sample board.

Interpretation of column 10. **Understanding of Technical and Slip Standards**

- Only 5 of the selling teams of the 22 stores surveyed could be said to have a reasonable understanding of the different technical characteristics of ceramic

tile. Four stores rated zero and 8 more rated only 1 point. One salesperson, an Interior Design student looking after sales for her friend on vacation, scored 5 out of 5. This indicates building professionals know much more about the technical aspects of tile than the sales staff in the specialist showrooms.

- Out of a possible 110 points available on technical and slip standards, the total of all the showrooms combined was only 37 points

Interpretation of column 11. **ADA Act and related standards:**

- Knowledge of the “Access for Disabled Americans” Act and its “deemed to comply” provisions were almost completely unknown to the showroom sales staff. A score of zero was given to 18 of the 22 showrooms surveyed. The chance of selling tiles that do not comply with the Act is very high.

This brings with it the prospect of rectification and / or litigation, particularly in the United States. Similar Acts or building regulations are in effect in most countries, and failure to be aware of their content can place the vendor in a very vulnerable position.

Interpretation of column 12. **Display of Product Range:**

- Having a good showroom display was shown to be important as the best salespeople could be linked to the better showroom layouts. None of the top 11 stores scored less than 3 out of 5 for display, however 4 of the bottom 11 stores scored 1 or 2 points.
- All of the up market showrooms scored 4 or 5 for display with the exception of the specialist natural stone showroom which was too small and cramped to be classified higher
- The 4 discount stores scored 1, 2, 2, & 4 for display generally emphasising their focus on price rather than appearance
- The top 11 showrooms scored 45 out of 55 for display while the bottom 11 scored only 32 points

Interpretation of column 13. **Use of Display to Sell:**

- Having a good display gave the staff the option of using it as a selling tool. It is worth noting that in only two cases did the sales staff score higher for the use of the display, than for the display itself. This indicates it is difficult to use a poor display.
- It appears good displays make it easier for sales staff to sell ceramic tiles as the top 11 stores scored 37% higher in this assessment than the bottom 11 stores.

Interpretation of column 14. **Total / Rank:**

- With the spread of results ranging from 66 points to just 8 points out of a possible 100, there appears to be a doubt over the professional service available from the lower ranking sales staff. Any showroom staff scoring below 30 points are in definite need of skills upgrading. They are less effective at accurate & detailed technical information and are exposing themselves and their companies to more post sale problems than the higher scoring salespeople
- Salespeople with good selling skills scored highly, but when they are linked to

poor technical knowledge, as it is in the showrooms ranked 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, & 10, concern must be expressed about the quality of advice on offer, and the likelihood of producing an incorrect tile installation specification.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS - CONCLUSIONS

Interpretation of the results and general findings:

Two clear messages came from the survey;

1. Women had a higher overall level of competence as tile showroom salespersons than men.
2. There was a deep and fundamental lack of technical knowledge and sales skills among a large percentage of the showroom sales staff surveyed.

The survey also revealed;

- Details relating to expansion joints were almost unknown and they were sometimes confused with grout joints.
- Tile surface abrasion ratings were confused with slip resistance ratings.
- Knowledge of the Access for Disabled Americans requirements related to tiling was almost non-existent. Nobody surveyed knew the ADA requirements for a ramp.
- There was no attempt to “close” on the sale by most salespersons.
- Sample boards were given away without names taken, leaving no chance to follow up on the sale.
- The size and value of the sale was rarely established.
- Almost all salespersons tried to sell “down market” to cheaper lines such as quarry tiles, instead of up market to porcelain, despite prompting about the desire for a prestige finish
- There is a every likelihood that sales staff are giving inappropriate or incorrect advice to clients leading to inappropriate products being sold, because of their own lack of knowledge.
- Salespersons in showrooms with better quality displays:
 - used the displays to sell more confidently and competently.
 - moved clients more easily to more expensive and higher profit products.
- Women sales personnel tended to use the showroom facilities to greater advantage as they moved through the process of offering alternative products.
- Most sales staff appeared unaware of the qualities of porcelain tiles. In one case we were standing on porcelain tiles and the salesperson could not tell us the type of tiles they were

On a more positive note;

- No salespersons tried to sell a non frost resistant tiles for exterior installation.

This all leads to the conclusion that there is often a shortage of **selling skills** among sales staff and this is leading to a loss of sales, particularly higher margin up market sales.

However, the lack of **technical knowledge** is more serious as it is leading to the sale of inappropriate products to clients. This is no doubt resulting in a multitude of problems for the retailer, as well as disappointment for the customers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the survey indicate there is an definite need for structured training to take place to improve the selling skills and technical knowledge of sales staff in ceramic tile showrooms.

This lack of specifically targeted training for these staff appears widespread and is probably causing an ongoing problem for the ceramic tile industry.

The lack of technical knowledge of tiling systems, combined with poor selling skills of showroom staff can be addressed by training programs which focus on defined competencies.

There is an opportunity for Ceramic Tile Industry Associations to develop and implement sales staff training to rectify this situation. This they can do to show their professionalism and as a service to their members. They should be able to provide this training for a profit and thereby ease the pressure on membership fees. This is already the case with the Australian Tile Council.

Suggested scope of training.

As a general rule the training will be more successful if it;

- is based on “competencies” developed by industry leaders and verified by critical incident surveys of showroom staff
- articulates with other training, particularly at a tertiary or technical level
- has a certificate granted on successful completion
- is flexibly delivered, eg. can be adapted to run in the evenings, over weekdays or weekends, portable so as to be delivered in different venues, etc.
- is developed in cooperation with a known educational provider
- has a large portion of time devoted to hands on skills such as tile cutting and laying
- calls on expert guest lecturers from within the tile industry
- is backed up with written resources, references and expert support systems

The course currently offered in Australia is run one day per week for 5 weeks at a charge of approximately US\$ 500.

Suggested content of training program

The course content should be established by the tile industry to suit the local needs. The skills list shown in attachment 1 can be a guide. Any course should include a segment on selling techniques as certain aspects were shown to be lacking in the Showroom Staff survey.

Likely areas of content for a Ceramic Tile Sales Staff Training Course are;

Expansion and control joints, tile characteristics and test methods, local and international standards and regulations for tiles and tiling, the causes of tiling failures, cutting of tiles by hand and machine, laying tiles in mortar and adhesive, basic setting out of tile work, waterproofing, adhesive types and uses, specialist grouts, underlays and separating layers, sealers and maintenance products. etc.

The industry association should maintain copyright over any courses developed in association with an educational provider.

DACUM + Delphi PROFILE: What must competent tile showroom staff and travellers be able to do?

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General Areas		Competencies										
Calculating Quantities.	➤	Interpret tiled areas from plans and specifications.	Use a scale rule to take measurements of a scale.	Use a calculator to calculate areas and quantities.	Calculate square and irregular areas of a scale drawing.	Convert imperial to metric measure.	Calculate areas of tiles.	Calculate the quantity of tiles for a given pattern.	Calculate quantity of border trims, covings, fittings / fixtures.	Calculate allowance for cutting and waste.	Estimate quantities of fixing materials, grout and fittings.	Estimate labour costs.
Knowledge of ceramic tiles.	➤	Describe methods of manufacture.	State limits of application of tile types.	List characteristics of tiles.	State types of finishing edges.	Select tiles suitable for treads, risers and thresholds.	Explain the special characteristics of terracotta and tessellated tiles.	State standards of quality for finished tiling.				
Knowledge of adhesives.	➤	State types of tile adhesives.	List characteristics of the different adhesives.	Match adhesive with tile type, background and application.	Mix and apply adhesives to manufacturer's specifications.	Describe methods of cleaning joints and surfaces prior to adhesive setting.	Describe the most common client problems and complaints.	Respond constructively to problems and complaints.				
Knowledge of grouting and sealing.	➤	State the different types of grout used for walls and floors.	Describe the characteristics of the different types of grout.	Match grout with tile type, background and application.	Mix and apply common grouts to manufacturers' specifications.	Describe the effects of climatic conditions and contaminants.	Describe the characteristics of special grouts.	Select the appropriate sealer for various products.	Safely apply sealer to prepared finishes.	Describe the most common client problems and complaints.	Respond constructively to client problems and complaints.	
Knowledge of natural stone tiles.	➤	Identify characteristics of natural stones: slate, marble and granite.	Sort to thickness and colour of natural stone.	Describe the preparation of slate for fixing.	Describe the different methods of laying slate.	Describe the grouting and cleaning of slate.	Describe the methods of sealing slate.	Describe the fixing of marble and granite tiles.	Describe the methods of polishing marble and granite edges.	Describe the care and maintenance of natural stone tiles.	Describe the most common client problems and complaints.	Respond constructively to client problems and complaints.
Knowledge of tiling systems.	➤	Establish the intended use of the tiled area.	Identify substrates and backgrounds that can be used in buildings.	Explain background preparation of surfaces to receive mortar.	Explain background preparation of surfaces to receive adhesives.	Describe 2 procedures for preventing water penetration from wet areas.	Explain the various tiling systems and their applications.	Locate relevant applications in the Australian Standards.				
Knowledge of plumbing and drainage.	➤	Measure up a bathroom for a tiling job.	Check walls for plumb and straightness.	Explain the use of fixing bolts.	Explain the use of tile cutting tools.	Cut a variety of tiles without leaving jagged or flaked edges.	Drill a neat hole in a tile without	Install a wall plug in the correct size hole without cracking the tile.	Prepare tiles to receive grout to manufacturers' specifications.			
Preparing tiles.	➤	Establish who is doing the job.	Establish the type and extent of the job.	Gain all the relevant information from the customers.	Explain and sketch the job layout to vary customer information.	List the appropriate surface preparation procedures to receive mortar or adhesive.	Set out small areas of tilework to demonstrate patterns.	Demonstrate how to make straight cuts without jagged or flaked edges.	Demonstrate how to make curved cuts by hand to a customer.	Explain the purpose and position of expansion joints to Aust Standards.	Explain how to select grout to match tile type, background and application.	Explain how to mix common grouts to manufacturers' specifications.
Polishing tiles (polished).	➤	Describe the cleaning procedures before and after grouting.	Describe the cleaning procedures to preserve the tile finish.	Describe the cleaning procedures to preserve any gold finishes.	Advise customer on the procedures used by tradesmen for repairing tiles.	Locate information relevant to tile installation from Aust Standards.						
Colour and design matching.	➤	Explain colour combinations with reference to a colour wheel.	State the effects of cool and hot colours.	Explain the influence that direction of tiles has on a room.	Describe the major styles of building and their associated styles of tilework.	Describe the matching accessories associated styles of tilework.	Explain the considerations in pattern selection to customers.	Describe the common client problems and complaints in colour coordination.	Respond constructively to client problems and complaints.			
Understanding the nature of a sales contract as a legally enforceable agreement.	➤	Explain the nature of a sales contract as a legally enforceable agreement.	Explain the rights and obligations of the consumer under current legislation.	Explain the rights and obligations of the tile merchant under current legislation.	Explain the manufacturers and resellers product liability obligations.							
Personal selling.	➤	Understand the importance of personal selling.	Explain the need for satisfaction approach to personal selling.	Plan a basic need satisfaction sales preservation for a typical customer.	Explain three basic methods of closing the sale.	Explain sales follow-up procedures appropriate to the tile industry.						
Handling complaints.	➤	Describe procedures for handling complaints.	Apply procedures for handling complaints.									

DACUM Grid developed by Dr. Geoff Saville

SALES STAFF COMPETENCY - SHOWROOM SURVEY RESULT RECORDING SHEET

1. Engage Client - *Greeting, rapport, eye contact* ☐
2. Establish size of sale *How large an area? Outside/inside?* ☐
3. Assess client needs and wants - quarry → slate → porcelain..... ☐
4. Identify alternative solutions, *without prompting* ☐
5. Check client perceptions of image & \$ *verses alternative solutions* ☐
- 5b) Show & tell alternative solutions - *watch for client reactions*..... ☐
6. Check client requirements for *wear resistance outside-inside* ☐
7. Check client requirements for *frost resistance outside* ☐
8. Check client requirements, *slip on ramp & steps*. Litigation? ☐
9. Comply with ADA, *slip on ramp & steps*. Litigation? ☐
10. Specify trims - *step treads, coves* ☐
11. Specify maintenance - *sealers? Grout - fading of color grout?* ☐
12. Explain the features, benefits & price of each solution..... ☐
13. Installation of preferred system(s) - *Setting materials + latex?* ☐
14. Expansion joints - *why?* ☐
15. Trial close on prospect *Give & receive cards, take order* ☐
16. Follow-up - *brochures, samples, refer to rep., measure and quote* ☐
17. Store presentation - *Quality of floor, range, display, accessories* ☐
18. Use of presentation to sell- *display*..... ☐
19. Product knowledge of ceramic tiles..... ☐

Sales person 1 _____ Sub Totals _____

Sales person 2 _____ TOTAL

Comments: _____

Attachment 2. Sales Staff Competency, survey result recording sheet

SURVEY OF SALES COMPETENCY - DFW area August 10, 1995.					1. KNOWLEDGE of		2. SELLING		3. INTERPRETATION of		4. SHOWROOM		TOTAL / Rank
Storesize Range offered Storestyle 1	Type 2	Name of Salesperson(s) 3	Title(s) 4	Gender 5	Products /25 6	Installation Methods /10 7	Selling General /30 8	Product Specific /15 9	Technical & Slip Stand's /5 10	ADA & Standards /5 11	Display of product /5 12	Use of display /5 13	Total 100 14
Medium, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Manager Sales Rep.	Female Female	15	6	21	12	1	3	4	4	66 / 1
Medium, Multi Upmarket	Tile	Deleted	Inside Sales	Female	17	8	14	12	5	1	4	3	64 / 2
Medium, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Manager	Male	15	8	14	11	4	2	4	4	62 / 3
Large, Multi Upmarket	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep	Female	12	4	18	10	4	0	5	4	57 / 4
Medium, Multi Upmarket	Gen Floor	Deleted	Sales Rep. Manager	Female Male	14	7	17	7	3	0	5	3	56 / 5
Medium, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Showroom Sales Rep.	Female	12	3	21	9	1	0	5	4	55 / 6
Small, Single Standard	Tile	Deleted	Manager Arch. Rep	Male	11	7	20	7	1	0	3	2	51 / 7
Medium, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep.	Female	10	0	19	11	3	0	4	4	51 / 8
Medium, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Showroom Manager	Female	10	4	10	9	1	0	4	5	43 / 9
Large, Single Upmarket	Tile	Deleted	Inside Sales Arch. Rep	Female	4	4	19	5	1	0	4	3	40 / 10
Large, Multi Standard	Gen Floor	Deleted	Sales Rep. Sales Rep.	Male Female	11	5	14	5	0	0	3	2	40 / 10
Small, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep.	Female	12	4	11	5	1	0	4	2	39 / 12
Large, Single Upmarket	Tile	Deleted	Admin Mgr. Sales Rep.	Male Female	11	6	8	5	2	0	4	2	38 / 13
Small, Multi Upmarket	Mar- ble	Deleted	Sales Rep.	Female	9	3	9	7	0	0	3	4	35 / 14
Small, Single Discount	Tile	Deleted	Manager	Male	13	5	8	2	2	0	2	1	34 / 15
Large, Multi Discount	Gen Floor	Deleted	Manager	Male	7	0	13	7	1	0	1	3	32 / 16
Small, Single Discount	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep. Manager	Male Male	10	1	7	1	1	1	4	3	28 / 17
Small, Single Standard	Tile	Deleted	Manager	Male	8	4	6	2	2	0	3	3	28 / 17
Small, Single Standard	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep. Arch. Rep.	Female Male	7	1	5	4	2	0	2	2	23 / 19
Small, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep.	Male	2	0	7	5	2	0	3	2	21 / 20
Small, Multi Standard	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep.	Female	4	2	2	2	0	0	4	1	15 / 21
Small, Single Discount	Tile	Deleted	Sales Rep.	Male	1	0	2	2	0	0	2	1	8 / 22

Attachment 3. Table of results - Survey of Sales Competency, Dallas / Fort Worth area USA.

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