

Like Us on Facebook

Home » Contractor Corner: Continental Office

[Floor Coverings](#)
[Commercial Flooring](#)

Contractor Corner: Continental Office



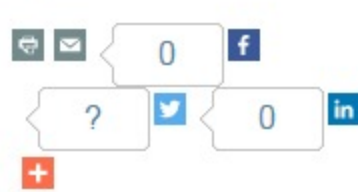
The company's design area in its Columbus, Ohio, headquarters.



December 1, 2015

Garry Ruick

KEYWORDS commercial market / flooring business news / marketing flooring Reprints



No Comments

Help shape YOUR industry's future.

[CLICK HERE!](#)

At Continental Office we have a very simple mission that keeps us on point in every aspect of getting the job done: provide great service and a great experience to every single customer. We believe this is a key building block that has made Continental Office the "go-to" flooring contractor in our marketplace. Through excellence in customer service, our customers are confident in trusting our team to do whatever it takes to get the job done—and *get the job done right*.

Now, it certainly does not mean we do not slip up and make mistakes. We do. However, when we do, it is all hands on deck to communicate with our client and deliver a solution that meets or exceeds expectations—for both parties. What's more, we make sure we learn from our errors, and we take that learning experience very seriously. These learning experiences help us develop better processes and deliver more effective flooring solutions. When we look at how we generate repeat business or new business, we believe most of it is because of the level of quality service we consistently provide to our customers.

Several years ago, Ira Sharfin, who entered the furniture and flooring business after a long and successful career in the business consulting world, purchased Continental Office. Ira and his team had a new approach to business, which was driven by technology, customer service and innovation. However, the most important part of this approach was a focus on our people. Our team's inherent knowledge and expertise combined with their passion to find the right solution for our customer's unique needs is what really makes us successful. The people at Continental Office are key to our continued business growth.

Customer service isn't just through our projects, it's also providing service to our community. Through Continental Cares, our coordinated community outreach program, we host a number of activities and participate in fundraisers. A major event for us is a local fundraiser for the OSU James Cancer Hospital called Pelotonia. Pelotonia is a fundraising bike ride of varying distances with 8,000 riders. Many of our associates participate in Pelotonia. As a company we have raised over \$400,000 for fighting cancer.

Unique Product Offerings

Our business is a little different than many dealerships. We focus on the entire workplace—from furniture and flooring to demountable architectural walls and branding. Moreover we offer services that allow us to help our customers throughout their entire workplace lifecycle. This means we're not just there as a partner during the initial sale. Rather, we're with our customers for the duration as their needs change and their business grows.

One thing that makes us unique is our office furniture business is much larger than our flooring business. We have a larger number of furniture salespeople than flooring in the market, and these teams share potential leads and foster opportunities together. Columbus, Ohio, is our oldest and largest location. We have nine dedicated flooring salespeople in Columbus with considerable experience. In fact, our least experienced salesperson has been with us for nine years.

In our flooring division, we provide a complete commercial flooring package, which includes carpet, resilient, ceramic, wood, concrete and toppings, as well as athletic flooring and various specialty items. Our primary market segments are corporate, higher education, education K-12, healthcare and government.

What really sets us apart in the flooring industry is we have a large installation force composed of direct hourly employees, in addition to the many subcontractors we use. Many of these hourly installers are highly skilled sheet vinyl installers who perform much of our healthcare work.

Managing, and Tracking, Growth

Over the last four years, we have more than doubled our business. As our flooring business has grown, we have been forced to keep updating work processes and systems to accommodate this growth. When our business was smaller everyone on the team knew every job and every aspect of the job—it was much simpler. Today, process flow is more structured so there is clear ownership and accountability every step of the way and for each of the necessary tasks to successfully complete a project. Team roles and responsibilities are key, and encouraging communication and teamwork is essential to success at every turn.

Specific to managing our growth, we launched a new business system called Structure from C/F Data. We added our hourly installation crew (which today is made up of 25 people). We also centralized purchasing and reorganized our project managers and installation service managers. Structure helped us focus on closing the gaps where customer service was slipping. C/F Data Systems' Structure also enabled us to better track inventory, WIP and AIA billing, all of which were lacking in the business system on the furniture side of the business. This new platform helped solve these problems while giving us better visibility to other aspects of the business such as costs and scheduling. We also use Callidus, which helps us with our estimating capabilities in all of our Continental Office locations.

Recently, we expanded our corporate marketing group to continue our outreach by establishing a more robust presence on social media, creating a better online experience through our website and informing customers through an effective e-mail campaign platform. We also collaborate with our peers. Specifically, we had an idea for a software enhancement that was costly. However, through the Fuse Alliance network, we were able to work with two other Fuse members on the same platform and share the programming costs. Because of the relationship we've developed with each other through the Fuse network, this was an option that easily presented itself and we were able to execute—collectively.

Overall, we strive to provide a great experience, and we want our customers to say they want to work with us. In order to deliver a great result and this type of experience, it's important that your business have control over the project all the way through until the end (and beyond). The right systems can help a business manage the parts and pieces of the job such as estimating, purchasing, inventory tracking, billing, collections and so on.

Understanding roles and responsibilities, where the role fits into the process, and how it needs to interact with the other team members' responsibilities is essential to a successful project. When roles are clear, projects can run smoothly, which ultimately results in a satisfied customer. When there is a breakdown along the way—internally or externally—things can fall off track and you'll find your company scrambling. Knowledgeable people running projects are a must.

Did you enjoy this article? [Click here to subscribe to Floor Trends Magazine](#)

Garry Ruick, president of Continental Office, has been working in the flooring business since 1975. His experience includes product manufacturer sales, flooring contracting and flooring services. Along with another colleague, Garry started the flooring segment at Continental Office Furniture in 1982. In 1996 the business was sold to Interface and Garry transitioned to the Re:Source division and managed all Re:Source-owned locations. Garry left in 2002 to start another flooring business at Continental Office, which remains today as a growing part of Continental's business. The company has locations in Columbus, Toledo and Pittsburgh. Continental Office is a member of the Fuse Alliance network. Find out more at [continentaloffice.com](#).

Related Articles

- [Contractor's Corner: Beatty Floors: A Flooring Business Growing with a Dynamic City](#)
- [Contractor's Corner: Interior Surface Enterprises Grows Through Diversifying and Training](#)
- [Contractor's Corner: Adaptability Plays a Key Role in Today's Business Growth](#)
- [Contractor Corner: Commercial Flooring Systems](#)

Related Events

- [FCICA to Host Webinar on Moisture Measurement Wood and Concrete](#)
- [14th Annual - George Buckhardt Memorial - Fundraiser](#)

Related Products

- [Contractor Soft Skills - DVD](#)
- [Concrete Floors and Moisture, 2nd Edition](#)

Related Directories

- [Philadelphia Floor Store](#)
- [FLEXTHERM - US office](#)
- [Portuguese Trade and Investment Office](#)
- [Tile Contractors Assn. of America](#)

You must login or register in order to post a comment.

FIND THE RIGHT SUPPLIER

DON'T WASTE PRECIOUS TIME SEARCHING FOR SUPPLIERS

Turn to the FLOOR TRENDS Buying Guide for trusted companies in the floor covering industry.

GO TO: [floortrendsmag.com/buyingguide](#)



[Subscribe For Free!](#)



Bostik SVP Bob Marquette - Part 2

prev next

[More Videos](#)

FIND THE RIGHT SUPPLIER

DON'T WASTE PRECIOUS TIME SEARCHING FOR SUPPLIERS

GO TO: [floortrendsmag.com/buyingguide](#)

TALK Floor

Daily Flooring Industry News, Videos & Podcasts

Events

April 6, 2016

International Wood Products Association (IWPA) 60th Annual Convention

The IWPA Annual Convention provides access to over 300 importers, U.S. manufacturers, exporters, wholesalers, offshore suppliers, and service providers of wood products from nearly 30 countries.

[View All](#)

[Submit An Event](#)

Poll

Succession Plan

Do you have a succession plan in place for your business?

Yes
 No

[SUBMIT](#)

[View Results](#) [Poll Archive](#)

Products

Tiling Floors - DVD

Ceramic tile is a versatile and popular material for all kinds of floors.

[See More Products](#)

Start your search today!

Flooring Buying Guide

Floor Trends Magazine



2015 December

In our December Floor Trends issue, we asked retailers and contractors whether they employ installers or subcontract the work. Also, we share tips on selling the right fiber for the customer's lifestyle.

[View More](#)

[Subscribe](#)

Resources

- [List Rental](#)
- [Flooring Group](#)
- [Web Exclusives](#)
- [Polls](#)

Want More

[Connect](#)