



A flooring contractor's guide:
Developing and growing your business with vinyl flooring





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Introduction

Vinyl is a rapidly evolving and increasingly popular commodity both in South Africa (SA) and globally. Effective and skilled flooring-contractor businesses are therefore playing an increasingly important role in the South African flooring market.

SA currently has a relatively limited pool of flooring contractors who can confidently and efficiently complete high-quality vinyl installations. This has created an exciting opportunity for professionals looking to establish or expand their businesses in a dynamic, growing industry.

As a supplier of high-quality vinyl in SA **for over 30 years**, with a chairman who has been involved in the local flooring industry since 1962, Polysales is well qualified to advise on the business skills required to develop a successful flooring-contractor business, and to share the many lessons we have learnt through working with various vinyl installation specialists.

The knowledge, expertise and advice contained in this guide have been contributed by the Polysales team, whose collective experience spans over a hundred years, and by some of the

country's top vinyl-flooring contractors, who have shared their vast experience with us. It provides a starting point for:

- experienced flooring contractors wanting to develop the vinyl-installation aspect of their business, and
- individuals or companies wanting to develop a flooring-contractor business which includes vinyl installations.

This guide aims to:

- provide insight into SA's current vinyl-flooring market
- provide detailed product knowledge on all relevant products
- refute some of the myths and uncertainties about vinyl
- explain the basic skills needed for top-quality vinyl installations and how to obtain them
- explain the basic skills needed to run a successful flooring-contractor business
- encourage both existing and new flooring contractors to expand the vinyl-installation component of your businesses.

01 Why vinyl?

Dramatic advances in technology over the last 50 years have resulted in the current highly versatile range of durable and design-friendly vinyl floors which offer:

- versatility in product, colour and design
- specialised functionality such as acoustic, slip-resistant and electrostatic dissipative properties in various multi-purpose or loose lay options
- durability, longevity and ease of maintenance
- remarkable design flexibility and opportunities
- eco-friendly credentials
- lower lifetime cost than many other floor coverings.

The benefits of vinyl are now being widely recognised by both South African and international construction and flooring experts, leading to the rapid expansion of this market sector.

A barrier-to-entry in this market sector is the fact that vinyl installations require a higher level of skill than most other floor coverings. Whilst challenging, this skill can also be exactly what differentiates your business from your competitors. The major differentiating factor is the skill of the installer and not just the price he will charge.



"I developed the vinyl side of our flooring installation business as it is highly specialised and demands a level of skill and high-quality delivery which ensures less competition for work. You have to know what you are doing. If you do, you will reap the benefits of regular projects and repeat work"

The market is growing; the skills are required. Putting the two together is likely to result in the development of a successful flooring installation business.



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP

02 Understanding the product


Seeing is believing. Click on the link below for an infographic which illustrates some of the functions and beauty that vinyl now offers across various industries.






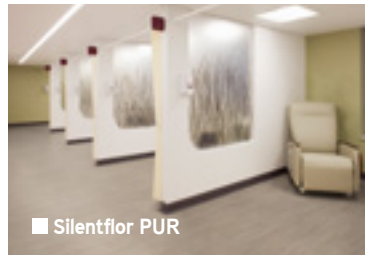
[Click here for the Versatile Vinyl infographic](#)



Whilst the aesthetic appeal and multi-purpose functionality of vinyl is easy to understand from images, it is also important for contractors and clients to understand its technical specifications. In today's world, where single spaces are used for many purposes and specific functional requirements are important, vinyl ticks many boxes.



TABLE I: Technical aspects of vinyl products

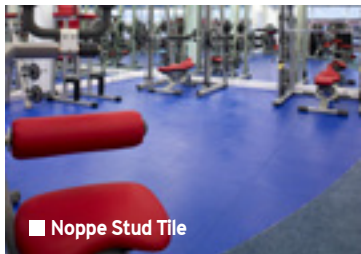

Product name	Explanation	Have a look
Homogeneous flooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consists of a single layer - Gives the flooring rigidity and toughness, making it a good choice for areas with heavy foot traffic - An attractive, high-performance and high-quality floor - Available in a wide range of colours - Features enhanced maintenance protection for optimum appearance retention 	 <p>■ 2000 PUR</p>

Product name	Explanation	Have a look
Heterogenous sheet flooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes called 'layered-composite' or 'backed vinyl-sheet' flooring - The sheet consists of a wear layer plus additional layers, which differ in composition and/or design - Additional layers often contain reinforcement - The different layers offer both sophisticated design options and superior performance such as sound and shock absorption - Used in residential and commercial installations 	 <p>■ Forest fx PUR</p>
Safety floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides accredited slip resistance for the life of the floor (>36+ on the pendulum test on a WET floor) - Used in high slip risk areas 	 <p>■ Polysafe</p>

Product name	Explanation	Have a look
Luxury vinyl tiles (LVTs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Design-led- An extensive collection of highly authentic wood, stone, slate, metallic and abstract designs- Available in both plank and tile formats- Feature realistic surface textures and polyurethane reinforcement, making them ideal for commercial and residential sectors- Available in standard and slip-resistant formats	 <p>■ NovoCore</p>
Acoustic flooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Acoustic flooring provides options to reduce levels of impact noise within domestic and commercial interiors	 <p>■ Silentflor PUR</p>

Product name	Explanation	Have a look
Loose lay flooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Design-friendly- Adhesive-free- Developed to reduce installation time and allow access to underfloor utilities	 <p>■ Expona Simplay PUR</p>
Electrostatic Dissipative (ESD) flooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Specialist hardwearing flooring for ESD-critical locations (e.g. healthcare, pharmaceuticals and electronics manufacturing)	 <p>■ SD Collection</p>

Product name	Explanation	Have a look
Sports floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- High-performance sports flooring which meets international non-slip and high-impact requirements- Suitable for general-sports halls and gymnasiums	 <p>■ Sport 67</p>
Semi-flexible floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Commercial grade- Feature a wide range of shades and decorations- Economical solution when budgets are tight	 <p>■ Polyflex Plus PU</p>

Product name	Explanation	Have a look
Rubber flooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Designed for heavy-traffic areas where durability, cigarette-burn resistance and underfoot comfort are required	 <p>■ Noppe Stud Tile</p>
Wall cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wall and ceiling cladding with polyurethane surface treatment- Suitable for all non-floor surfaces, e.g. reception desks- Ideal for wet and hygiene-critical areas, e.g. theatres	 <p>■ Polyclad Pro PU</p>

Whilst choosing the appropriate type of floor is not usually the flooring contractor's decision, it is nevertheless important to understand the different options and their functions. This will allow you to make good installation decisions and add value to your client relationship.



Partner with a vinyl supplier who can assist in selecting the correct floor for the application by conducting a thorough needs analysis for you, the architect or the building contractor.



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP



03 Busting the myths about vinyl

A pair of yellow rubber boots is shown from a top-down perspective. The soles of the boots are heavily coated with thick, black, clumpy mud. One boot is positioned to step onto a light-colored, textured tiled floor, leaving a large, irregular black smudge. Another boot is slightly behind it, also with mud on its sole. The scene illustrates the common myth that vinyl flooring is easily damaged by dirt and grime.

Myths abound when it comes to industry chatter about vinyl. To become an expert in vinyl, you need to understand which are based on truth and which are not.

Myth 1: Vinyl is very difficult to install

Without question, expertise is required for the successful installation of vinyl. The sub-floor must be of excellent quality: smooth, level, sufficiently strong and moisture free. As vinyl is a relatively thin floor, imperfections in the screed or sub-floor will show on the finished floor.



[Click here for how to get it right the first time](#)

Measuring, cutting, coving, grooving, welding and trimming the weld also require expertise. It is therefore essential that, as a vinyl-flooring contractor, you have a highly trained and skilled team who will do an excellent job during every installation. With the right attitude and the right expertise, installation of vinyl can be painless and produce superb results.



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP

Myth 2: Vinyl is an expensive product

Vinyl itself is not more expensive than many other commercial-grade floors. It is true that the sub-floor preparation for vinyl can be more expensive when compared to other floors. But the lifetime cost of a vinyl floor is often substantially less than other floors and contractors and clients should understand this.



[Click here for a simple explanation of the cost of floor ownership](#)



Depending on which product it is compared to, the up-front costs for vinyl may be more expensive, but when the floor's lifetime cost is considered, vinyl is in fact a very cost-effective option.

Myth 3: Vinyl is not eco-friendly compared to other floors

False. The following points were published by the **Southern African Vinyl Association (SAVA)**.

- Through modern manufacturing, vinyl has a low environmental impact and exceptional performance characteristics

within a multitude of uses, where no other material could perform as well or cost effectively.

- Vinyl is an environmentally sound choice. Over its whole life cycle, vinyl floorcovering performs comparably or better than competing materials across a range of impacts. Vinyl flooring is exceptionally energy efficient to manufacture, using less energy than other plastics and linoleum.
- As a material, vinyl is ideally suited to being recycled. It is 100% recyclable and can be recycled many times over without losing any of its performance properties. If it is not recycled, vinyl has a high calorific value and may be safely incinerated generating energy recovery, although this is a 'one-hit wonder' and not the favoured disposal route. Landfill is seldom used and is the last option, albeit a safe one, as vinyl remains chemically inert without producing leachate.
- When looking at homogeneous ranges of vinyl flooring products for example, we see they use up to 85% sustainable materials with the average being 71% across the range. This includes calcium carbonate filler. The high abundance of this



material in the earth's crust makes it a sustainable material and its use diminishes the polymer content, thus reducing the usage of oil.

- SAVA welcomes any proactive steps taken by industry members to take responsibility for their own waste. We have made a firm commitment to increase responsibility and sustainability within the PVC industry as a whole and will support any initiative taken by our members in such an important industry action. Polysales offer an award-winning recycling initiative for vinyl floor offcuts; the first of its kind in South Africa.



[Click here for more on the sustainability of vinyl flooring](#)

Myth 4: Vinyl is unattractive, old fashioned and does not offer enough design options

False! Modern-day vinyl is very far from old fashioned and unattractive!



[Click here for more on vinyl's versatility](#)

Myth 5: Vinyl floors do not last long

False. The warranty of a vinyl floor is generally 10 years, but most last for significantly longer if properly laid, maintained and cleaned. In fact, there is a local installation which has lasted nearly 50 years! In 1968, 650m² of Polyflor's Standard XL Black Cherry 8580 and Mushroom were installed in the George Civic Centre and it still looks fantastic, receiving an award for the 'Longest Lifespan Installation' at the 2013 SA Flooring Awards.

George Civic Centre, installed in 1968



■ Standard XL

Myth 6: Vinyl floors are difficult to maintain and have to be cleaned and re-sealed regularly

False. Most of today's vinyl products contain polyurethane coatings applied during manufacture to ensure lifelong protection and optimal appearance for the surface. Sealing, stripping and re-sealing are therefore not required for the floor to continue to look good.

However, it's important to know that there are two types of coatings and you need to understand which coating is applicable to the product you are working with.

In many cases, the installation phase exposes the product to potential damage, especially in a new build while all trades are still working on site. In some vinyl products, the first coating is therefore a sacrificial layer, designed to protect the product during the installation phase. This coat does wear off and then a standard strip-and-seal maintenance regime applies for the rest of that floor's lifetime (as per manufacturer's specifications).

The second type of coating is a permanent one. It has been reinforced and is usually a UV-crosslinked polyurethane type

of coating. With a permanent coating, you never have to apply a sealer to the floor and your maintenance regime will consist of a simple daily mop (dry or wet system) and a weekly spray buff. The buffing results in a good sheen. This floor is extremely durable. When compared to a non-coated floor, the long-term maintenance-cost saving is estimated at about 48% over 20 years.

Myth 7: Vinyl is difficult to use when design-appeal is important

False. Vinyl's malleability and broad product range mean that design and branding can be incorporated into the floor to stunning effect.



■ XL PU and Forest fx PUR



04 Challenges of vinyl

Whilst many myths about vinyl are exactly that - myths, the issue of complex installation is important and real.



"To run a successful flooring-contractor business, you need to develop a highly skilled team able to deliver the sub-floor required for a successful installation. Whilst this is one of the challenges of vinyl, the successful vinyl-flooring contractors have focused on getting this right. When you get the sub-floor right for a vinyl installation the end-product is excellent; when you get the sub-floor wrong, it goes badly wrong and costs the client and contractor both time and money"



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP

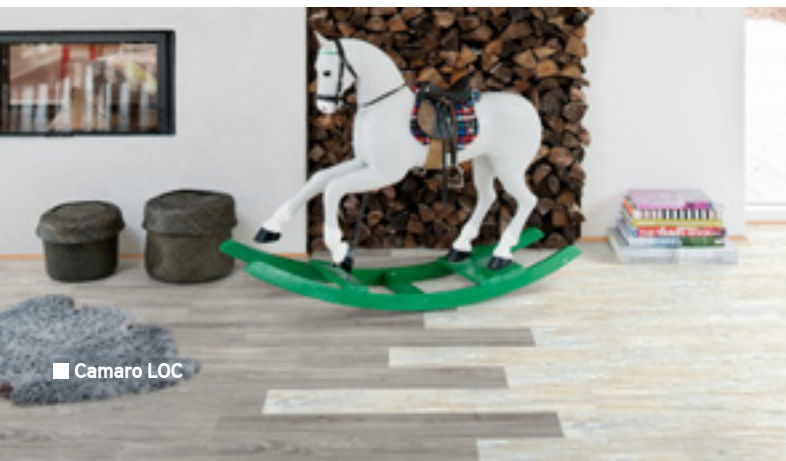


A high-angle photograph of a rustic wooden table with a dark, weathered finish. On the table are several clear glass jars of different sizes and a white ceramic teapot. A small green plant with thin stems is also visible. The table is positioned on a floor covered with a vinyl material featuring a complex geometric pattern of interlocking triangles in shades of beige and light brown. A wooden chair with a slatted seat is partially visible behind the table. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text.

05 Comparing vinyl's performance features to those of other floor coverings

Product name	Performance features
Vinyl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design appeal with a wide range of multi-purpose options - Functional specifications such as acoustics, hygiene, slip-resistance and ESD can be met - Excellent longevity and durability - Easy to clean and maintain - Waterproof, and will not react to humidity if properly installed
Solid hardwood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design appeal, warm and authentic - Susceptible to scratching and will show wear, especially in heavily trafficked areas - May be damaged by moisture and sunlight - Can be difficult to maintain, requiring regular re-sanding and sealing to maintain appearance - Requires the cutting down of trees
Laminate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design appeal with a wide range of options - Less durable than vinyl - Noisy to walk on - Contains a core layer of dense fibreboard which, despite the plastic wear layer and protective melamine resin layer, will react to standing water and excessive humidity in the same way as solid wood flooring does - Poor repair ability and not completely waterproof

Product name	Performance features
Engineered wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design appeal - Easily scratched and damaged leading to less durability in appearance - Can be reactive to weather and moisture
Carpets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warm and soft - Difficult to clean - Durability and longevity can be an issue



Product name	Performance features
Ceramics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Durable - Cold and hard - Crack and become damaged more easily - Can be slippery - Grouting grooves allow bacteria to collect



06 Incorporating vinyl into your business

A vinyl floor's performance is dependent upon many factors and the floorcovering itself is only one of those factors. Correct sub-floor preparation and dryness, the workmanship of the installer, how the product is maintained and the selection of the correct vinyl product are all equally important if vinyl installation is going to be part of your business offering.

- ✓ **STEP 1:** Train your team well, so you can deliver a great end-result every time (more on this later). It is not the product on its own that will grow your business, it is your expertise and service.
- ✓ **STEP 2:** It is important to identify a supplier who will offer you more than just a product. You want to work with a company who can guide you in a product choice that will fully meet your requirements, assist you with training and provide on-site support and technical advice to ensure that your installation is successful; a company that partners with you and is involved in the process from initial enquiry to site hand-over.

- ✓ **STEP 3:** Do not underestimate the importance of up-front planning and understanding what the end-product needs to look like.
- ✓ **STEP 4:** Make sure you have the correct, top-quality tools for the job.
- ✓ **STEP 5:** Do an excellent job and focus on delivery. Word-of-mouth and repeat business will be critical components of your success.
- ✓ **STEP 6:** Get it right first time if you want to make a profit. Having to repair, fix or change the floors will cost you in the end.



HERMAN'S TEAM - GETTING IT RIGHT

Herman Tshabalala is a very professional flooring contractor based in Mpumalanga. He has a highly skilled team of fitters who work on his vinyl installations.

Herman and his team installed a vinyl floor at a large toy- and baby-supplies retailer two years ago. Last year another store in the same chain came up for refurbishment. Herman was asked to quote and duly supplied a fair quote based on his experience and understanding of what is needed to complete a top-quality installation.

A new flooring contractor in the area supplied a substantially cheaper quote, undercutting Herman's price. Herman was not prepared to drop his price as years of experience have taught him what he needs to charge to produce an excellent end-result and he knew his price was reasonable and fair. The retailer chose to go with the cheaper quote.

This year Herman received a quote request from the same supplier, for a large store in a neighbouring town. Herman asked the building contractor why they had come back to him and not gone to the contractor who had done the job more cheaply last year. The building contractor admitted that the job had been disastrous. The quality of the sub-floor had been poor and, as a result, the installation did not go well and the final product did not look good at all. To make matters worse, a cheap, ineffective adhesive was used and the floor started lifting almost immediately. They had to pull up the whole floor and start again. In the end, the flooring cost nearly three times more than the initial estimate.

Having experienced none of those problems when Herman's team installed the floor in the first store, the building contractor had insisted on using them this time - even though the quote would be higher. He knows that, in the end, it will save him money because Herman's team will deliver excellent quality, on time, within budget.



EDWARD'S TEAM - GETTING IT WRONG

Edward and his team won a contract to install a vinyl floor at a well-known hospital chain in Kimberley. The entire floor, which included several very long passages, was being revamped. The total flooring to be laid was 50 000m².

Edward was juggling four jobs at the time and was in a rush to get the hospital job done so that he could be paid as he needed the cash flow. He didn't spend too much time planning and thinking about the installation up-front or communicating with the building contractor and architect about the desired end-result.

The vinyl sheeting being used for the job was 2m wide and the length could be cut to specification. As the passage was slightly wider than 2m, Edward decided to lay the sheeting with the horizontal length widthways. The result was a join every 2m down the long passages.

He had completed 800m² when the architect arrived at site for an inspection. The architect immediately made it clear that this was unacceptable for two reasons: (a) whenever there is a join in a floor you create a point of weakness and a hygiene risk in a hospital environment as bacteria could collect in a compromised join space and (b) aesthetically, a join every 2m was unsightly. Edward was instructed to start again, increasing the size of the coving on either side of the passage instead, so that the flooring could be laid with the length running longways down the corridor. Vinyl flooring cannot be re-used once it has been pulled up, so he had to foot the bill for the replacement floor himself.

Edward learnt a valuable lesson about pre-planning, thinking about the final outcome and understanding the needs of the project's building contractor and architect. Had he asked them - or his flooring supplier - for advice on how best to handle this challenge, he would have saved himself substantial amounts of time, money and frustration.

A photograph of three children running happily down a school hallway. The hallway has light-colored wood flooring and large windows on the left side. The children are in motion, slightly blurred, suggesting they are running quickly. The text '07 Understanding the technicalities and tools of a flooring contractor's business' is overlaid in white on a semi-transparent dark band across the middle of the image.

07 Understanding the technicalities and tools of a flooring contractor's business

The technicalities of sub-floors are discussed on **pages 9 to 15**, but additional technical knowledge and skills are essential. Your installation team also needs to be trained in:

- measuring and cutting accurately
- cutting off factory edges
- applying appropriate adhesive
- grooving
- welding
- trimming the weld
- grinding the sub-floor

Ask your vinyl supplier for technical checking, training and on-site assistance and for help understanding the necessary add-on products, such as adhesive and sealer.



Make use of industry training and on-site assistance from your vinyl supplier to ensure that your staff are well trained in all necessary skills.



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP



- Read about the **18 things to look out for on-site when installing vinyl floor**
- Find out more in our **technical manual**
- See our **Flooring contractor's/fitter's site and tools checklist**
- Technical training videos
 - External butterfly corner**
 - Scribing and rolling of sheeting**
 - Fitting sheeting**
 - Cove sheeting with internal butterfly corner**
 - Grooving and welding**
 - Moisture testing**
 - Fitting coved sheeting**
 - Expansion joint**
 - Cutting coves and fitting**
 - Common fitting mistakes**
 - Fitting clip top capping**
 - Common screeding mistakes**

08 Creating and keeping a skilled team

There are two main methods of up-skilling your team:

- Use skilled staff to train new staff: all the top flooring contractors use their experienced and skilled staff to train new staff. On-the-job training in real scenarios works best. Combine highly skilled people with new team members and ensure that the team works carefully so that training is efficient and effective.
- Take advantage of industry training: many suppliers offer free training. Make use of it wherever possible.

"Sometimes it's difficult to attend supplier training. If it is run during the week, it is time off-site for my guys and that costs me. If it is run on weekends, I need to pay my staff to come in and attend training. The best type of supplier training is when the supplier's highly-skilled technical staff will come to site (preferably at the beginning of a job) and work with my staff, teaching them as we go. This type of supplier training really works. Using this method also ensures that we get the job right, from the start"

what the installation experts say



■ Camaro Water Jet



PAUL'S TEAM

Paul started his own flooring-contract business eight years ago and it has been growing steadily. A large portion of his business is becoming vinyl-floor installations. He has just won a large tender for a supermarket in Benoni.

Paul has a small team of skilled fitters, but for this job he will need to increase his team size. Whilst his skilled and trained staff can assist the new fitters he will employ, he is concerned about time. The timelines on this job are very tight as the supermarket cannot afford to keep its doors closed for long.

Paul considers the other options for training his new staff. His vinyl supplier offers training at their premises one afternoon a week and on weekends, but Paul is worried that one afternoon a week will not be sufficient for the specific training that his team will need. It would also take them away from site which would cost him time and money. The weekend training means he would have to pay overtime to the new fitters (which is difficult in his small company) and he may actually need the weekend days to get this job done in time anyway.

Paul is hugely relieved when the vinyl supplier phones and offers to send their highly trained technical staff to his site for the first week of the job. They will train his new employees on-site, during the installation, and make sure the team gets it right, first time. The on-site assistance is cost-effective for Paul and his team, and allows them to deliver an excellent floor to the client.





■ Expona Flow PUR



■ NovoCore



“The flooring industry needs better regulation for skilled staff. They need to be properly trained, well paid and have a potential career path. This is one of the major challenges in our industry. It’s not easy to keep good staff, you need to treat them extremely well and you need to pay more than your competitors do”

“Keeping a skilled team is all about treating your staff well, paying well and giving them opportunities to grow”

“You have to be a company that people like to work for and where your staff feel valued and respected”

 **what the installation experts say**

 **TOP TIP**



09 Insourcing vs outsourcing

The decision to use only permanent staff, sub-contracted staff or a mixture of both is always a difficult one as there are pros and cons to each. Everyone has their own method of managing this and you will need to find what works for you.

Permanent staff mean you can ensure high-quality installations because your staff can be focused on the quality of the installation rather than on the amount of work done in a day. Sub-contractors are usually paid less and paid by the number of square metres completed per day, which often means quality becomes a secondary concern. But the risk with permanent staff is having to keep them busy and pay salaries even during quiet times.



"I only use permanent staff for vinyl installation. Using sub-contractors is too risky as quality is compromised and this can often cost me in the end when a re-do is necessary"

"I use a mixture of sub-contractors and permanent staff to help manage my costs. But when I use sub-contractors I always make sure one or two of my skilled permanent staff are on the team to

ensure that the quality of the installation is up to scratch, and I am on-site often - checking"

"My advice to a new flooring contractor would be to make sure you know how to do a good floor prep, then start by using sub-contractors as initially it will be difficult to afford your own permanent staff. Use a good sub-contractor, be on site all the time and make sure the job is done well. As you grow, bring in your own, young guys and train them up to your own standards. Don't take on staff with bad habits; rather employ young guys and teach them properly"


Regardless of which option you choose, being on site, being involved and delivering a high-quality installation are critical components of a successful job.



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP

A bouquet of flowers, including white baby's breath, pink and white daisies, and purple flowers, is wrapped in brown paper and sits on a floor with large, dark and light grey diamond-shaped tiles. A semi-transparent grey banner is overlaid across the middle of the image.

10 Advertising and creating a brand

“Advertising and marketing have never worked for our business. It’s all about doing a good job, word of mouth and relationships”

“Social media and digital marketing don’t seem to have any impact for us at present. We get work based on referrals. Make sure you have a good relationship with your suppliers so that they can recommend you for jobs”

“We get our work based on tenders submitted, price and our reputation in the industry - advertising and media coverage don’t work. Rather spend your money on good quality staff”

In time, ensuring that you do good work repeatedly will help you to gain industry referrals and meet industry requirements.

what the installation experts say





11 Building a successful flooring business

The importance of delivering good-quality installations is clear, but there are other aspects to running a flooring contractor's business that you need to consider and ensure are in place:

Managing your projects:

- Do not take on too much work at the expense of quality.
- Do not grow too big too soon.
- Be very involved and on-site at every project.
- Quotations and invoices must go out same day or at least within three days for big jobs.
- Specify your contracts very carefully.
- Get your deposit in up-front.
- Stay up-to-date with ways to manage your time productively. This fun and interesting **blog** may help.

- Try using a project-management software tool like **Workflowmax** to assist you.

Managing your finances:

This is a critical part of any business.

- When starting out, draw up a business plan and discuss this with your bank manager or future supplier with the aim of obtaining a credit facility. This can be difficult to achieve up-front so sometimes the best option is to request that your client cede payment directly to the supplier. This guarantees payment to the supplier and builds trust.
- Do your homework on your client. Check their credit worthiness and, if unsure, request payment before placing materials on site.
- Finances are about discipline: do not be tempted to spend more than you have and do not take unnecessary risks.
- Build up some cash-reserves in the good years if possible. This will help in the leaner years.

- Understand your margins and be aware of cash projections so you can sort out issues before they arrive on your desk.



Always remember that cash is king and manage your cash flow carefully. Two important tips are:

- 1. Invoice as the job finishes.*
- 2. Make sure that a team member who was on site is involved in the invoicing process and is available to clarify any queries from the client. This ensures prompt payment.*



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP





JACOB'S DILEMMA

Jacob was delighted when, within three months of each other, he was awarded the contracts for instalment of vinyl flooring at two major hospitals. He was very focused on getting the right teams on the job and getting the job done in time.

As both jobs were very large, he had to order a large amount of flooring from the supplier, who was providing the vinyl floor for both jobs. His client, a well-respected healthcare company, had excellent credit ratings and Jacob therefore did not ask them to pay for materials up-front.

Jacob has a sizable credit limit with his supplier, but given the size and scale of these two jobs, he has quickly reached this limit and suddenly can no longer order the additional flooring he needs. He is now having sleepless nights over this issue and wonders what he could have done differently.

Jacob should have done his homework on his calculations, costs and credit facility and realised that he was going to struggle with purchasing sufficient material. At that stage, he had three possible options for how to handle this situation:

- **Option 1:** Given the size of the order and his cash-flow limitations, Jacob could have talked to the building contractor who works for the reputable healthcare institution and requested payment for the material up-front. In return, he could have offered a small discount. This discount would probably have been less than the interest Jacob's bank is going to charge him on the loan he has been forced to take instead.
- **Option 2:** Jacob could have contacted the supplier up-front to explain the situation. He could then have requested 60-day terms for a period of three to six months. If he had offered to forfeit his settlement discount in lieu of the new terms, the supplier would have appreciated that he was willing to give from his side too in order to make the arrangement work for everyone.
- **Option 3:** Jacob could have been up-front with his client regarding his cash-flow limitations. If he guarantees top-quality workmanship, most clients will be willing to negotiate a way to handle the situation.

Building your relationships:

Relationships are critical in the flooring industry. Establish and maintain strong relationships with all industry stakeholders, including architects, building contractors, suppliers, sub-contractors and FITA.

Understanding your bill of quantities (BOQ):

Take time to learn how to accurately interpret a BOQ. Ask questions if you do not understand what is being asked. You can only submit an accurate quote and tender if you fully understand your BOQ.

This [link](#) is a useful starting point for understanding BOQs in SA.

Submitting successful tenders:

- Invest time in really understanding what a good tender is. Enlist the help of an expert, like a quantity surveyor, who has experience with tenders.
- Get your price right. Develop your own formula over time.

- Remember that if it is a big project, you can make money on the extras.
- Remember that your price needs to include waste.

Understanding the local and government legislation:

Spend time with local experts and make sure you understand all local legal and policy requirements, including BEE stipulations.



The more aspects of your business you get right from the very beginning, the more likely you are to be successful. Take time to get it right up-front, wherever possible.



what the installation experts say



TOP TIP



Conclusion

Being a successful flooring contractor is all about outstanding service, expertise, relationships and partnering. The diagram below summarises the important concepts that a flooring

contractor should understand in order to run a successful business.



Polysales would like to thank all the experts who were generous enough to share their knowledge, experience and advice with us during the compilation of this guide.



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