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SALES GROWTH CONTINUES AT INTERFLOOR



Gary Cowley

Interfloor experienced strong sales growth in the second half of 2010 as demand for their PU underlay gathered momentum. Their Tredaire Seventh Heaven PU consistently broke both sales and production records as retailers, wholesalers and contractors switched from competitor brands.

“We’ve been very pleased with the sales performance of our Tredaire Seventh Heaven PU underlays” says Gary Cowley, Interfloor’s sales director. “Since we commissioned our brand new, state of the art, production line in Dumfries last year we’ve seen a steady rise in demand from across the market. In the second half of 2010 this rate of growth shifted up a couple of gears and we’ve had to increase our output to keep pace with the surging demand.”

A recent survey of Interfloor’s retail customers shows that retailers appreciate the combination of strong branding, point of sale and the increased choice in thicknesses, densities, colour and applications. Gary Cowley points out that, “one of the main drivers of our PU sales growth has been the performance of the Seventh Heaven range. We’ve maintained Seventh Heaven as a genuine high density range at 110 kg/m³ even though some other brands appear to have reduced their densities by up to 10%. We’ve also introduced Contract 9 into our range, a 9mm ultra high density PU, ideal for contract, heavy domestic and double stick applications at 145 kg/m³.”

This recent addition extends the Tredaire PU range to six underlays: four Seventh Heaven products in Cosywalk (7mm, high density), Softwalk (9mm, high density), Dreamwalk (11mm, high density) and Contract 9 (9mm, ultra high density); plus two medium density products (at 98 kg/m³) in Brio (8mm) and Zest (10mm). All of the products are colour coded to aid identification and up-selling in store.

“We’ve made excellent progress, in a difficult market, in 2010. In the UK we’re now the number two in terms of PU sales but our goal is to be number one in the next 12 months and we believe that we now have in place the products, marketing and customer support to achieve that,” says Cowley.

This significant growth has required a major commitment in terms of product sampling. Interfloor produced over 200,000 samples of products last year, of which over 100,000 were A3 hanging samples. This is a truly staggering quantity of underlay sampling. To put it into perspective if all of these A3 samples were placed end to end they would be one and a half times taller than Mount Everest!

So what does the growth of Tredaire Seventh Heaven PU mean for Tredaire and Duralay rubber underlays? "We launched our Campaign for Real Underlay at the beginning of 2010. We wanted to re-focus attention on the considerable benefits of sponge and crumb rubber underlays. We're the only manufacturer that produces all three types of underlay so we think it puts us in a good position to recommend what we think is most appropriate for any domestic or contract application. The campaign features Mr Rubber and we've had a lot of fun with him. It's provided a platform to talk about rubber underlay in a different way – from adverts to sales tools and a web site – www.realunderlay.com. We've been delighted in the response from the trade to this campaign – we've now got more customers buying rubber underlay and we've seen excellent growth from the top of the range products such as Tredaire Colours Red and Duralay System 10," says Cowley.

"The most important thing for a retailer is not what the product is made of but what it can do for their customer, and how they can sell more of it. That's why we continue to invest in marketing tools that help the retailer to sell and up-sell the product. Our Profit Ability programme is well established in over 500 stores and it incorporates a superb point of sale underlay stand, so that the consumer can feel the benefits of underlay, plus consumer leaflets, samples, hanging boards and posters. We monitor the stores that use it and they sell about 10-15% more than stores that don't. You can't really ask for more than that," says Cowley.

2010 also saw a step change in marketing activity with new advertising campaigns for PU and rubber underlay backed up by a major investment in direct marketing. "We want to use all of the marketing tools at our disposal to get our message across. Last year saw a big increase in direct mail, telesales and even email activity. We plan to do more of this in 2011 but we're also talking continually to our customers to find the right mix of communications that helps them. Our territory managers are the key to this. They're in regular contact with the customers and are there to help them choose the right products and provide all of the product, sales support and marketing back-up they need. Overall market conditions will remain challenging for a while but we're excited at the opportunities we have and we intend to make the most of them."