

MSI expands into LVT for full-service flooring

The demand for LVT flooring continues to rise, and MSI has evolved with the times by expanding its product offering to include the popular category alongside its tried-and-true tile assortment. According to the company, its new LVT offering is meant to support the changing needs of its retail partners while tapping the potential of a growing category to support the company's growth. Megan Salzano, senior associate editor of *Floor Covering News*, sat down with MSI president Raj Shah to discuss the company's new direction.

What was the driving force behind MSI's decision to expand into LVT?

MSI expanded into LVT to help our customers better serve the consumer. With the growth of LVT, consumers have started demanding the product from flooring retailers. Our retail customers have been looking for a simplified way to capture this demand. MSI was able to put together a great line—Everlife—of rigid and flexible LVT at affordable prices that can be bundled with all MSI products including tile, stone, mosaics, etc. It was a win-win for the consumer, the retailer and MSI.

How will this new offering support your independent retail partners?

I think our biggest differentiator is empowering flooring retail sales associates with "hero" products that

sell themselves on look, price and availability, and to offer creative merchandising and a concentration of hero products that are easy to browse and simple to make a decision on. In addition, MSI is continuing to build many tools that will produce demand for the customer. Our augmented reality app, which allows you to see LVT on your floor with two simple clicks, as well as our videos, etc., are receiving very positive reviews in the marketplace. This demand will make it even easier for retailers to close sales.

How does this move support MSI's overall expansion goals?

Everlife LVT is an integral part of MSI's flooring future. This helps round out MSI's product offering by playing in the largest growth category within the flooring business.



Raj Shah, president, MSI



MSI's LVT Cyrus collection in whitfield gray

We are so thankful to our customers who have responded to our launch with overwhelming positivity.

Has this changed your go-to-market strategy or business model in any way?

Fortunately, we have already set up the infrastructure to support the LVT program at a mass scale through our existing tile infrastruc-

ture. The addition of LVT adds convenience and ease to our customers purchasing from us.

How do you plan to evolve the company's branding, marketing, etc., to reflect its now broader product range?

MSI has recently undergone a re-branding effort to reflect the continued evolution and adaption that we embarked on. MSI Stone is now MSI Surfaces, which more accurately reflects who we are. One thing that has not changed is our tag line of being Affordable and Accessible. At the core of this evolution lies advanced technology, artificial intelligence, augmented reality and big data—all of which are designed to improve the ability to serve our customers' needs to a level not expected of a typical flooring distributor.

How have you leveraged your expertise in tile and stone to develop your LVT offering?

Our customers have taught us how we should think about design, and in our dedication to serve them we are honored to be the largest flooring distributor in America. This not only helps us to reach our customers in a broader and more cost-effective way, it also provides us the ability to react to what the consumers want, faster. We use all our

learnings from countertops, walls floors and landscapes to develop and refine our Everlife LVT line.

How will you approach the resilient category from a design perspective?

We approach design from a holistic perspective. Floor covering is never decided in a vacuum; it is designed in the context of wall, countertop, cabinet and paint designs above it. We not only have vast, real-time data on all surfacing trends through our sales, nationwide distribution and sourcing presence in 36 countries, we have a full staff of professional designers who study the data to develop flooring covering designs—color, texture, size—that provide compatibility to the most popular design elements in the home.

Do you expect MSI to further expand in the future?

MSI has grown every year for the last four decades, and we anticipate and prepare for that growth continuing into the future. Ultimately, the direction of our evolution will be dictated by what our customers demand. Our customers have given us tremendous opportunity to serve them at a national level and continue to be avid supporters of MSI on our new product launches. We are energized by this support and will strive to improve and start fresh every day.



MSI's LVT Glenridge collection in elmwood ash