

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Green Scene

EQcountertops Offer Green and Affordable Options
Page 2

Service Update

VT Industries Streamlines with Purchase of State-of-the-art Super line for Two Facilities
Page 3

Fabricator's Forum

Clingingsmith Brothers Get Creative
Page 3

In the News

John Muller Joins VT Industries
Page 4

CounterTopics Trivia

Take this challenge for a chance to win a VT prize. Page 4

PERSPECTIVES



By Trisha Clausen-Schmitt
Vice President of Corporate Marketing

2010 has begun with a bang here at VT Industries. After many months of planning, we are now moving forward with some very exciting initiatives and campaigns that will continue to leverage our brand and promote our extensive fabricator network and our unique product mix.

In 2009, VT Industries launched a new print media campaign that blended beautiful, scenic landscapes with VT postformed laminate countertops, to call attention to the environmentally friendly aspects of our product. In 2010, VT Industries continued the campaign with the addition of two new ads for the series. The first ad features a serene prairie setting and the color inspiration comes from Wilsonart's Coral Roca (4839) laminate. The second ad depicts a rocky stream and waterfall and was inspired by Formica's Blue Storm (3467) laminate.

This year, VT Industries will be attending numerous trade shows, both local and national in scope. The two national trade shows VT will exhibit at are the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show (KBIS) held in Chicago on April 16-18 and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Convention, held in Miami on June 10-12.

We have once again partnered with *Kitchen and Bath Design News* (KBDN) to bring the Profitable Showroom Design and Profiting by Design in the New Economy seminars to eight cities throughout the United States in

continued on page 2

Carousel Court Senior Apartments Has Charm

Evansville, Indiana is an all-American city located in southwestern Indiana. With small town charm and hearty Midwestern values, this city was built on a foundation of hard work. Counter Design Company, Inc. is a family owned and employee driven casework company that takes great pride in their products and services. This dedication to quality, service, and dependability is evident in the Carousel Court Senior Apartments job they recently completed.



Kitchens at the Carousel Court Senior Apartments features Formica's Sandstone (7265-77) laminate in a honed finish with a Valencia edge.

The Carousel Court Senior Apartment community is Evansville's newest residential option for people ages 55 and older. This brand-new 37-unit complex features attractive upgrades, proximity to dining, medical facilities, and shopping. Some of the designer touches incorporated into the spaces include

tile floors in the kitchen and bathrooms, custom, Amish-built cabinetry, matching tile backsplash, and VT postformed laminate countertops with a premium edge profile.

The countertops feature a Valencia edge profile. The full wrap ogee edge profile is paired with Formica's Sandstone (7265-77) laminate in a honed finish. Counter Design Company, Inc. fabricated the tops for the kitchen areas as well as tops for an office/computer area in each unit. The office/computer area tops features the same Sandstone laminate as the kitchen, but in a matte finish, to achieve a smooth surface ideal for writing upon.

Ultimately, the kitchen area is a very attractive area that tenants will find real value in. The upgraded finished products and quality of fabrication of these products are what make this community unique.

ABOUT COUNTER DESIGN COMPANY, INC.

Counter Design Company, Inc. prides themselves on their ability to provide exceptional products and service. They fabricate VT Fine Laminate Countertops for several key sectors in the Evansville, Indiana market including kitchen and bath dealers, commercial, home builders, home centers, and multi-family housing. Founded in 1976, Counter Design Company, Inc. has grown from a two-man operation to a nearly 50 employees. Owner, Alvin Tretter explains, "Our Company's success is a direct result of the hard work and talent our employees bring to the table on a daily basis. We have a great sense of pride not only for the service but the products we provide our customers, which is why we've partnered with VT Industries."↔

DESIGN TRENDS

Homebuilders Take Second Look at Laminate Countertops

2009 was a record year in many respects, one being that for the first time in nearly 30 years, the average single-family home size declined. In 2008, the average home size was 2,520 square feet. These huge houses were coined "McMansions". When the housing bubble burst, home values plummeted and the number of new home starts drastically fell off.

Without the promise of 100% financing, multiple mortgages, and easy money, people are reevaluating their budgets. This in turn translates to smaller, more efficient homes. When builders were surveyed about their plans for 2010 by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), 96% responded that they would build smaller homes and 95% said that they would build lower priced models.

continued on page 2



continued from page 1

2010. These seminars are a great opportunity for our customers to gain insight from nationally renowned Kitchen and Bath experts on a variety of topics including, successful showroom design and emerging design and product trends. Seminars will be held in the following cities: Miami, New York, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Boston, Baltimore/Washington D.C., Chicago and Atlanta. If interested in attending the seminars free of charge, contact your territory sales manager for more details.

At the end of 2009, VT Industries launched a "Fan Page" on Facebook®. The fan page is a great tool that VT will continue to use in 2010 to promote our products, share information, and network with people who represent a wide variety of demographics. In addition to Facebook, VT will also be exploring various social media outlets as well as blogging on industry related blogs to spread the word about the features and benefits of VT Fine Laminate Countertops.

We look to 2010 with a new sense of optimism and we look forward to growing our partnership over the course of the year.↔

Homebuilders Take Second Look

continued from page 1

How does this trend translate to the laminate countertop business? According to Eliot Nusbaum, Executive Editor of Home Design for *Better Homes and Gardens* (BHG) magazine, people are more willing to trade off on some things in order to get the things they want. For example, if the homeowner wants the high-end tile or stone, they may be willing to consider other less-expensive options for their countertops or wall treatments. So people that previously would have demanded only high-end countertop materials now are considering other options. This is a great opportunity to reintroduce buyers to the benefits of VT's Fine Laminate Countertops with premium edge profiles paired with premium laminates.

Homebuilders are taking a second look at laminate countertops to not only value-engineer the retail price points of the homes they build, but also to provide their clients with products that have high-perceived value but are still affordable. Todd Vezina, director of Residential Sales for Formica Corporation notes, "With Formica's new 180FX product, the large-scale granite patterns not only show well in model homes, but get the attention of the value conscious homebuyers who find this

new generation of laminate countertops not only stylish but affordable. At Formica Corporation, we recognize this as a great opportunity for VT Industries' customers to get out and talk to the builders at the local, regional, and national levels to promote themselves and their premium edges and laminates." The Barcelona, Valencia and Geneva edge profiles are a wonderful way to re-define the way builders view laminate countertops. The advances in laminate and laminate countertops over the past few years have been astounding. The high end looks that people aspire to are achievable with the textured laminates that are available in the market today.

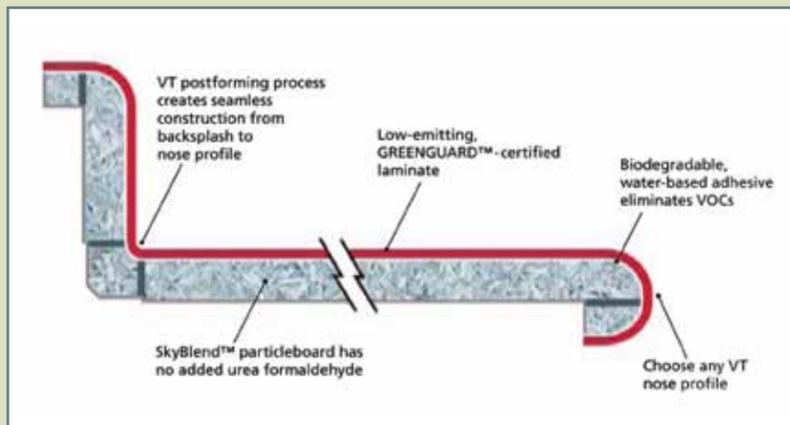
Richard Wylie, sales manager- National Accounts for Wilsonart International, has also seen an increase in interest among builders for affordable alternative countertop products for kitchen and baths. Their clients are looking for ways to build a home and stay within their budget. "Wilsonart has continued to invest in advancing the technology of laminate. We continue to push the design envelope as our customers seek the look of aspirational surfacing materials at an affordable price point.↔

EQcountertops Offer Green and Affordable Options

The environmental benefits of laminate countertops were highlighted in a recent article in *The Washington Post*, "How To Go Green When Choosing Countertops." Mentioned in the article are some sustainable options to look for when selecting a countertop including, recycled materials, no added urea formaldehyde adhesives/resins, and GREENGUARD Certification. These are all features and benefits of EQcountertops, along with affordability, compared to other green countertop options.

VT FINE LAMINATE COUNTERTOPS HAVE MANY ECO OPTIONS TO FIT MANY LEVELS OF SUSTAINABLE BUILDING.

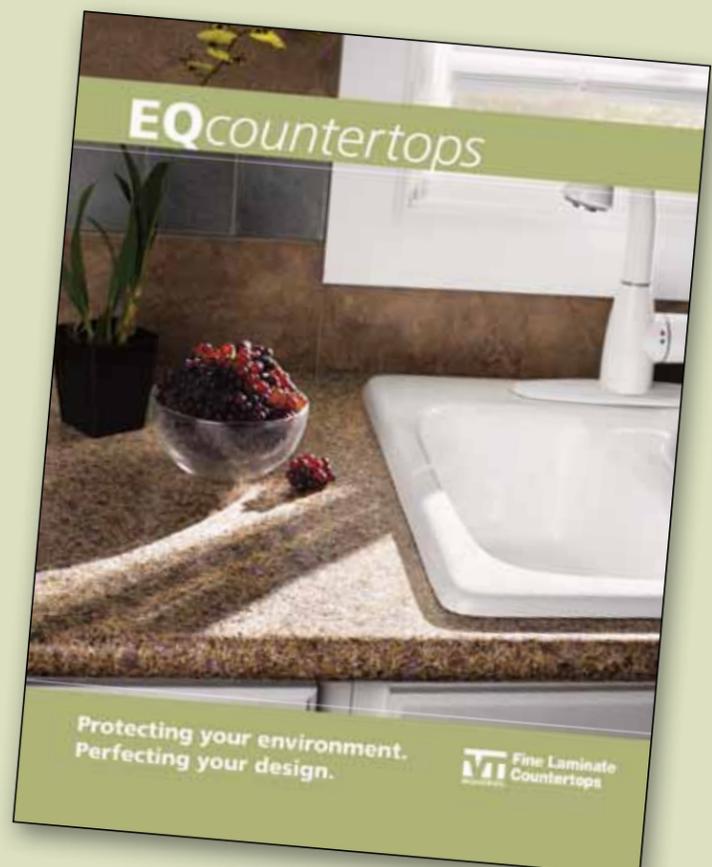
Both high-pressure decorative laminate (HPDL) and particleboard substrates contain recycled materials from renewable wood sources. EQcountertops, feature particleboard that is composed of 100% pre-consumer recycled material, and represents 91% of the countertop's construction by weight. Laminate is comprised of recycled and non-recycled components. The article breaks down the percentage for Wilsonart brand laminate as composed of 28% post-consumer recycled material. According to other leading manufacturers Web sites, Formica contains 6%-14% pre- and post-consumer recycled materials and Pionite contains between 16-21% pre-consumer recycled materials.



Indoor air quality is a concern for all, whether in the home, your children's schools, or the workplace, and often referenced in green building programs. HPDL countertops are manufactured using composite wood substrates that often contain urea-formaldehyde resins. These resins emit formaldehyde emissions that have been known to cause discomfort and health problems when found at high levels in indoor environments. To decrease the emission of formaldehyde into indoor environments, green building programs promote the use of no added urea-formaldehyde composite wood and adhesives. EQcountertops are manufactured with no added urea formaldehyde particleboard and adhesives.

GREENGUARD Certification is another approach to providing healthy indoor air. Certified products are quarterly tested for multiple volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that could have an effect on indoor air quality, including formaldehyde. Many environmental claims are based on manufacturer declarations; GREENGUARD Certified products are third party tested, for precise, unbiased claims. Both EQcountertops, and HPDL from all major distributors are GREENGUARD for Children & SchoolsSM Certified, meeting stringent emission limits. Testing information is available at www.greenguard.org.

As defined in this article, VT Fine Laminate Countertops have many eco options to fit many levels of sustainable building. Whether following LEED or NAHB National Green Home Building standards or your own green definition, VT countertops made with high pressure decorative laminates are manufactured to meet your environmental and budget requirements.↔



VT Industries EQcountertops brochure.

For more information contact your VT Territory Sales Manager, Customer Service Representative or to request an EQcountertops Brochure, visit WWW.VTINDUSTRIES.COM/COUNTERTOPS/EQCOUNTERTOPS

VT Industries Streamlines with Purchase of State-of-the-art Superline for Two Facilities

VT Industries recently purchased and designed state-of-the-art Superline manufacturing equipment for two of their manufacturing facilities, which is streamlining the production process. VT's manufacturing facilities in Montreal, Quebec Canada as well as the Rome, Georgia production facility were the first two locations to install the Superline equipment. "The Superline equipment has been up and running at our Canadian production facility for approximately six months and on February 1, 2010 VT commissioned the Superline in Georgia," explains Bruce Campbell, Vice President Operations - VT Fine Laminate Countertops.

VT is excited to offer its customers the added benefits that the Superline technology affords. The new equipment allows for a 30% increase in production speed over the previous equipment. Additionally, the equipment is computer automated making it faster at adapting to the change in varying countertop styles, widths, and profiles. Combining these two unique features results in a more responsive and reactive manufacturing process which is beneficial to VT's fabricator customers when they have last minute changes or additions to their order. The new equipment also offers a more consistent product as a result of more process control which is achieved through the computer automation.

"VT INDUSTRIES IS CONTINUING TO INVEST CAPITAL INTO ALL OF OUR BUSINESS UNITS EVEN IN A DOWN ECONOMY. WE ARE FOCUSED ON PROJECTS THAT IMPROVE QUALITY, INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, IMPROVE SAFETY AND ADD VALUE FOR OUR CUSTOMERS,"

Two inherent characteristics of the Superline equipment is that there is no set-up scrap associated with a change in style, width, or profile, and it is a safer piece of equipment to operate. The equipment produces a quality top and eliminates the need for a "test top" to be produced in order to calibrate the machine. This cuts down on scrap and downtime, two areas of inefficiency. Safety is also much improved over the previous production equipment. Features like an automatic sheet feeder and an improved dust collection system result in improved employee safety because of the decrease in physical strain due to handling the tops and increased indoor air quality within the production facility.

"VT Industries is continuing to invest capital into all of our business units even in a down economy. We are focused on projects that improve quality, increase productivity, improve safety and add value for our customers," Rick Liddell, senior vice president – Fine Laminate Countertop Division explains. "The new Superline technology is only part of the continued commitment that we have to keep our production plants modern and capable to meet the market demand of the future. We are committed to the long-term positioning and growth of postformed laminate countertops in the market."↔



The Superline's postforming equipment is shown above.



This material handling equipment at the end of the Superline helps reduce the risk for employee injury due to lifting and straining.



The enhanced dust collection system is shown at the miter cutting station on the Superline.

FABRICATOR'S FORUM

Clingingsmith Brothers Get Creative



End table featuring a postformed laminate countertop base.

Brothers Mark and Tim Clingingsmith, VT PRO Team members, and co-owners of Clingingsmith Countertop Company in Quincy, IL both enjoy the satisfaction and pride of craftsmanship that is a result of their woodworking and furniture building hobby. The same qualities that have made their company successful, such as attention to detail and creativity, are utilized when they design and build furniture.

"When we have downtime at the shop, we like to get creative and build," explains Mark. One day, Tim was playing around with miter pieces and realized that they would make a great base for an end table he was constructing. The base of his end table is made from four mitered pieces

of VT Industries' postformed countertop with the Valencia edge profile. The tabletop has a self edge that Tim fabricated and matches the Formica Antique Mascarello laminate that was used on the base.

The leg of the table is another product of creative thinking. It is actually a concrete form that has been clad with a complimentary wood grain laminate. The end table is on display in their showroom and they have received several compliments on the piece.↔

John Muller Joins VT Industries

VT Industries is proud to announce that John Muller has once again joined VT Industries as territory sales manager for the following territories: eastern Texas, western Louisiana, Kansas, and western Missouri. John will be assuming a portion of the sales territory previously covered by Tommy Coleman, as well as his current territory which he maintained as an independent sales representative for VT through his company Muller and Associates.

John has a long-standing history with VT Industries. John began his career with VT in 1980 as territory sales manager. In 1995, John started his Kansas City based building materials company, Muller & Associates, where he also served as an independent sales representative for VT Industries through November of 2009. "John has extensive knowledge about VT's products as well as first-hand experience and will transition smoothly into his new position," explains Chris Schlabach, national sales manager, VT Fine Laminate Countertops.

John is currently getting acquainted with his new customers and has recently relocated to the State of Texas.↔



John Muller, Territory Sales Manager.

Kitchen and Bath Outlet Center Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Larry and Theresa Krotz, co-owners of Kitchen and Bath Outlet Center, located in Alton, IL will celebrate 25 years of business in 2010. To celebrate this momentous achievement, Larry and Theresa plan to refresh their showroom. "We plan to update seven different displays on our showroom floor," explains Larry, "We are going with a more upscale theme with our new display areas." When the display areas are complete, they will have an open-

house event and promote their store's new look through local advertisement. Over the past 25 years, Larry and Theresa have opened three additional branches of their Kitchen and Bath Outlet Centers; two stores in Saint Louis, Missouri and one store in Fairview Heights, Illinois. In the last decade they've sold their subsidiary branches and continue to operate their retail and fabrication business in Alton, IL.↔

**CONGRATULATIONS ON
25 GREAT YEARS OF BUSINESS
FROM YOUR PARTNERS AT
VT INDUSTRIES!**

COUNTERTOPICS TRIVIA QUESTION

Congratulations to Sue Mozcynski, Expeditor at The Home Depot in Norfolk, Virginia – who knew that VT Industries has an exclusive sponsorship with the "Boyce on Building" blog on builder online.

QUESTION: TRUE OR FALSE? VT INDUSTRIES WILL BE HOSTING EIGHT KITCHEN & BATH DESIGN NEWS (KBDN) SEMINARS IN 2010?

Answer this question based on this issue of *CounterTopics* for a chance to win a VT prize. View the newsletter on VT's Web site at www.vtindustries.com/trivia and submit the correct answer by filling in your contact information electronically by April 15, 2010. Limit one entry per person, and one winning per year.

VT employees and sales representatives are excluded from this promotion.



As part of our commitment to enhance your VToonline® experience through ongoing training and education, we invite you to participate in VToonline by submitting your questions or comments to: MGebers@vtindustries.com.

Our interactive team of experts will diagnose your symptoms and offer their prescription for online relief.

QUESTION:
What is the 'Specials' tab used for?

ANSWER:
This tab can be used when placing orders for all non-standard countertops, accessories or factory order laminates.



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