

## Large-Format Tile Installations



// Large-format tiles are gaining popularity because they present a much cleaner and open visual. Photo: Fishman.

Keeping up with the steady stream of new and better products that are introduced into the flooring installation marketplace can be challenging for many flooring contractors and installers. Industry veteran Greg Schmitz, senior business manager, Fishman Flooring Solutions, shares his thoughts on increasingly popular advanced tiles and some of the important considerations for installing them, including some newly introduced products that facilitate their installation.

### FCI: Let's start with a basic question. How would you define advanced tiles and how long have they been on the market?

Schmitz: When I think of advanced tiles, I think of large-format tiles that are defined as having at least one side that is 15 inches or longer. I would also include in this category gauged porcelain tiles, which could be as large as five feet by 10 feet in size. Large-format tiles, or LFTs as they're called, have been on the market for some time, but, from my vantage point, they have become more popular in the past five to 10 years.

### FCI: Where are large-format tiles typically used? How do they bring value to end users?

Schmitz: Large-format tiles are used in almost any application. You can find them in commercial buildings and homes used on both interior and exterior floors and walls. End users value them because they present a much cleaner and open visual. They're also easier to clean and maintain than other types of tiles, because there are fewer grout joints to manage.



// In order to successfully install large-format tile, Schmitz says installers must ensure that the substrate is flat and smooth. Photo: Fishman.

### FCI: You mentioned that large-format tiles are becoming more popular. Why do you think that is?

Schmitz: There is an increasing awareness of the value of large-format tiles, which I just mentioned. Also, while I haven't seen any hard data, I think it's safe to assume that lower interest rates, which allow people to buy larger homes or make nicer upgrades to their current homes, coupled with a desire by many people to buy new homes in less populated areas because of the pandemic, are driving growth in sales of large-format tile.

### FCI: What advice would you give to flooring installation contractors with respect to properly preparing the substrate when installing large-format tiles?

Schmitz: The single most important step in successfully installing large-format tile, especially large gauged porcelain tile, is to ensure that the substrate is flat and smooth to prevent problems like cracking, hollow spots and the tiles not lining up properly. One product that I think is excellent for this is Mapei's Planitop 330 for patching and leveling interior and exterior floors and walls. It's easy to use. You just mix it with water and it's ready for tile in about 90 minutes.

### FCI: What tips can you give to installers when it comes to selecting and using adhesives and mortars for large-format tiles?

Schmitz: I think three things are very important when it comes to adhesives and mortars. Only use those that are recommended for large-format tile; back butter if a full contact mortar is not being used; and use the recommended trowel notch for the size of the tile being installed.

Time is money in today's flooring installation marketplace, so installers do their best to avoid back buttering. Mapei's new Keraflex line of products are easy troweling, high-bond mortars that are excellent for large-format tiles. They can achieve nearly full transfer of mortar, so back buttering isn't necessary, and they cure within three to four hours. For gauged porcelain tile, which is thinner than standard tile, Mapei recently introduced Ultrabond ECO GPT adhesive, a single component, non-sag adhesive that is easy to trowel.



// Greg Schmitz, senior business manager, Fishman Flooring Solutions. Photo: Fishman.

### FCI: In your opinion, what are the best grouts for advanced tiles and how should they be used?

Schmitz: One size doesn't fit all when it comes to grouts. It's really important to select a grout based on the application. For example, special grouts are necessary to protect against the enzyme cleaners typically used to maintain the floors in commercial kitchens.

Installers have several options when it comes to grouts. There are ready mixed grouts, which are very easy to use, rapid setting grouts and epoxy grouts. And some installers still choose to use standard cement sanded and non-sanded grouts.

www.progressprofiles.com

**The customizable system for the modern shower design.**

COVERINGS 2021 ORLANDO FL  
JULY 7-9, 2021  
BOOTH 3720

**PROSHOWER SYSTEM**

Showers have become the focus of modern bathroom design. Progress Profiles has always paid attention to customers' requests and installers' needs, creating exclusive solutions such as PROSHOWER SYSTEM. Proshower System Drain is a low profile shower drain, combining ease of install, adaptability to existing plumbing, functionality and design, that allows any installer to build the dream shower project for the North American market. The system is composed by several elements as the waterproofing PROFOIL MEMBRANE, the Pre-sloped Wedges different shower drains and a series of profiles to finish your project down to the last detail. The desired shower slope is attained using a PRE-SLOPED Wedge with a 2% slope that facilitates tile installation by providing an optimal pitch for efficient water drain.

North America Headquarters  
Progress Profiles America Inc.  
4 Midway Boulevard, Suite 100  
Randolph, New Jersey 07869 U.S.A.  
Tel: 973 584 2620  
Fax: 973 584 2627  
ppa@progressprofiles.com  
www.progressprofiles.com

Corporate Headquarters  
Progress Profiles Inc.  
4000 Highway 101, Suite 100  
Lafayette, CA 94501 U.S.A.  
Tel: 925 255 2015  
www.progressprofiles.com

Download on the App Store  
GET IT ON Google Play

PROSHOWER LINEAR DRAIN BASE  
PROSHOWER LINEAR DRAIN BASE OFF-CENTER  
PROSHOWER LINEAR DRAIN BASE POLY-PRO-FLINE  
PROSHOWER LINEAR DRAIN TOP  
SLOPED SHOWER PANEL  
2% SLOPE  
PITCHED SHOWER CURB  
PROFOIL PANEL  
PROFOIL  
PROBAND 150  
PROBAND FIX  
PROSHOWER PROFILE  
PROSHOWER PROFILE WALL  
PROSHOWER PROFILE FRONT  
PROSHOWER PROFILE GLASS

36 YEARS OF INNOVATION

PROGRESS PROFILES & SYSTEMS

### FCI: What things should installers consider when sealing advanced tile floors and walls?

Schmitz: Again, one size doesn't fit all. The selection of a sealer depends on the type of tile. For porous natural stone tile floors or unglazed porcelain tile, for example, a penetrating sealer that will enhance color and allow maximum protection against staining and UV light should be used. If there is any doubt about which sealer is best for a particular type of floor, installers should contact the tile manufacturer.

### FCI: How about maintenance? What advice should flooring contractors give to end-users in terms of maintaining advance tile floors?

Schmitz: Tile manufacturers have specific maintenance instructions for their tiles. The best flooring contractors make sure that they explain these maintenance procedures to end users and give them copies of the instructions.

### FCI: Where can installers go to learn more about the products used to install advanced tile floors?

Schmitz: Manufacturers of setting materials and mortars are great sources of product information and many of them offer training at their facilities, at flooring contractors' places of business and, in today's coronavirus world, virtually by hosting webinars. There are also very good videos on manufacturers' websites and on YouTube.