

IFTI's Company Story

By Lee Eliseian, CEO

Deep roots in the flooring business

During the early sixties, my father started a carpeting business in the San Francisco Bay Area. It was a family business with strong work ethic and creative technicians; however they lacked business and management skills.

In the late sixties, my father's business burned to the ground. With little money and no insurance, he was forced to close his business. Looking for a simpler life, he moved to Kenai, Alaska and began installing floor coverings for others as an independent contractor. He would always say to me, "See! You need to learn to work with your *head*, not your *back*, to *do it right*."

In the mid-seventies, I went to Alaska to work with my dad, helping him install floor coverings. Shortly after working with my dad, a job opportunity presented itself in California. I accepted the job and was hired as an apprentice with a large union floor-covering contracting company. The apprenticeship played a key role in my life; through this experience I decided to make flooring my career. During my training, I took the time to attend installation classes to further enhance my technical skills.

A new specialization

In the early eighties, after receiving a California State Contractors License, I started a small flooring company in the Bay Area. Recognizing the need for an academic understanding of business, I spent my evenings in night classes and business seminars. I thought that if I could learn enough in all areas I could "*do it right*."

The business was developing nicely as a local commercial floor-covering contracting company. We were well organized and operated systematically. We understood the need to continually develop, implement and follow systems, processes and procedures that worked. We strived to constantly "*do it right*" by operating in a predictable, professional, organized, and efficient manner.

In the late eighties, one of our customers, a local retail chain store, contacted us regarding a moisture-related flooring failure. It was the second time they had experienced the pain of a flooring fail in the same location. They asked us to help them resolve the matter. We agreed to work with them towards a resolution, while at the same time completing certification programs for a particular moisture remediation system. We diligently applied this system and installed a new vinyl tile floor in their problematic store. As a result, the concrete slab moisture problem was corrected and the new tile flooring remained intact.

After that experience we became *specialty contractors*, correcting floor failures relating to concrete slab moisture problems, which differentiated us from our competition. Because of our inherent drive to "*do it right*," we became factory-trained certified applicators of several (more advanced) concrete remediation systems.

Becoming the leaders in concrete moisture

In the mid-nineties, I attended the PRSM Association conference (an association that represents retail maintenance/ operations executives and vendors dedicated to advancing industry awareness of retail facilities maintenance), and an amazing opportunity presented itself.

As I introduced myself and the company you could see the collective uninterested eyes glazing over as they glanced at their watches, undoubtedly thinking, here is another local flooring vendor with the same boring story. However, when I got to the part of the company being qualified to diagnose and resolve concrete slab moisture problems that cause flooring failures, it was astonishing to see how many heads turned in surprise.

After the meeting, I spoke with several retail executives about unresolved moisture-related flooring failures they were encountering in some of their stores nationwide. We talked it over and agreed to help them resolve their concrete slab moisture problems.

That's when the light went on! What a great opportunity to **pioneer a solution** for a segment of the construction industry that was in tremendous pain with no solution in sight! All I had to do was to figure out a way to ***“do it right.”***

First, we set out to gain a better understanding of concrete and the root causes of flooring failures. We did this to enhance our “marketability,” and to provide complete and accurate diagnostic services and remediation solutions. Through our research we found that it was one of the biggest unresolved nationwide flooring installation problems the construction industry experienced. The heart of the matter is as follows: With the advent of rapid changes within the construction industry — i.e., the loss of asbestos as an ingredient of flooring material, the loss of solvents from adhesives, increased use of water to allow easier placement of concrete and fast track construction schedules — U.S. moisture-related floor covering failure claims exceed \$1 billion every year.

It all leads to IFTI

In 1997, after receiving training and certifications to perform concrete moisture testing and hard surface flooring inspections, I created IFTI — Independent Floor Testing and Inspection Inc. to address this opportunity in concrete moisture.

In 2004, my local flooring company was sold and all of our efforts and resources were focused on developing IFTI to its fullest potential.

And now, having an established client base of national retail chains stores, we have become North America's Specialist in Concrete Slab Moisture Testing.