



President's Message

Revitalizing our Membership

By WIA President Mike DiGilio, C.P.

The dictionary defines “revitalize” as the act of giving new life or vigor to something. As I sit here in the snow, ice, and near-zero temps of Chicago this January, I think about the WIA and revitalization. The WIA was formed in the 1970s to give a voice to wallcovering installers. We remain the only brick-and-mortar organization for professional installers, and now we’re worldwide association.

A few years ago, the WIA Board of Directors recognized that if we were going to survive, we needed to make some changes. So, we took action. We changed our name and logo. We changed our management company to one that better suited our needs. We updated our website. We hired a marketing firm to promote us. Our conventions grew from 2-day events to 3-day events. We developed pre-convention educational specialty seminars. We did all these things and our membership liked it all.

I attended the Minneapolis, Minnesota Chapter’s “meet and greet” held at Hirschfield’s Design center on January 16, 2019. There were about 25 to 30 people in attendance. Three-quarters of them were non-members. At least four had apprentices, and one had two apprentices. The event had a lot to offer. There was a talk about what the design center has to offer installers. The representative from Thibaut discussed their wallpaper products. There was a presentation on liner papers and another on installing commercial vinyl. The chapter provided dinner. Central Region Director Susan Macuna talked about the benefits of joining the WIA.

The “meet and greet” was a great way to see what we were all about in-person. The attendees were excited about what we do. Apprentices and professionals both sought educational opportunities, expressing excitement about future meetings and continued learning. It was a great night.

Thanks to everyone who was involved for putting it on and to the continued success of that chapter.

The event got me thinking. Anyone who has ever been to a convention, workshop, or March Madness knows the great value of in-person meetings. That led to thought about “revitalizing” our membership: I think “meet-and-greet” nights would do very well. That doesn’t mean only the chapters should do this. Any area could manage one.

I’d like to call upon all our members to begin on planning meet-and-greet events. If you are an installer member of a chapter, plan one for your chapter. If you are an at-large member and have installers in your city or town, plan one. If you have installers in your state or tristate area, plan one. We’ll help you. The WIA will provide you with an outline of a timetable to put it all together. We’ll promote you on Facebook, Instagram, and the WIA website.

Resources are available. Denver has a design center, so engage them to help. Houston has many individual installers over a broad area, so plan one for a Saturday. Nashville has wanted to start a chapter for some time now, so get them all together. March Madness is coming. Let’s promote all these events as “meet-and-greets.” Let’s revitalize our members by revitalizing our membership through growth. ■

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WIA Chapter Celebrates Christmas in January

With installers scrambling to fulfill a crazy schedule of end-of-year projects, the Boston Chapter decided to hold its annual holiday party in January – after the holidays. The plan worked and 13 chapter members gathered for an evening of camaraderie, football and more than enough wonderful food. Melanie Harvey hosted the party and everyone brought something to share. ■



Back row from left to right: David “Cody” Morse, Barry Blanchard, John Golden, Greg Kahler, Don Ebbett, Melanie Harvey, and Mark White. Front row from left to right: Normand Ste. Marie, Warren Reeb, Sandy Coppolino, Tracy Ebbett, Sarah Smyth, and John Smyth.



Wallcovering
Installers
Association

New Members

New Members September – January 2019

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Smart Steps to Managing Your Digital Presence

With Kelly Alexander Millar, Kelley & Co.

Over the past 25 years, it's become a truism that the Internet is here to stay and every business needs a digital presence. A company's website and social media often serve the first interaction a potential customer has with your business. It becomes the place where existing customers go to find your contact information, see what you're doing, and learn more about your business. Therefore, managing the multifaceted aspects of your digital presence is crucial to maintaining your professional reputation.

Visibility

In order to build your business, potential clients need to be able to find you. People being essentially lazy, won't scour internet search engine results beyond a page or maybe two. Lori Randall Stradtman illustrates this with a joke in her book *Online Reputation Management for Dummies: Where do you hide a dead body?* The answer: On the third page of Google results.

Search engine optimization (SEO) proves key in the effort to rise in search engine rankings. Be aware of "white hat" and "black hat" techniques for improving your company's ranking. Harkening to those old westerns in which the hero wore a white hat and the villain wore a black hat, seek out companies that use benign (but still savvy) methods to boost awareness of your business. Fees for such service can easily exceed \$5,000; however, Fiverr offers a wide array of freelancers who offer

low cost white hat SEO. Some companies like BrandYourself.com offer free or low cost online tutorials for the DIY contingent.

Reputation

Google yourself. Seriously. What you find may surprise, shock, or even dismay you. The joke or rant you posted five years or five weeks ago may come back to haunt you, because anything posted is public. Released into the wild, you no longer have control. The old adage of posting nothing that would offend your grandmother serves as an excellent rule of thumb.

Not all negative comments are bad news. Some will enhance your credibility. When it comes to business, use the opportunity of a negative comment to address that unhappy customer's problem. This action shows two things: 1) you understand and will respond to a customer's issues, which shows you care; and, 2) those positive reviews aren't just from friends and family who are obligated to say something nice about you – they're from real customers.

(Continued on next page)



Digital Presence (from previous page)

Fight serious problems like past legal issues or authoritative articles that say negative things about you (personally or about your business) with services that offer reputation management. For busy professionals who have neither the time nor the digital expertise to remediate an unflattering online reputation, Business.com offers a list of reputable vendors who can wipe your slate clean.

Of course, the best way to build your online reputation is to do it yourself through the regular addition of good content and optimized profiles.

Those who attended the WIA Convention in Denver may have seen Kelley Alexander Millar's presentation regarding online reputation management. Digital copies of the handouts are on the USB card attendees received in their swag bags for reference.

Audience

Everyone is not your audience. Your business caters to a specific market niche, so focus your content to address their problems, concerns, and interests. Knowing your audience helps you determine the appropriate social media platforms. For instance, the under-30 crowd prefers Instagram to Facebook. Platform analytics also assist in determining the best times and frequency for posting content.

Relationships

In simple terms, show off your human side. Sure, your business website is the company's face to the world, but don't be afraid to interact with those who post comments and show the people behind the corporate logo. Respond to comments and post pictures. People like to do business with other people.

In fact, it's prudent to respond to every comment. You are building relationships with your online community. Therefore, showing candid shots of work in progress and the boss at the grill treating staff to a company picnic all contribute to that personal connection that builds relationships.

Social platform algorithms respond best to video. Take a couple of minutes and do a Facebook Live or an Instagram story from your place of business or a special location. Record a quick 1-2 minute interview with an employee on a specific topic. Keep it interesting and fun.

Remember the social part of social media: that means engaging with followers like real friends. It means following the Golden Rule: Treat people as you would like to be treated.

You want to put your best face forward, both in person and online, which requires vigilance in managing your online reputation. ■

NATIONAL ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

When you have a choice of vendors, remember to use WIA Associate Members first.

Advance Equipment
Manufacturing Company
AMBTRA, Inc.
Atlantic Wallcovering and Décor
Bradbury & Bradbury Art
Wallpapers, Inc.
Cavalier Wall Liner
Designtex Group (The)
Experience49
Eykon Design Resources
Fabricmate Systems
Fidelity Wallcovering, Inc.
Gardner-Gibson, Inc.
Heritage Wallcoverings Ltd.
(Lincrusta)
Hytex Industries, Inc.
Jacaranda, Inc.
Jack Loconsolo & Company, Inc.
Koessel Studios
Len-Tex Wallcoverings
LSI Wallcovering
Maya Romanoff Corporation
MDC Wallcoverings
Pacific Laser Systems (PLS)
Painters & Allied Trades LMCI
Phillip Jeffries Ltd.
Presto Tape
R37 Inc.
Roman Decorating Products LLC
Roos International, Ltd.
Wallcovering
Rust-Oleum Corporation, Zinsser
Brands
Steve's Blinds & Wallpaper, LLC
Textile Wallcoverings
International, LTD (TWIL)
The Paint Store Online
Thibaut Wallcovering
Vahallan Papers
Wallauer's
Wallpaper Boulevard
Wallpaper Direct
Wallpaper Warehouse
Williamson College of the Trades
Wolf-Gordon, Inc.
York Wallcoverings, Inc.

Mid-Atlantic Workshop Boosts WIA Membership

The WIA's Mid-Atlantic Region held a workshop in Frederick, Maryland that brought in two new members to the association. Of the 19 attendees, eight were non-members. Of these non-members, three were "marketable" – active paperhanger professionals. Two of these participants joined the association, and the third has continued to show interest. Several of the other non-member attendees were support sales staff of the local Sherwin Williams. Though these attendees may not have been considered potential members, all expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to learn more about the skill and knowledge required to install the products showcased.

Like the workshop held in Richmond, Virginia a couple of years ago, this one included a quick review of the class on creating unique designs with wallcovering. The workshop also included a presentation of component wall coverings such as Bradbury and Bradbury and demonstrations of self-stick wallpapers with discussion and practice at the "wall." Many of the attendees were beginners seeking to learn more about these complicated wallpaper products and installations. The "walls" used for practice were simply 4x8 drywall boards that had been primed prior to the workshop.

The workshop was made possible through generous donations from Sherwin Williams, Bradbury and Bradbury, Romans Decorating Products, Gardner Gibson, Experience 49, Wallpaper Direct, and Limitless Walls. Donated



products were given to attendees at the end of the workshop, as well as some additional products and premiums. Registration for all attendees included breakfast and lunch.

The event lost approximately \$187 plus the fee per head paid to national, including a \$225 membership giveaway won by Michelle Corl. Regional leadership stated that the goal of the



event was not to make a profit, but to teach aspects of the craft and bring in new members. Those goals accomplished, they consider the workshop an unqualified success.

The one non-member attendee who did not join at the event remains very interested. Alternate Region Director Michelle Corl hopes that the theory of needing several contacts will result in adding that last person as a member. That would put the event's membership recruitment effort at 100 percent success. If that person joins, he and one of the other new members will be crucial in reviving the struggling Baltimore Chapter, which currently has only six members.

More workshops are being planned for the Mid-Atlantic Region: a spring workshop in Richmond, Virginia, a workshop in New Jersey (location to be determined), and one in Media, Pennsylvania. Region Director Shelley Wilkins expressed a desire to hold a workshop further inland in the West Virginia-Kentucky area; however, that area is so rural that it may not be possible. She will confer with fellow member Bob Banker to determine the viability of an event there.

Based on the recruitment success of the workshop in Frederick, Wilkins noted that future events will follow the same pricing and promotion models to entice non-member participation. The region has a sufficient budget to cover them, thanks to the allocation of funds, earmarked for revitalization and membership, from the defunct DC Chapter. ■



What's Old Is New Again

Fashion, including interior décor, tends to be cyclical. Elements of the cutting edge from decades or even centuries ago reappear refreshed and newly glamorous. Most recently, the trend could be witnessed in the return of 1970s hippie fashions and the return of popularity in wallpaper after a similarly long hiatus. That cyclical trend sometimes happens with association memberships, too. In the winter issue of *The Installer*, the WIA welcomes three members, Richard Bernstein, Bob Manion, and Kay Harris. Bernstein and Manion return after a long hiatus in the industry.



Richard Bernstein

Modestly declining to style himself a renaissance man, Richard Bernstein is a writer, part-time seller of used books, and wallcovering installer. As a writer, he claims authorship of *Following the Ragman*, which he describes as a “healing project” that helped him cope with childhood trauma. (The book may be purchased from Amazon.)

When asked about his debut in the wallcovering industry, he stated that he worked as a custodian at California Lutheran College in the early 1970s. The foreman hired a paperhanger, thought his employee might find the work interesting, and informed Bernstein about a wallpaper installation course at North Valley Occupational Center. Bernstein was intrigued and checked it out.

Since then, he’s been in and out of the profession and even joined the painters union in Las Vegas, NV eight years ago.

“I restarted about a year ago,” Bernstein said about his return to the wallcovering industry. “I came back to wallpaper. I love it because of the concentration – you can lose yourself in it.”



Bob Manion

Bob Manion came to the wallcovering industry as a legacy, a fourth generation painter/paperhanger. He started his business in 1981, and was a member of the association (known then as the National Guild of Professional Paperhangers) in

the late 1980s.

The wallcovering industry slump sent Manion to the Painting Contractors Association (PDCA) to expand his business. Throughout the decades, he worked with many WIA members and returned to the WIA as a member this year.

“I came back to the WIA because the wallpaper business expanded. I felt the need to learn more about the new aspects of paperhanging. Plus, it’s a good group of people and the chapter meetings are close to home. I like being involved in the industry,” Manion said.

Manion proudly stated that he has been married for 37 years. He and his wife have one son whom they adopted in Seoul, Korea.



Kay Harris

After 30 years in the wallcovering industry, Kay Harris is also a new member of the WIA. She began as her husband’s helper. “We learned how to hang wallpaper through trial and error,” she said. Her husband ventured into remodeling and she stuck to wallpaper and painting, their work complementing. She and her husband brought their children into the family business. Their three daughters now work in the wallcovering trade in Nashville, Tennessee; Denver, Colorado; and Purcellville, Virginia.

Harris describes herself now as semi-retired at 68 years old, although she keeps busy helping her three daughters, all of whom are wallcovering installers and members of the WIA. Her daughters, she said, talked about the WIA “all the time” and encouraged her to join the association.

“They seem to learn a lot from the WIA,” Harris noted and declared the importance of passing on the skills to younger generations. After bringing in three children who practice the craft, she laughed and commented that she did her part.

Harris aims to attend the 2019 WIA Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, and add to her knowledge and skillset. She hopes to get together with all three of her daughters at the convention, perhaps combining the event with a family reunion. ■

Product Review: Scratch-n-Sniff Wallpaper

Modern living is all about customization, arranging our environments to our preferences. That means eliminating odors we find offensive and adding fragrances we want to enjoy. Therefore, it seems perfectly reasonable to add such capability to the walls that surround us. For those who agree and those who want to experience something like the lickable wallpaper in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Brooklyn-based, boutique manufacturer Flavor Paper has the answer: scratch-n-sniff wallpaper.

Flavor Paper produces three standard scratch-n-sniff wallpaper lines: bananas, cherries, and citrus. They come in different colors and primarily serve a niche clientele. WIA member Donna Montgomery of The Wallcover Girls in Abita Springs, Louisiana recently completed an installation project using Flavor Paper's banana-scented product.

The project consisted of wrapping the paper around a checkout counter in a children's boutique. "It's a delicate paper, like aluminum foil," Montgomery said, "and made the boutique smell like banana candy."

She noted that the paper's sheen "like high-gloss metal" and fragility made it susceptible to tearing and scuff marks. She warned the client of its limited durability: "It won't hold up for long." The areas to be scratched to release the embedded scent are sturdier than the wallpaper field, which should add to the product's usable lifetime. To keep the paper clean of sticky, little finger and nose prints and the inevitable licks from curious tongues, she recommended wiping it down with a damp cloth.

Installation proved easy on a primed wooden surface. Montgomery experienced no unexpected issues, other than a shortage of product. She noted that the client received incorrect advice about the amount of wallpaper required, because neither company



representatives nor the client took into account the paper wasted in the pattern's repeat. The client placed the order based on square footage before Montgomery could provide a correct measurement.

Montgomery noted that, like most high-end papers, the wallpaper from Flavor Paper had selvedge edges which protect the paper during manufacturing, shipping, and handling. The selvedge edges require table trimming or must be double-cut on the walls, she advised.

When asked about her overall impression of the paper, Montgomery chuckled and replied, "The paper looks fun." ■

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Website Design Tips for Your Small Business

In this digitally oriented age, even the proverbial one-man shop that stays busy with referrals needs a website. The website serves as your professional “face” to the world, as well as your resume and portfolio of previous work. It need not be expensive, but it should be well-organized and look good. After all, who trusts a creative whose website looks terrible?

The WIA offers these tips for a functional, engaging website.

Focus on quality, not urgency. Time is not of the essence when designing a website. Sure, your business needs one, but it makes good business sense to do your research first and then design your website around that rather than rush through the design without thinking it through and then having to do it all over again because it just doesn't work. When designing your website, you'll need – at a minimum – a page about the company and a page displaying examples of prior work and a contact form.

Consider multi-platform viewing. You have about three to seven seconds to impress a visitor with your website before that visitor gets frustrated and heads to your competition. A busy or complex web design doesn't translate well to tablets or mobile phone displays. Use the KISS principle: keep it simple, stupid. That means clear and obvious navigation that takes people to the right page once they reach your home page.

Check references on website designers. Big brands like Coca-Cola® and Nike® can pay tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars for website design: you can't. Don't be lured in by big-name brand references; check the



portfolios of small website design companies. They'll offer more affordable rates and high quality design and service, plus you'll have the pleasure of supporting another small business just like yours.

Keep it current and correct. You need not update the content every single day, but visitors want fresh content. Use your website to post business updates, product opinions, blogs, and anything brag-worthy. If you do decide to keep a blog, then ensure it's well-written and well-edited and updated at least once a week.

Remember that content – visual, textual, and aural – is protected under copyright. Cutting and pasting someone else's words, images, or recordings violates copyright law.

Target a specific audience. Be honest with yourself and your clientele. Focus your website on attracting the kind of clients you want. Yes, that means your service and prices won't make everyone happy. That's OK, because you don't want to become known as the low-bid provider in your field which always transforms into a race to the bottom.

A word on SEO: SEO stands for search engine optimization. If you're not familiar with the term, then you're probably familiar with the concept. SEO practices come under “white hat” and “black hat” varieties. Make sure the programmer, designer, and/or copywriter you select engages in white hat SEO, which helps your website rise in Google rankings while staying within search engine terms of service.

A good website serves as the first encounter with your brand that most people will have. Make sure it's a good encounter that engages your target audience, establishes you as an expert, and puts your best face forward. ■

Affix It or Forget It

Of the ways to hang wallpaper on a (relatively) flat, vertical surface, paste remains standard. Something has to stick the wallpaper to the wall and that something is usually paste.

Every wallcovering installer knows that not all affixatives are created equal. Some pastes come in powder form to be mixed with water in accordance with manufacturer instructions. Installers can also purchase liquid adhesives, some of which are concentrates to which water must be added. Again, the amount of water depends upon the manufacturer instructions. Adhesives come in common varieties: standard adhesive (usually a cellulose, ether, and starch base); synthetic adhesive (contains resin to increase strength); textile adhesive (may contain plastic dispersion glue); special adhesive for non-woven wallpaper; machine adhesive for use with pasting machines; and dispersion adhesives which are ready-to-use right from the bucket.

Every professional wallpaper installer has his or her own preferences for adhesives, just as manufacturers recommend specific types of adhesives for the best installation of their products and certain adhesives work best with

certain types of wallcoverings. Retired installer Rebecca Schunck maintains a website (www.wallpaperinstaller.com) to serve “consumers and the industry as a whole by providing links, tips, and advice for people looking for wallpaper information.” She offers an annotated list of adhesive types with recommendations for best use, as well as a handy table of which types of wallpaper go with which types of adhesive.

Writing for *PaintPro Magazine*, Susan Brimo-Cox addresses the advantages of knowing which adhesive to use rather than defaulting to the one-size-fits-all solution. She advises that installers strongly consider how strippable an adhesive is, because what goes up must eventually come down. She also notes that clear and clay-based adhesives primarily serve commercial markets, not residential.

Brimo-Cox echoes Schunck in that the wallpaper to be hung determines the adhesive to be applied: “woven or fabric-backed products commonly used in commercial applications typically dictate a strippable, heavy-duty clear adhesive, although some contractors will use a strippable clay adhesive.” The same holds true for delicate

wallcoverings which require a “delicate” paste.

As every professional installer knows, adhesive only figures as part of the installation. The major portion of the job concerns preparation of the surface. However, just like seasoning food with salt, more adhesive isn't always better: it's just more. For the best policy in applying adhesive, use just enough and of the right type. ■

