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IF Expands Again with Cabinetry and Schluter® Shower System Waterproofing

International Flooring | Spring, Texas



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By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Houston's International Flooring (IF) isn't about just floors any more. After 18 years in business, IF now offers more than 500 pieces of cabinetry with immediate availability and a cabinet designer on staff to customize any kitchen's look. It's also adopting the Schluter® Shower System for waterproofing its bathroom tile installations.

"We're getting a good response from builders. There's a need for a full-service cabinet supplier that does design and installation for the builder," Richard Arnold, president and co-owner of International Flooring, stated. "Not only do we provide fast quotes – two days for cabinets and the same day for flooring – but we also offer a turnkey operation with installation." To handle its workload, IF employs two cabinet installers in addition to its office and back-shop workers. Arnold co-owns the company with Luis Hernandez.

IF can deliver pre-fabricated cabinets in standard sizes to builders in any style and size they want the day after

they're ordered, thanks to the huge warehouses of its suppliers.

Arnold continued, "There are so many sizes, we can do anything the builder wants. We supply cabinets from the very budget-oriented to the high-end custom," noting that in addition to the most popular frameless boxes and Shaker-style doors, IF will also supply made-to-order cabinets in specified woods and finishes if one of its 10 door styles and 20 colors does not meet the buyers' needs. Currently, 90 percent of the cabinets I.F. sells are white with Shaker doors.

International Flooring will display its new product line to homeowners as well as builders in an expanded showroom, adding 500 sq. ft. to the 3,500-sq.-ft. showroom space in its office and warehouse facility in Houston. It will "open grandly" at the beginning of the year.

He noted that the cabinet detail that architects provide in a home's rendering is a place to start for cabinet design, but



what really makes the difference is the design expertise that Paula Calderon offers IF's clients based on their budget and functionality needs.

A cabinet designer, Calderon joined IF's staff in fall 2020 to serve both builders and homeowners with cabinet design and hardware selection. "Paula can make kitchen and bath cabinetry look so much better with a little bit of design, such as where to place cabinet lighting and glass doors – things that will wow the homeowner," Arnold noted.

Popular features are hidden garbage containers and appliances, such as mixers and blenders, that can "disappear" into cabinets rather than cluttering countertops when not in use.

Calderon works with the clients through the whole selection process, which leads to high customer satisfaction, Arnold said. Builders receive the cabinet design service at no charge, he added.

IF's prefabricated cabinets have advantages to both the homeowner and the builder, Arnold declared. Homeowners get exactly what they want in cabinetry, with the design and quality that Calderon and IF provides. Builders can continue construction while top-quality cabinets are built in a shop rather than on the worksite. No longer does construction have to stop for almost a month while a trim carpenter builds cabinets and then a painter customizes them. "It all takes time and there's a lot of room for mistakes. These pre-fab cabinets are much more precise and much tighter," Arnold stated, than cabinets built on site.

Expanding its services to cabinetry just a few months ago, Arnold said International Flooring is already getting a good response from builders. "Clients are very familiar with our





service. They assume our service will be just as good for cabinets as it is with flooring. They tell me we just have to be competitive on the price side to get their business.” Arnold said his goal is to sell a million dollars of cabinetry and its hardware in 2021, and he expects to add a cabinet salesperson in the middle of the year.

Because most builders love the idea of getting multiple products from one source, they now can turn to International Flooring for wood floors, carpet, luxury vinyl tile (LVT), large-format tile, moisture shields, and slab preparation in addition to reclaimed antique beams, solid wood, engineered wood and laminate flooring. Wood flooring comprises about 70 percent of IF’s sales.

Before adding cabinetry and its hardware in the fall of 2020, the company had about 500 different products in its showroom.

In 2021 International Flooring will expand into the tile business by offering the Schluter® Shower System, “a family of products that together forms a fully bonded, watertight assembly for tiled showers,” according to the company website, www.schluter.com. It is used before tile is set.

It’s a waterproofing system for showers and steam that gives the builder a 10-year warranty, Arnold said. Waterproofing usually falls in the hands of the tile installer, who may not have the necessary additional training.

“We are focused on product knowledge. Every product I have, I understand it. I trust it. I can explain and put everything in context,” he noted. Arnold and one of his installers went to classes presented by Schulters to learn the system, and the installer’s work was inspected by the Schluter representative to ensure the company’s standards were followed.

With housing in the Houston market becoming vertical as land availability shrinks, shower leaks can create major damage in a two- or three-story house, Arnold stated. “Waterproofing is more important than ever.”

Builders look for vendors who can support their products, Arnold added. “Builders want a new product to fit in



their system or to save money. The builder needs to feel comfortable the product will perform. I help the builder keep looking forward.”

And it’s obvious that Richard Arnold also keeps International Flooring itself looking forward!

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