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Haines and Mirage make it work

By Emily J. Cappiello

When one of the biggest distribution companies in flooring went under in 2007, hardwood supplier Mirage was left to find new distributors. One of the companies Mirage chose to fill the void was J.J. Haines, ranked No. 1 on FCW's top 25 distributor list, but Mirage needed to make some adjustments. "Haines' footprint was different, so we had to make distribution changes. It also carried different product lines, but Haines had a bigger customer base and we would be able to reach more people by partnering with it," said Chris Thompson, vice president of sales and marketing for Mirage.

Bruce Zwicker, president of J.J. Haines, understood that it wasn't going to be easy for Mirage to deal with the distribution shift, as well as the deteriorating market, but he welcomed Mirage with open arms. "The decision for Haines [to carry Mirage] was relatively straightfor-

ward. It has a high-end line with great brand recognition and low claims and it is led by an excellent management team," Zwicker said.

As time went on and Mirage and Haines worked together to overcome initial challenges, the companies

realized that they had quite a bit in common. "I think Mirage saw a mirror image when it looked at us," Zwicker said. "We [both] have strong principles, strong organizations, high-quality products and a high service model." Thompson credits commitment and involvement from the distributor's management team with helping his company get acquainted. "I knew that I would be able to count on Haines for service and support. Haines focuses on representing our lines the way we want them to be represented, so we can put our focus elsewhere," Thompson said.

Zwicker agreed, adding, "We worked together with Mirage so



that everyone understood that our sales team deployment and philosophy matched their approach to the dealer and consumer."

Now with Haines for more than a year, Thompson is glad the company made the move. "Our relation-

ship with Haines is excellent. It is very well managed from the top all the way down and it has tremendous staff in place in all facets of the business," he said.

The expanded customer base is also serving Mirage well — its products now penetrate the retail, builder and construction markets. "For Mirage, attractions of doing business with Haines are our staying power and our coverage. We don't need to be the largest, just the best. We make money even in bad times; we are financially conservative and strong; we focus on what we do best; and we will be around for a long time," Zwicker added. 