

INTERFACE FLOORING SYSTEMS CANADA (cont)

By Bill Hunt

The Intelligencer

In times of change, flexibility is essential.

Interface Flooring Systems Canada at 233 Lahr Dr. has incorporated flexibility in to its daily operations by taking some of the fear out of change for employees, says Jeffrey Casselman, general manager and senior vice-president of Interface Flooring Systems Canada.

The company manufactures modular carpet tile and 6-foot wide broadloom. It currently supplies about 70 per cent of all modular carpet sold in Canada.

One reason for the company's success is its flexibility. Interface Flooring allows employees to spend four hours a week, with pay, upgrading their skills. "We don't know everything, and to be competitive and stay competitive we have to be good learners," says Casselman. The company hires tutors to come into the plant and pays for the employees' materials.

The courses studied don't have to be work-related because by continuously learning,

employees are less afraid of change.

"It's really to create an environment where learning is the norm," says Casselman.

Another reason for the company's success is its lack of waste.

In the late 1980s, the plant's operations were changed and employees no longer remain at one work area all day.

QUEST (quality utilizing employee suggestions and teamwork) is a system in which employees are encouraged to improve the operations of their work areas. The idea is "to pick something in your area that isn't working right and do something

about it." Employees meet once a month to discuss problems and ways of remedying them.

"In our process people almost move with the product," says Casselman. As a result, workers' skills are increasingly "generalized" and employees are less likely to blame other departments or allow problems to slip by without being corrected.

These processes reduce waste and therefore production costs.

Interface is currently working toward a goal of halving its waste, using 1994 levels as the standard, within three years and is more than half way there, says Casselman.

Waste is classified in three groups: internal, from the production process; external, such as products needing repair or that

are returned; and administrative

manufacturer of modular carpet. It has made the largest reductions of internal waste of any of the Interface companies in the world, says Casselman, and is third for overall reduction of waste.

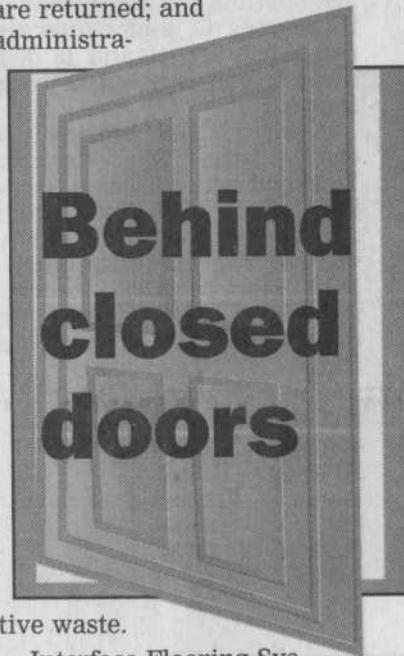
The company also recycles used carpet by using it in the production of new material.

Such tactics appear to be working. Prior to the implementation of NAFTA there were between 10 and 12 modular carpet manufacturers in Canada. Today there are four. The others either closed or moved to the U.S., says Casselman.

Interface employs about 60 people and operates from a 75,000 sq. ft. facility. Each year it produces approximately nine million square feet of modular carpet that is sold from Newfoundland to British Columbia.



John Casselman



tive waste.

Interface Flooring Systems Canada is a subsidiary of Interface Inc., the world's largest

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