



Modern Wood Flooring & Wood Facades in Indian context

Selected blogs...



SATINDER CHAWLA – FOUNDER

Introduction

Wood, as a material, is ubiquitous. From structural usage to a finished material, it covers all.

This small compilation collects, at one place, some of my writings, over the years, on the subject of wood floors and facades. This is not a literary work rather an easy, practical and casual read. One does not need to go in sequence.

My hope is to share some of what I have learnt over the past twenty odd years since I came into the field of wood floors and sometime later, wood for outdoor applications such as facades, decks etc. Architects, Interior Designers, PMCs, Contractors, Builders, Retailers of Wooden Flooring, Cladding and Decking may find this of some use.

About the Author

Satinder Chawla

Founder Span Floors



Satinder Chawla is a leading wood flooring and facades expert with over 20 years of on the ground experience.

Founder of the brand Span Floors, a well known name in the niche luxury segment of the wood flooring and facades industry in India, the brand has a clear focus on the higher end of the market where the clients demand the best the world has to offer.

Satinder is credited for developing world class training manuals on the subject with a first ever comprehensive installation system based on the Indian ground conditions.

Application of these systems has made him a sought after name when it comes to wood floors and facades for luxury apartments and villas across India. Known for an eye for meticulous detail, he, along with his team, have completed a host of projects across various geographies pan India in coordination with India's leading architects & designers.



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A collection of blogs written over the years

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How to increase an architectural practice by specifying right?



How to increase an architectural practice by specifying right?

Increasing business with today's competition can seem tough. And it is. Unless the key delivery of any business or profession is not in place it can be a rough ride. As an Architect or interior designer,

your main focus is on delivering "*an aesthetically designed and well-executed functional space that fulfills the needs of its occupants and the larger habitat it is a part of*". The delivery of this statement is a key factor in growth. Unless this aspect is fully taken care of there remains but a slim chance of customer referrals and growth in practice. Product specification and Vendor selection thus become one of the crucial factors in end-user satisfaction. At many practices I have observed this has been somewhat relegated to as a secondary function and often given to juniors without first training them into what exactly to ask the vendor and how to objectively evaluate a product. While it is understood that it is not possible for the seniors to meet everyone, by creating and using a checklist based on the 6 points mentioned,



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juniors can get a wealth of data which can then be evaluated further by seniors.

Now, what in brief are the broad key parameters of high quality and functional building design? And how to achieve them? Let us have a look at the basic criteria which are applicable to any product and how specifically our brand Span Floors fits into each. You can use the following 6 factors as a simple checklist for any material selection:

01 | Aesthetics

02 | Functionality

03 | Durability

04 | Health

05 | Sustainability

06 | Technical Competence



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Aesthetics

As human beings we love beautiful spaces. Research has shown that a beautiful ambience has an uplifting effect on a person's feelings and well being. However, beauty is a subjective subject.

Hence knowing and delivering what the client sees as beautiful objectively is an important point and contributes hugely to the success of the project. In the area of wood floors and facades, it generally makes sense to see a larger area or ask for grading pictures (pictures that will show the overall color tone and feel of the product) as wood is a natural product and there could be variations that can not be judged from a small sample piece or plank.



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Functionality

It includes ease of usage, comfort and overall workability. A beautiful house or a building which somehow lacks practicality leads to dissatisfaction at a later stage reflecting poorly on the design and specification process. As such while specifying wood floors, one needs to look at the expected traffic (commercial/residential), building occupants (Adults/Children), care facilities (skilled staff), downtime for maintenance (in case of commercial projects) and other environmental conditions (floor level, air conditioning, dust etc).

Understanding various possibilities and then choosing the best-suited one can help increase your client's satisfaction and increase chances of positive word of mouth.



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Durability

Sound specification based on factual data will lead to a high level of construction quality. This is a key factor in client satisfaction. And wood floors are no exception. With the ever-increasing demand for construction and renovation, a mind-boggling variety is available in the market today making it difficult to shortlist the correct type. Using the 6 points as mentioned above, a comparative could be easily prepared which can result in an objective conclusion.

Talking about wood floors and facades, our sales and technical teams are trained to guide you in the selection of most suitable wooden flooring, decking and cladding based on your project's specific needs. They will also help you prepare a comparative with other materials and help you arrive at the right product for a particular project.



Health

With exposure to environmental as well as food pollutants at its highest ever, it becomes paramount that the indoor air quality of buildings is also looked at and effectively controlled. Building materials that contribute positively to improving Indoor air quality should be sourced and specified and clients educated on this crucial aspect.

Span Floors offer certified E1 Low Formaldehyde emission or CARB compliant wooden floorings that are safe for the building occupants meeting the latest most stringent European and US norms for Indoor air quality.



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Sustainability

Mindless exploitation of resources has wreaked havoc on our planet in terms of climate change, population displacement, natural disasters etc. A well thought of design takes care of this very important parameter. It is not about future generations anymore. We are already seeing the effects within our own time frames.

As an Architect, you have a big role to play on how the future goes. Educating the clients and specifying wooden flooring, decking and cladding made out of certified sustainable wood from certified FSC or PEFC forests is one definite step towards a better future for all.



Technical Competence

The best of the materials can go to waste if the workmanship is poor. Installation contractor selection thus becomes an extremely important factor in the success of any project. We at Span Floors take this aspect rather seriously.

Our in-house team headed by a qualified architect and civil engineers helps ensure technically correct and aesthetically pleasing installations of wooden flooring, decking and cladding through our dedicated set of trained and competent carpenters.

We have executed several complex design demands for wood facades, decks and floorings over the years which have been performing well till date. A host of success stories are witness to the above.

To help architects, designers, contractors and PMC's create better projects using wood, we conduct regular free of cost lectures on wood fundamentals. Participants love them for their simplicity and practicality. You can get in touch with us at floors@spanfloors.com and request for conducting an online training specially for your team.



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Which wood flooring to choose?

Laminate or Engineered...



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Which wood flooring to choose? Laminate or Engineered...

This is a common question: which is best, engineered or laminate flooring? The immediate answer to the question is that both of them are equally perfect in their own way and for their own use depending on the user's needs:

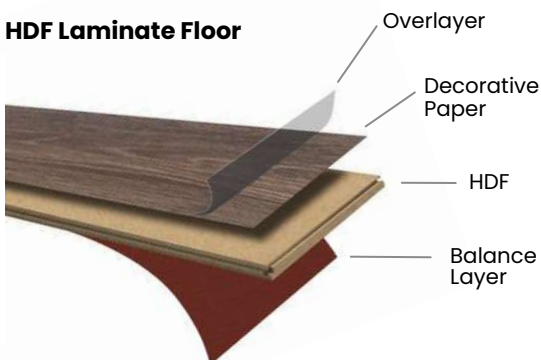
Both are alternates for Solid wood floors, both move (expand and contract) less than solid wood and both look nice! However, like everything, they too have their pros and cons.



What laminate flooring is:

Laminate flooring is basically a photograph of a hardwood plank, laminated and stuck onto a composite wood material like HDF (High-density fibreboard).

HDF Laminate Floor



1 Overlay:

Provides resistance to scratches, stains & fading.

2 Decorative Paper:

Realistically captures the look of genuine wood.

3 HDF:

Made from wood fiber fused with resin. Provides a sound base.

4 Balance Layer:

Protects the floor from deformation, warping & humidity.

The benefits of laminate flooring are:

The price:

Definitely cheaper than Engineered.

Durability:

A laminate floor has generally a higher scratch resistance than a real wood floor such as an engineered wood floor. Hence they may be more practical in a young kids room or any other area which such a characteristic is important. If something sharp or heavy drops, a laminate floor can take that better.

Variety:

Laminate flooring can be a picture of anything. This means a large range of design options are possible at a reasonable price. From wood designs to concrete, stone or anything else is possible.

The downsides of laminate flooring are:

It is not real wood. A faux wood floor, even if it replicates a gorgeous Rs 1000/- square foot oak wood floor.

Non-Repairable:

Laminate flooring cannot be sanded down and refinished. Thus, laminate flooring is unlikely to be a floor for life. When it wears off, you just change it.



What engineered flooring is:

Engineered flooring is a thick hardwood plank veneer, laid on top of other, generally (but not always) softer & cheaper, woods (Pic 2) or plywood in a cross layered fashion to reduce the expansion and contraction of the flooring plank post installation.

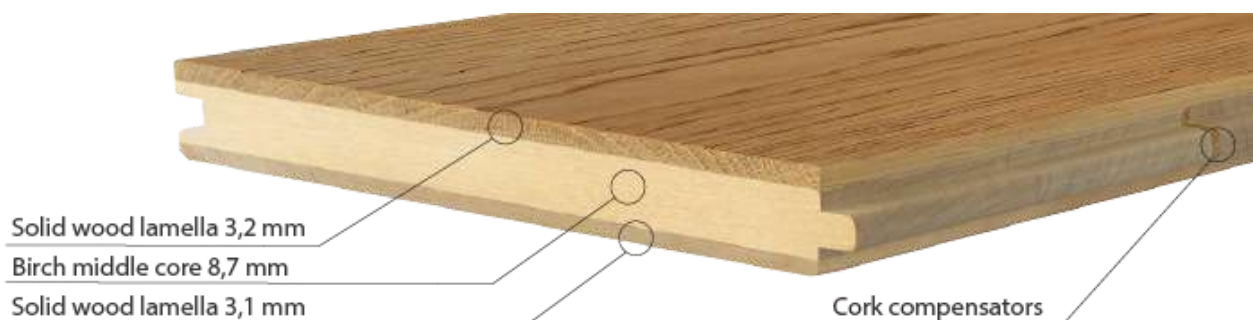
The benefits of engineered flooring are:

It is the Real Thing:

As you have probably gathered by now, engineered flooring is about as close as you can get to a real solid wood flooring while keeping a very high level of stability. In fact, to the untrained eye, it is practically impossible to tell that it is not a solid wood floor. It is not solid only to the extent it has been engineered for performance (cross layered structure) otherwise it is a 100% real wood surface. The big advantage over a laminate floor is the natural beauty and brilliance of real wood and the variation characteristic of real wood. No plank is like the other one - all unique.

Refinishing:

Engineered flooring is practically a hardwood floor. It can be resanded and refinished a varying number of times (depending on the thickness of the top veneer) to renew the surface and prolong life.



Pic 2 - Cross section of our Coswick 3 layered engineered flooring. This is an example of very high quality as the core (middle) and the bottom layers are also made from birch hardwood. This combination makes the flooring plank very stable (very low expansion and contraction)

It can also be stained to different colours and then oiled or lacquered to finish & protect it from damage. The possibility to stain it at the time of renovation gives it a unique advantage over other flooring surfaces be it marble, tile or laminate flooring where you can not change the colour even if the other elements of interior design change.

Scratch Resistance:

The advanced coatings on the engineered floors of today provide a good level of protection and ease of maintenance for the end user. Its life can further be prolonged by carrying out maintenance as suggested by the manufacturer.

From the con side:

Price: Definitely higher than a laminate floor. But you are talking about real wood here!

So, who wins the Laminate Flooring Vs Engineered flooring battle?

As I said at the beginning, both are perfect in their own ways for people with different circumstances:

For people who are on a budget and/or do not own the house/plan to change the flooring for some reason in 5-10 yrs, then laminate is going to be their best option (it is not that a good laminate floor will not last longer or does not look good.

Of course it is not real but it is a question of budget & practicality). For couples with very young kids, this might be a better option as well. In fact, the top of the line Laminate Floors such as the ones available with us are so realistic that it becomes really difficult to tell them apart from an engineered or solid wood floor. Most people can't.

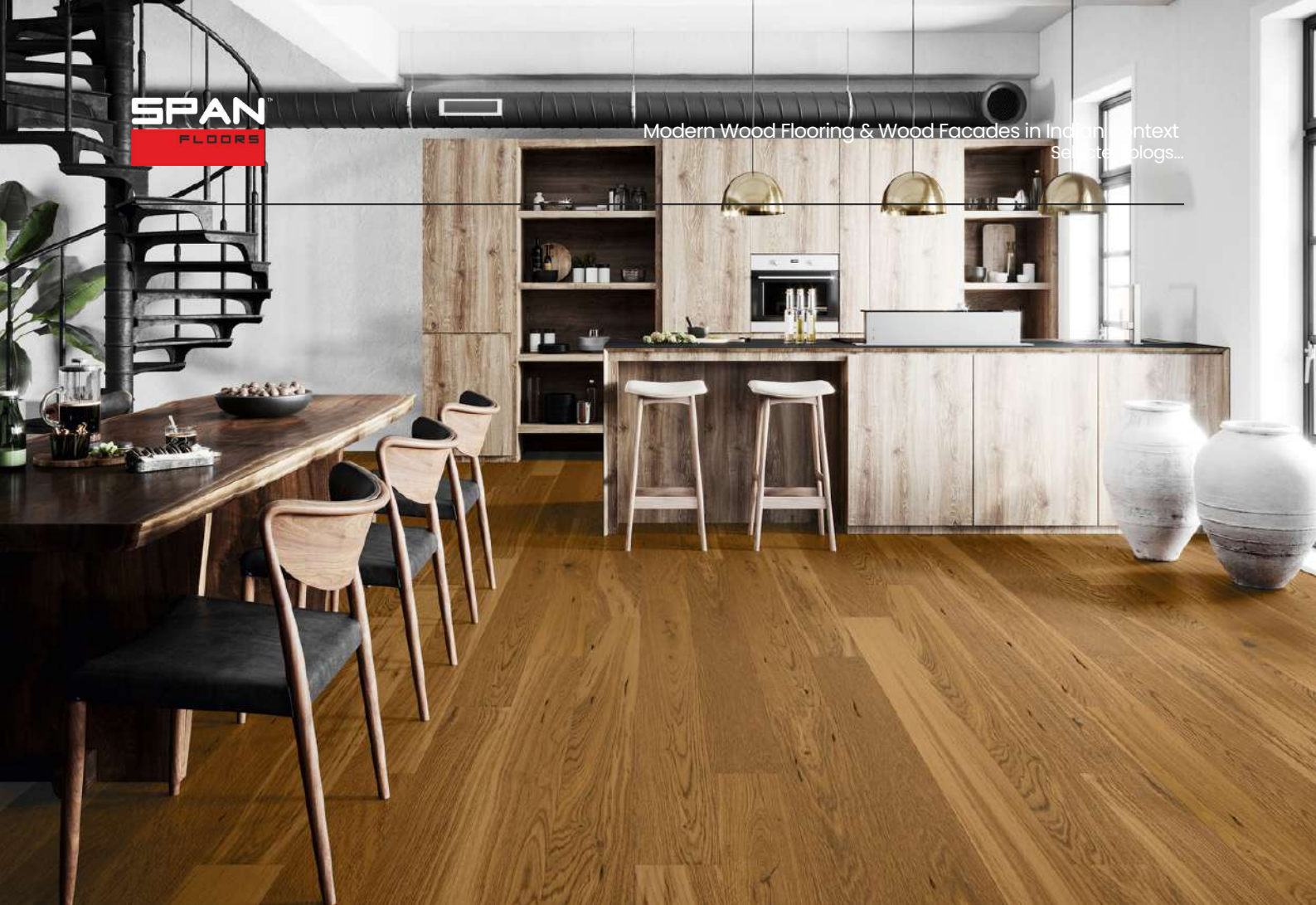
Meanwhile for someone who has his heart set on the authenticity & brilliance of real wood, then engineered wood flooring is the perfect package for you. There is nothing to match the warmth and aesthetic. Just go for it!



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Your Health & Wood Flooring...



Your health & Wood Flooring...

Is it only the looks or what is inside that matters most? Well, the answer is both.

A flooring material is bought for the obvious reason that a floor is required as a base. So surely it must be strong & long lasting. At the same time, it must look nice to take care of the beauty aspect. And last but not the least, it should be healthy as well.

Health & wood flooring? How do they relate?

Very much. This is where the insides of the material have a major impact.

As a flooring material forms a substantial part of a room, it makes sense to know what goes inside it & if it has an impact on our body. Each material, when it comes in contact with the air in the room or when the occupants walk on it barefoot or interact with it in any way, has a reaction.



The reaction may be barely noticeable or one may perceive it more acutely. For example, a freshly painted room has a pungent smell sometimes. Some may find it offensive and others may not.

This smell comes from the chemicals that go into the paint. So it would be good to know what exactly we are inhaling?

Similar is the situation with other materials. A good quality wood floor, for it to be safe for the room occupants, must use high-quality raw materials which do not have any long-term negative effect on the human body. I would recommend only those floors that have been certified E1 per the European norms where E stands for 'emission'.

This European certification basically regulates the amount of formaldehyde that is emitted from a product. Formaldehyde is a chemical preservative which is commonly found in many products such as beauty & cosmetics, building & construction, fuels, glues etc and in nature. Excessive Formaldehyde is a potential carcinogen & hence it is extremely important that it is used within safe limits. Since raw materials containing less or no harmful chemicals are generally more expensive, they tend to be a bit higher in pricing.

So next time you are choosing your wood floor or for that matter any other building & construction material, it would make sense to ask about its impact on the indoor air quality & factor in this information while making your purchase decision.



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Aesthetics in Wood Floors



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Aesthetics in Wood Floors

Wood flooring is considered warm and natural by actual survey. Most people feel comfortable when in contact with wood. In fact, it would be impossible to imagine a home without wood in it. While the technology today permits the creation of a host of wood look-alike products, however, they remain look-alikes. Real wood, well, is real wood!

One of the major things that affects the final aesthetic of how your room will look post-installation is its grading. By grading is meant, the visual appearance of top surface wood veneer. Here is an example of a Select grading:



As you can see, the above grading is quite even and clean meaning that colour variation between individual planks is less and the wood knots are practically absent or very low (size and quantity). Complete absence of variation and knots is neither possible nor desirable since it is this uniqueness and randomness that people find charming.

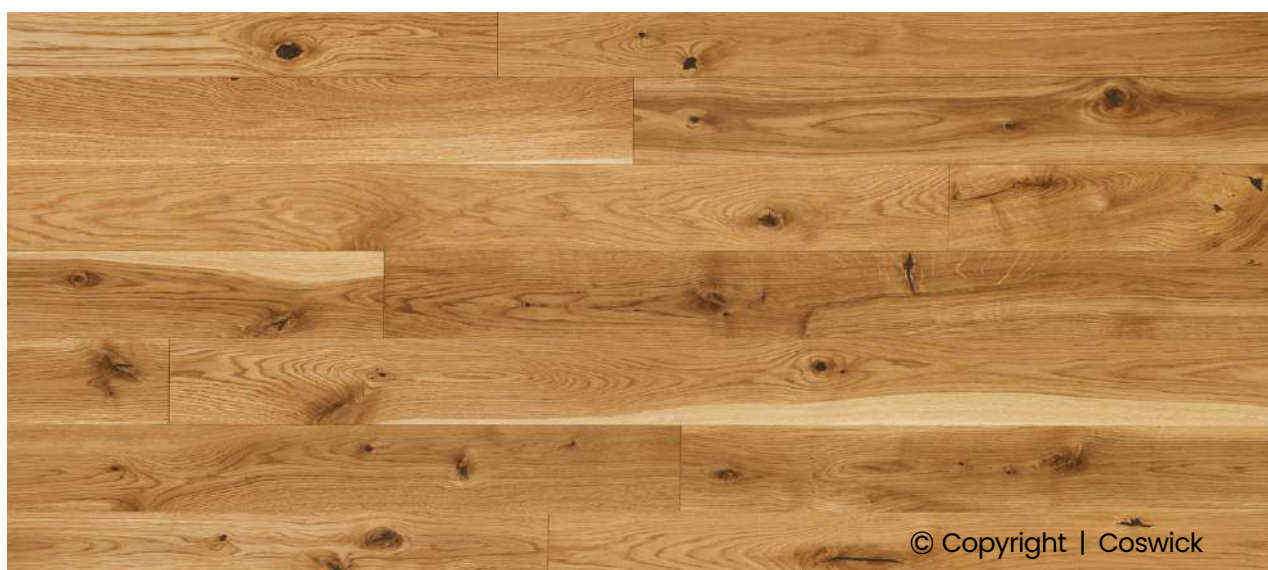
That said, an interior designer or an end-user would think of the final effect he wants to create. Should that be an elegant and clean appearance with a very calm appeal, a select grading will definitely do the job. Wood sawing mills in order to get such grading will have to do a lot of sorting and segregation. Discarded timber is sorted to other, lower grades. This jacks up the pricing of Select and Better grade.

Now, this does not mean that the sorted timber left after Select grade has been segregated is lower in terms of durability. The major impact is on the aesthetic. Let us look at the next grade. By the way, the names of these grades are entirely dependent on the manufacturer or may vary from region to region. The next is 1 common from our Coswick engineered flooring collection as below:



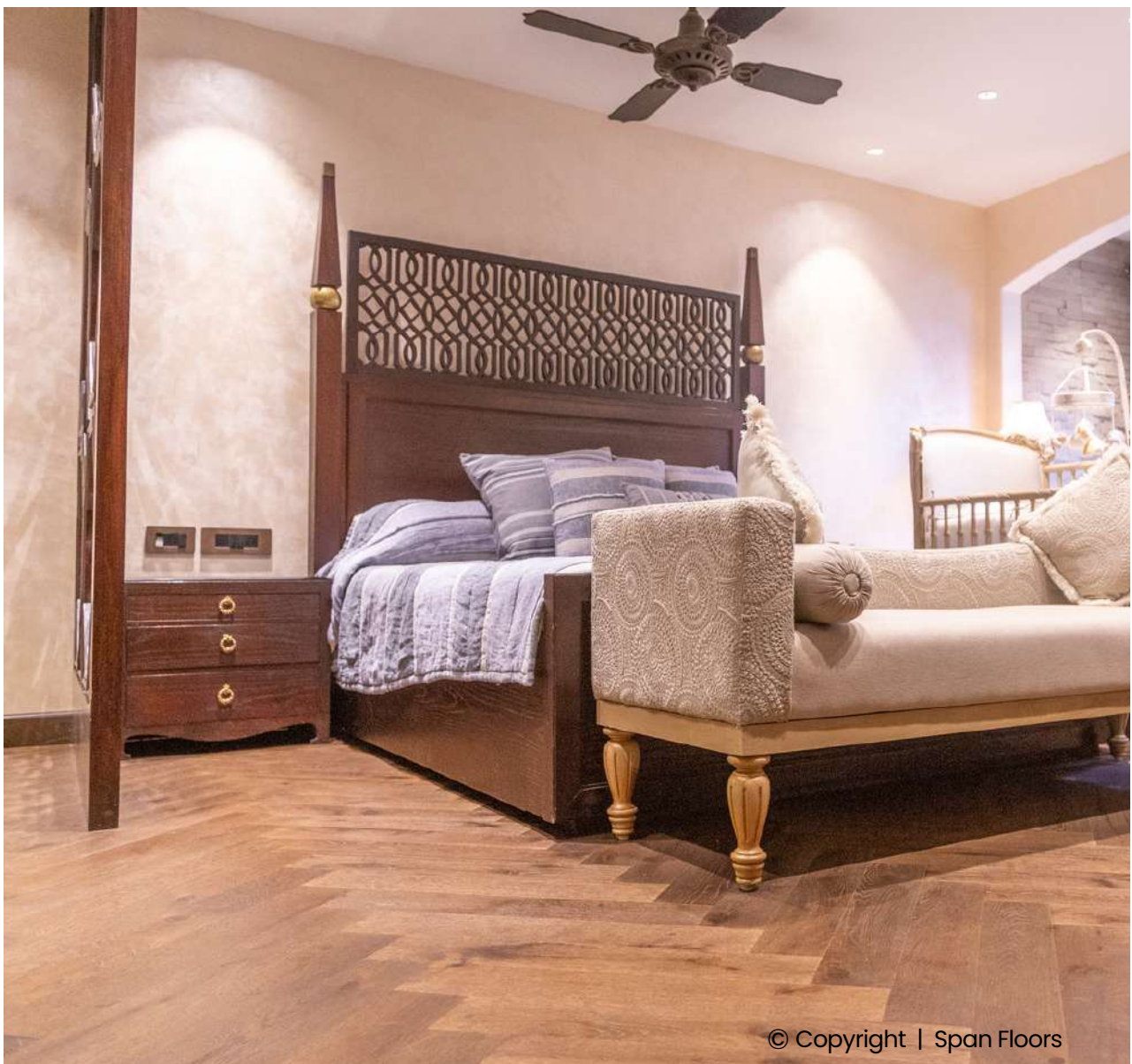
The main difference between Select and 1 common grade is the size and quantity of wood knots. There is also more variation. As said it totally depends on the effect you want created per your design theme.

I would use the above where I want a bit more earthy and natural affect and the flooring more lively. Will save me some money too! Next is our Tavern grade:



A higher level of variation and more sapwood (the light streaks that you see) with bigger knots are the main characteristics here. A large room or even a study, done with such a grading, while keeping other surfaces more calm and even, can make the floor stand out and turn it into a conversation piece that attracts attention.

If the design demands a stained look, say a dark brown or a black wood floor for a chic, dramatic effect, this grading can be used. The stain will hide the variation as well as the big knots and yet you will have a beautiful floor at a lesser cost. Here is an example of our Coswick collection engineered wood flooring in Oak dark-stained:



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The next one would be Rustic or Character grade which essentially means more variation, bigger knots, more sapwood (white streaks - the outer part of tree trunk). By the way, sapwood is generally less durable than the heartwood (the center part of the tree trunk).

This is one of the reasons for the lower cost as well. However, in most interior applications, it should work fine. Here is an example:



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As an architect or an interior designer, one could use this information about grading effectively to create the kind of ambience one desires at a budget that works.



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Indoor air pollution

An article written in 2018 and
still as relvant...



Indoor air pollution

An article written in 2018 and still as relevant...

Hi,

My teammates and I here at Span Floors wish you a very happy and prosperous new year! However, I say that with a heavy heart. Coming back from work yesterday, I was once again appalled looking at the dense smog I found myself in during the rush evening hours. Visibility was a disaster and the effect was overwhelming on the psyche, to say the least, leave aside the body. Each breath seemed like I was taking more toxins in and the worse part, that I had no choice in that moment but to inhale. So just wishing a Happy new year certainly does not make one! Something needs to be done.



Our country now has the dubious distinction of having the most no. of cities with highly polluted air. And not only the outdoor air, latest research points to an even more dangerous fact. It seems indoor air is also grossly polluted though not as highlighted. So a person does not have respite even when he retreats to his or her home and has access to something as fundamental and basic as clean air. It may not be visible pollution (in case of urban environments) but certainly, toxicity arising from harmful chemicals and other materials. In rural India, indoor air is polluted by the fossil fuels used while cooking (coal, wood and cow dung).

However, in the urban India which is developing, particularly the homes of HNI's, the biggest source of indoor air pollution are pollutants such as aldehydes, volatile, and semivolatile organic compounds which are produced from resins, waxes, polishing materials, household cleaners, cosmetics, and binders. Lastly, biological pollutants like dust mites, molds, pollen, and infectious agents produced in stagnant water, mattresses, carpets, and humidifiers pollute indoor air.

That said, let us focus on the solutions. A lot of data is available on outdoor pollutants so I will focus on the indoor air, particularly relevant to the building and construction industry:

01 Switch to cleaner building & maintenance materials (benign organic cleaners & disinfectants, indoor air quality certified wood products such as flooring, furniture, plywood and boards, paints etc) - When you buy or specify a material, check the impact of the product on the indoor air quality. There are 3rd party certifications such as GreenGuard, CARB etc available today that measure the impact of the particular product on indoor air quality.

03 When you compare any product, the right question to ask regarding the price is 'Why is 'x' product cheaper?' or 'Why is 'x' product priced higher?'. Listening to the answer patiently backed by evidence might reveal a wealth of data that allows for a better decision.

02 Go into a little detail before you specify or buy - I hear this at times 'who has the time to go into so much detail' or 'No-one wants to listen to this marketing stuff. It is the price that customers are interested in' etc. Well, detail means 'hard work'. And certainly, some people want to avoid it. Sadly, there are no shortcuts in life. If one avoids detail, one is bound to be superficial and bear the consequences.

04 As a specifier, contractor or a worker, the level of exposure is the highest as during the initial construction period, the majority of the off-gassing happens (products releasing harmful gaseous substances). So it makes sense to take due care while specifying.

At Span Floors, we have been focusing on stocking and promoting wood floors that are 3rd party certified on indoor air quality. Not only that, we ensure that the wood used arises from sustainable forestry. A big chunk of our floors conform to the highest and most respected certifications & regulations in the field (CE, PEFC, FSC, GreenGuard etc). We are not sitting and being in apathy about this rather taking action for a meaningful change, however small. On a lighter note, we are making 'A happy new year' happen and request your support in the endeavor! Wishing you once again an action filled, positive change oriented 'Happy 2018'.

Installing

wooden floors the
right way!



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Installing wooden floors the right way!

We often get this request – Can we do away with the profile at the junction (where the wood floor meets the other flooring)?

The request is understandable as the Designer or the End user have their focus on how to make the flooring and the details look best! So how do we reconcile the need for aesthetics with practical considerations?

Let us first understand why a profile is needed at the junction?

We know that wood moves – expands, contracts with changes in airborne humidity.

Now as the flooring planks expand, the flooring needs space to expand into. If there is no space (the flooring is tightly abutted to the adjoining flooring or any other restriction), then it is bound to go up since there is tremendous physical pressure.



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This is called buckling. Since we cannot abut it (tightly fit it with the adjoining floor), there will be a visible gap at the junction. This gap is what is covered by the profiles at the junction (ref Pic 1 above).

We recommend using Aluminum profiles as this area of the flooring takes the most abuse.

We stock a range of profiles by Kueberit, Germany who are one of the world leaders in this area. The fixing detail of our Kuberit profiles is excellent and very pertinent for Indian conditions (the flatness of the subfloor is often in question and its fixing system compensates for it to some extent). This makes the overall fixing very sturdy and long lasting.

The problems which crop up if this detail is not properly executed are creaking sounds, movement in flooring panels (flex) as you walk on them and eventual deterioration of the plank locks or the tongue.

Coming back to the initial reason for this discussion - The Designers and the end users wanting to avoid it since the usually used wood profiles don't look so great.

This is a very valid reason and they have every right to expect a beautiful outcome.

With our beautifully crafted Kueberit Aluminum profiles, finally the aesthetic needs of the project can be reconciled with practical considerations.



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5 crucial things

to consider before you
install your wood floors



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5 crucial things to consider before you install your wood floors

Wood floors are an increasing trend in quality residential construction. More and more designers and end users are selecting **engineered wood floors** as the flooring surface of choice in premium construction. The reasons are not difficult to understand.

They look great, are easy to install, save tremendous amount of project time as compared to say a marble surface (as much as six months depending on the size of the house), can be easily renewed (depending on the top layer thickness), are hygienic, colour can be changed while renovating (not possible with other hard surface floorings) and can be taken off and replaced without a mess while still living in the house. Now in order to get the most out of your engineered hardwood flooring, here is a list of 5 things to take care of before you have them installed:



Correct timing

This, by far, is the most repeated error that happens. Owners, project managers, site supervisors and designers sometimes in a rush to meet deadlines would have the floors installed while other work at the job site is still going on. While the wish to meet the deadlines is fully acknowledged, one has to understand that you are buying a factory finished, ready to install product that should be put only at the last stage.

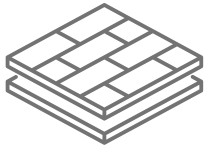
Would you install your fine furniture or furnishings at this stage?

Fine airborne dust from dusty conditions around, from the painters using sandpapers to smoothen the wall surface etc settle inside the beautiful brushed surface (open pores) of the wood flooring. And in order to clean it, the cleaners will use a damp mop at this stage which causes the dust to turn into mud and solidify inside the open grain.

Even if the wood surface is smooth, it can get scratched or dented or the humidity in the air might be too high with all the wet work going on in the house (could cause excessive movement or creaking sounds at a later date) etc.

Often we hear from the site owners or supervisors that they will cover the flooring and then rest of the work would not cause any damage. From practical experience that is rarely the case. With all the workers moving around, it is practically impossible to monitor each and every worker and eventually, some damage occurs. While it is possible to handle these damages later, why get into all this when it is simply avoidable?

Hence this is my **#1** recommendation. Only install your **wood floor** at the right time. Set realistic project completion targets. This is practically the last thing just before the furniture and furnishings move in and the last coat of paint is about to be put in.



Sub floor

Quality of the sub floor (the floor on which your wood flooring will be installed) is crucially important so that the final wood floor is installed correctly. By quality here I mean the flatness (not level), firmness, dryness and cleanliness of the sub floor.

These 4 elements are the key. There is a simple way to achieve this. Just have the sub floor tiled using regular commercial tile.

It is cheap, easily available and in one stroke can give you a flat surface which resists moisture, is firm and gets dry fast. Cleanliness is topical and the flooring installer can just easily clean it with a broom before starting installation. Compared to a cement screed subfloor this is a much better option given the curing time and skill needed to get the cement screed right.



Wall quality at skirting level

This is quite important too. Your wood floor skirting is also a prefinished product and the sub wall surface has to have all the above 4 qualities. However, it is possible to achieve this easily.

Just tell your civil contractor to handle these. If you are able to take your tile up to just below the finished skirting level (flush with the wall), it would be even better since moisture protection would also be taken care of in this case.



Humidity at site

This is crucial and often overlooked. Wood is hygroscopic (responds to moisture) in nature. This is true of all types of wood. And so are your wood floors. Reacting with the increased humidity at the site (if the wood floors are installed early and not when the site has returned to normal humidity levels), will expand more than usual.

This also means they will shrink back excessively when the site returns to normal humidity levels. This can cause some complications which are totally avoidable if care is taken to install only when all the wet work is over with, site conditions of normal air humidity levels achieved and we are installing floors right at the fag end.



Other sources of moisture

While this is related to correct timing as well, this deserves a special mention. We have had situations, although rare, that the floors were installed before the central air conditioning was tested. At one site the builder, in a multi-storey housing project, had not performed the final AC testing while the apartment owner got his wood floor installed.

When the testing was being performed later (the ac was left on) it was found that the water drainage was clogged and the water back-flowed into the room. And the water was substantial.



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This not only damaged the wood floor (some material had to be replaced as the area was practically flooded) it also caused damage to the paint and some of the other items. So the moral of the story is to have your Ac's tested (even if it is a split A/C) and ensure all windows and doors opening to weather are in place and sealed.

At **Span Floors** we do a full site inspection with many additional but crucial points prior to installing wood floors to ensure a successful installation that the homeowner can enjoy for years to come. Following these steps would save cost, lead to a more beautiful installation and happiness for all stakeholders.



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Wood

on building facades

A photograph of a modern building facade featuring a series of dark-stained wooden beams and columns. The structure is composed of thick, rectangular wooden posts supporting horizontal beams, with decorative curved brackets visible at the joints. The background shows a light-colored wall and a clear sky.

Wood on building facades

Wood being a natural element is fast becoming a material of choice in residential building facade cladding world over and particularly in India. This is a rising trend and is particularly seen in the context of cities where villas are the primary abode for the rich and influential. Being a wood deficient country where wood logging is primarily restricted due to environmental factors, the majority of the wood species, raw or finished products, are being imported.

Following this trend, we look at the suitability of timber for such an application and the various alternatives available in the market.

The solid wood cladding products available can be primarily divided majorly into two types - Modified and Non-modified. By modified it is meant that the wood has been physically and/or chemically altered in some manner to make it more suitable for outdoor use.

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Typically these are sustainable wood species being imported from the developed side of the world where such technologies have been commercially developed and are in use for some time now. Modifying wood using high temperatures (thermal modification) is one such technology that has become popular today. Thermal modification entails treating wood at temperatures above 200 degree Celsius typically 215 to 230 degrees which permanently alters wood chemistry by making it more stable.

It also seems to have a positive effect on the resistance to rot which is essentially a fungal mechanism. However termite resistance does not seem to improve and remains more or less the same as of the untreated base wood species. Additional treatments are needed to handle the termite threat. The most effective termite treatments penetrate deep into the wood, and are long-lasting in nature.

Vulcanisation, Acetylation and Furfurylation are other wood modification techniques that are being used to modify wood and are available in the Indian market.



These techniques increase wood stability and rot resistance. The difference between the various technologies lies in changes in base wood colour, its structural strength, stability, resistance to insects and coating performance.

Vulcanisation of timber includes a process which increases termite resistance to a very large extent and is crucial in the Indian context. In the non-modified or natural timber category the available alternates are Ipe, a hardwood primarily originating from South America, Teak wood originating from Burma, India or other plantation forests around the world and others like Cumaru, Western Red Cedar etc.

With growing concerns about the source of timber and sustainability, the cost of these natural, old growth timbers is going up and availability is reducing.

Timbers which are 3rd party certified with traceable origins are more expensive and have a restricted availability.

Though naturally durable, these species require skillful installation to achieve long term durability and beauty. With growing concerns world over on the depleting natural wood resources and sometimes illegitimate deforestation, a preference towards modified, sustainable and certified wood species is seen as an emerging market trend.

To sum it up, when using wood outdoors, the various alternatives should be rated on aesthetics, durability and sustainability. The factors affecting are the wood colour, grain pattern, weathering performance (how the wood ages), resistance to termites, wood insects, fungal decay, coating performance, origin of wood and maintenance protocol.

Used intelligently, wood on the facade can help make any building facade warm and inviting, providing an effective balance in conjunction with other hard surface facade materials such as stone, glass, tiles etc.



Vulcan Wood Decking and WPC Decking



Vulcan Wood Decking and WPC Decking

WPC or wood plastic composite decking had been proclaimed as the answer to problems with wood decking. It rose in popularity during the last few years as a solution to the challenges natural timber offered in terms of maintenance in outdoor exposed applications. Moving on to current times, what was being proclaimed as the answer has now thrown similar challenges. Lowering quality standards, issues with installations, concerns on sustainability have led architects, homeowners to look again for alternative deckings.



A WPC decking gone wrong!

The rise of WPC

One of the main reasons why WPC decking started gaining ground was the issue of maintenance with natural unmodified wood when it was installed in fully exposed applications such as decking, cladding etc. It was more so in decking as sunlight falls on a much steeper angle on a horizontal surface such as decking, leading to fading and surface cracking. During those years, the modern real wood technologies such as Vulcan modified timber had not arrived yet hence WPC was considered an answer.

One thing is to be noted though - Consumers and Architects always wanted real wood products and even in the alternatives they sought, they wanted them to look like real wood. In fact one of the key selling points of most producers and marketers of synthetic flooring and decking materials made of plastic use is that their material copies the look of real wood closely. This shows the affinity we have for natural timber or wood.

Basic issues with WPC



Appearance

While all products have their pros and cons, the biggest challenge with WPC is the fake wood appearance. One look at real wood decking and WPC decking make this point very clear.

Most consumers do not like the idea of so much plastic on their feet. Having said that, it is a subjective decision based on individual choice.



Dents and Scratches

Composite decking scratches and dents rather easily. Moving outdoor furniture, kids playing, dropping objects, dog nails etc are part of life in any active home. This may lead to irreversible damage in a WPC decking board. In a real wood decking board such as Vulcan,

it could always be sanded and refinished. Another thing to know is that WPC deckings have an outer covering which is called the protective cap. If this is penetrated with a sharp object, the exposed core of the decking can cause serious issues.



Temperature

Talking about the Indian climate, for most parts of the year and in most geographies within our country, you can imagine the decking being exposed to our scorching sun.

WPC tends to get rather very hot under the feet. Dark colours tend to get much hotter as compared to lighter ones.

Basic issues with WPC

Strength

Another point to note is the strength part. Even though it is very heavy, you would find that it is actually weaker than modified wood.

Gauging its strength only by weight and not by actual performance may lead to wrong conclusions.

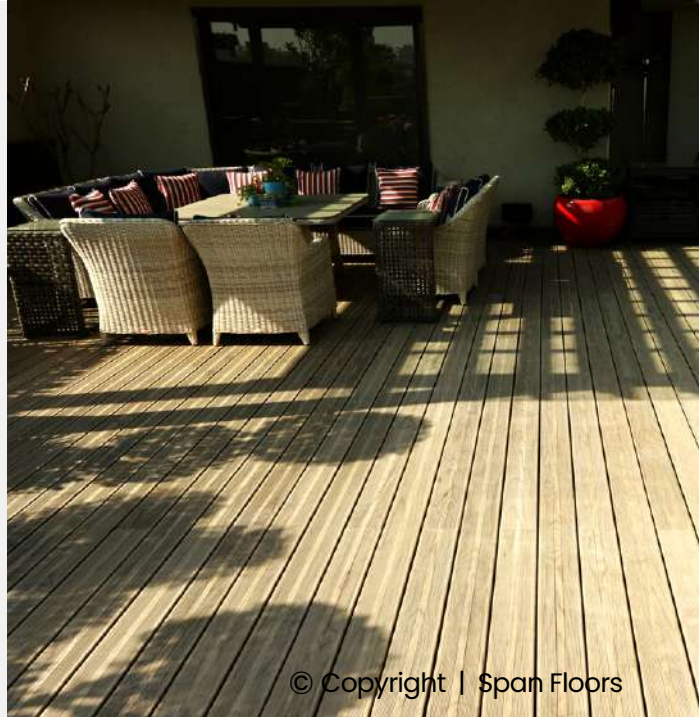
Environment

Sustainability being a key issue nowadays, WPC has been proclaimed as being “Eco friendly”. Let us look at how we could correctly gauge the impact of a product on our planet. In order to do so correctly, we will have to look at the life cycle,

from manufacturing to transportation to end of life disposal. WPC has a significant energy consumption during this entire life cycle. Also recycling plastic is not so simple and cost-effective as it is shown to be.



Vulcan modified wood decking



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As Research evolved in the area of real wood, newer solutions came into existence. One of the best solutions to the problems of natural timber is the Vulcan decking. Made out of plantation timber (from forests specially grown for the purpose of commercial use without harming natural forests) thus sustainable, Vulcan Decking is also very stable (taking care of the warping concerns with natural non modified timbers), can be left uncoated/unfinished even in the Indian sun or can be coated to the desired colour using proprietary protector oils and other coatings to provide a nice finish and long term protection. One of the prime concerns people have is insect attacks.

Vulcan timber has been demonstrated to be very resistant to termites and fungal decay due to the specific treatments involved.

In terms of day to day maintenance, no material is 100% maintenance-free. Vulcan Decking requires simple cleaning with water and at times with household gentle detergents. In case the end user wants to maintain the initial colour, it will have to be periodically oiled depending on the exposure. WPC is similar in this instance in that it also needs the above treatment however with one major difference. As shared above, it can not be sanded and re-stained like Vulcan real wood in the event of scratches and fading.

Natural wood beauty

Real timber has a warm, inviting and natural appeal thus it is ideal for creating outdoor relaxation and entertainment spaces. When exposed to sun, it turns to a

beautiful silver-grey colour which can be refinished or stained to any colour at any time.



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Vulcan decking at a terrace in a Delhi home

There is nothing more beautiful than a natural wood deck. Wood has a warm ambience to it and makes for a very inviting entertainment or relaxation space. Vulcan wood decks also age to a beautiful, silver patina over time.

In order to make this grey, aged appearance even and uniform, a new coating has been specifically developed. This is a very long-lasting finish and provides additional protection to the wood.

Conclusion

How one chooses to solve the problems in natural timber decks is an individual choice and preference. One thing is clear though - Vulcan wood decking can now handle all of the traditional issues with natural timber as well as WPC decking boards as discussed above but with one clear advantage. It is still 100% real wood! All in all, Vulcan wood outperforms composite decking in nearly all categories.

Homeowners and Architects looking for a decking solution can opt for Vulcan decking over natural timber or WPC decks. Not only is Vulcan wood 100% natural, but it is also very attractive and combined with easy maintenance and the ability to be renewed whenever desired to a new colour, it is the ideal choice for modern homes.

About Span Floors

Span Floors distribute Vulcan wood profiles for Facade Cladding, Decking, Pergolas as well as Vulcan timber sections for joinery applications across India. For more information on Span Floors products,



visit www.spanfloors.com or
reach us at +91 99715 09922 or 92120 96387.



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Do good old brick &
mortar stores
make sense in these
online times?



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Do good old brick & mortar stores make sense in these online times?

We now live in "online times" so to say. Connected 24 x 7, fast access to anything and everything over the web and tons of data! Where do businesses and people who still have more of a "physical orientation" stand?

Are they completely out of times or they still have some hope?

Well, my opinion is the market has just got segmented further. Internet and online sales are definitely here to stay and have added tremendous value by creating another distribution channel which works very well for a certain kind of products and services.

On-demand information, entertainment, advice and of course some physical products. However, there still remains a large product category that should rather be touched and felt.

A human interface while completing such a sale, information or an advice cycle adds tremendous value and impact. For such businesses internet is the first line of consumer interaction and can help in building awareness and helping consumers do their initial research. However one must remember that a quality decision depends on quality data! So in certain products, it becomes important (particularly high value) that a person perceives the product personally so as to have maximum first-hand data (touch and feel of the product, a chance to observe the salesperson while communicating and a face to face discussion to clarify all doubts, queries). I personally think that internet or online models are more an aid rather than a replacement in such product categories. A combination of both can provide an effective solution to consumer interaction and decision making. For instance, in our business (#woodflooring#decking#cladding),

we have been investing both in online information dissemination (www.spanfloors.com) as well as our physical stores (pic above) so as to provide our customers with maximum quality data in a manner that is simple and easy to absorb and can help them arrive at a good decision. High-quality online pictures, specifications, advice combined with physical displays and face to face product consultation all combine to help us achieve that. Our products are long-lasting and a consumer is likely to buy them at most 2-3 times over the lifespan. So in such products, it is well worth the end user's time & effort (visiting stores, personal interaction etc) so as to get the right data and consequently derive maximum benefit out of the purchase cycle!



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