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DESIGN & INNOVATION

Click systems have been one of the primary stories in product development for the last few years. Now that everyone offers them, the push has clearly moved toward design realism, as manufacturers try to distinguish themselves from the competition. Surface texturing has been around for a few years now, and the process continues to evolve. A recent development is in-register embossed grout lines for tile looks. Now laminate producers are coming out with true in-register embossed surfacing, where the underlying design matches up with the surface embossing, in products with both tile and wood looks.

Nobody does this better than Faus, which was offering those looks as early as Surfaces 2001. The firm focuses on private label programs, so several other players in the North American market offer Faus; products with their own designs. Manufacturers selling true-in-register embossed products include Alloc, Armstrong, Wilsonart, Shaw and Formica. Later this year, Uniboard will also come out with this technology on its wood designs.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

There are, of course, the niche players, and there's no better example of that than the Faus Group. More than anything else, Faus is a technology company. It focuses all its efforts on product, which is arguably the best on the market. Faus out sources its core, and sells most of its glueless products in the U.S. through private label deals.

The firm's strategy is to corner one small but growing part of the market and clamp down on it like a pit-bull. U.S. sales doubled in 2001 and will probably increase by over 50% this year. A number of the dominate players in the laminate industry sell Faus products. One of the reasons Faus is successful is because all the big players want a top of the line product, but none is willing to make the investment to develop it. As long as the competition keeps manufacturers running full throttle, Faus will probably remain secure in its niche