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Decorative Concrete Engraving

Taking Concrete Floor Surfaces to the Next Level

By Paul J. DeFino

Finishing concrete floor surfaces, inside and outside, has dramatically grown in popularity and acceptance in recent years. More staining and sealing products are available and the processes have become increasingly user-friendly, allowing contractors to experience an improved dependability on return on investment with lower risk of job failures.

Among the fastest growing processes in decorative concrete is concrete engraving.

and, most importantly, a nearly infinite range of looks, colors and pattern/graphic reproduction that can be achieved.

Decorative Concrete Options Abound

Staining and sealing concrete surfaces are long-accepted processes. Adding tex-

ture to concrete surfaces is now what the market demands. Consumers and commercial enterprises are looking to replicate higher-cost building materials on or in concrete, and add relief in replication of graphical treatments and designs, such as corporate logos, corporate/city seals, emblems reflecting individual passions,



ing. The reasons for the growing acceptance of decorative concrete engraving are simplicity of process, lower materials cost,



Concrete floors can be luxurious while remaining tough and easy to maintain with decorative concrete engraving. (Photo courtesy of Engrave-A-Crete Inc.)

About the Author

Paul J. DeFino is a principal of the consulting firm Opportunity Inc. For nearly 15 years, he has assisted entrepreneurs within service and contracting businesses to increase their return on investment. Visit www.opportunity-inc.com to contact them or learn more about their services.

Comparing the Decorative Concrete Options

	Concrete Engraving	Concrete Stamping	Concrete Overlay
Uses existing cured concrete	X		X
Mixing & applying cement or polymer			X
Polymer overlay used on existing concrete surface			X
Process done before concrete is cured		X	
Process done after concrete is cured	X		X
Rubber mats used for designs		X	
Plastic templates used for designs	X		X
Tracking systems used for designs	X		
Can free-hand designs with equipment	X	X	X
Multiple people required to do process		X	
Easy to learn	X		X
Rain will negatively affect process		X	X
Design can peel off			X
Pattern permanently in concrete	X	X	
Repairs easily	X		
No thickness added	X	X	
Stain and oil resistant	X	X	X
Flexible at existing cracks	X		
Easy to clean	X	X	
Economical	X		
Low overhead costs	X		
East of customization	X		
Personalization	X		

or numbers and letters/initials. The more complex the look created, the higher the perceived value by the end customer.

Options for achieving such effects can be simplistically described as:

Concrete Stamping – The process of stamping texture and designs into wet material with a rubber mold.

Concrete Overlay – Adding a thin layer of cementitious/acrylic polymer coating to an existing concrete surface. Relief and designs are often achieved by applying pattern tape or stencils to the surface in advance, then removing the tape after the surface has hardened.

Concrete Engraving – Using specially designed machines to cut patterns in existing plain or colored concrete which simulate grout lines of standard building materials. Other methods use tools and templates to precisely chip away sections of the concrete, revealing designs of exacting detail replicating any pattern or graphic.

Cost of Starting New or Adding to an Existing Business and Training

Depending on what business you are currently in and what tools and equipment you currently own, the cost of entering any of the decorative concrete business options will vary greatly.

Customized concrete engraving equipment varies in options and capability. It is possible for an entrepreneur to enter

the business with a minimum investment of under \$5000. Full turnkey business-on-wheels trailer packages are also available for under \$60,000.

When evaluating the start-up costs and degrees of difficulty of offering decorative concrete services, do not forget to evaluate training and future technical support. There are numerous training options available that can be researched online. Possibly the most important question you should be asking is whether your trainer or supplier will be available to you in the future for technical support when you encounter a new circumstance on a job site.

How Hard Do You Want to Work?

The processes of concrete stamping and concrete overlay often requires the mixing of concrete or the mixing of bagged acrylic polymer material with application over existing concrete. Anyone who has mixed material will attest to the fact that this can only be described as back breaking labor. Beyond the physical demands, any outdoor application of these processes is extremely environmentally sensitive. timing of rain can create havoc with the processes and leave the contractor with no options other than ripping up existing work. This uncontrollable scenario can destroy any profit margin left for the installer and makes scheduling of repair and delays of future commitments no less than a nightmare.

The process of decorative concrete

engraving is growing in popularity due to the fact that there is no back breaking labor. Contractor/installers are not adding material to the existing surface. Machinery is relatively small, manageable, and light. These facts have made the process and business extremely attractive to both sexes.

Where Is the Art?

When the compelling arguments of economics and ease of work are put aside the tables turn completely in favor of decorative concrete engraving when considering the artistic potential and the then natural leap to be paid as an artisan versus a tradesman.

Concrete stamping is limited to continuous replication of a pattern of a mold and the application of one color. Some design flexibility exists, but complexity creates multiple problems in installation.

Decorative concrete engraving offers unlimited options. Replication of the looks of standard building materials such as brick, circular brick, cobblestone, flagstone, river rock, are what decorative concrete engraving machines are meant to do. Additionally, these designs can be enhanced by simple techniques to vary coloring in/on individual simulated stones or sections of the project. Varying patterns for borders and multiple patterns within the overall design are easy when planned in advance.

Decorative concrete engraving offers unlimited potential for artistic expression and often allows the contractor to command a higher price.

The Ultimate Differentiator

The world of decorative concrete engraving has within it a package of tools called the KaleidoCrete System. These innovative tools, when used with specially designed and manufactured templates, allow contractors to permanently engrave nearly any pattern or design in a concrete surface. This process allows for:

- Marketing to corporations, government, and associations for logo replication anywhere there is concrete in or around their facility.
- Opportunity to upsell to customers for the reproduction of graphics depicting their personal passion. Examples of



Numerous decorative concrete engraving tools are available. (Photo courtesy of Engrave-A-Crete Inc.)

this may include horses for the equestrian, ship's wheels for the boater. The opportunities are nearly endless.

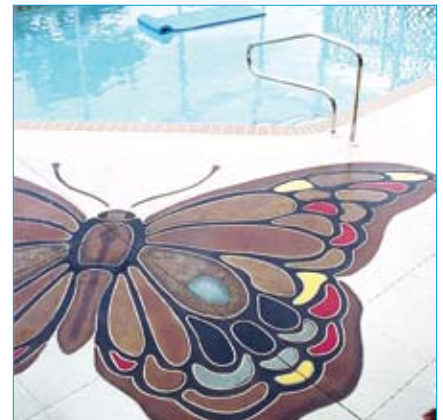
- A price as art versus the traditional square foot price driven off the alternative building material option.

It May Come Down To What Is Easiest To Sell

The sale of decorative concrete Engraving services is an art as well. The traditional approach of showing a photo album of past jobs or suggesting that purchasers visit past jobs is no longer enough. The sophistication of decorative concrete engraving has allowed for the introduction of customized simulation software. Picture a scenario where you visit a prospect job site and, when first arriving, snap a digital photo of the location. While interviewing the prospect this photo is downloaded into a laptop and, as your prospect articulates their vision, you work with the software to simulate patterns, colors, and graphics that your prospect is describing on the photo image of the actual job location. In the case of corporations or commercial enterprises, a right-click on a logo or emblem on a prospect's Web site allows the salesperson to drop the graphic into



Decorative concrete engraving is a service that can be sold for interiors and exteriors and allows for personalization with the engraving of nearly any pattern or graphic. (Photo courtesy of Engrave-A-Crete Inc.)



With Decorative Concrete Engraving, pool decks can be transformed into artistic displays. (Photo courtesy of Engrave-A-Crete Inc.)

the design in any scale. The end result is a sales experience that leaves a lasting impression of professionalism and an accurate printed visualization of the end product.

The world of decorative concrete is changing and growing. If you are considering entering the business or are considering supplementing an existing business with the service, seriously weigh the benefits of concrete engraving. Proper planning and introduction

should:

- possibly lower your cost of business entry.
- provide easier work.
- provide you with an end product that will command a higher price.
- provide you with a process for the most advanced sales approach.
- provide you with the ability to sell art.
- provide you with a way to gain a higher return on investment capital and time.

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