



2010 Concrete Flooring Report

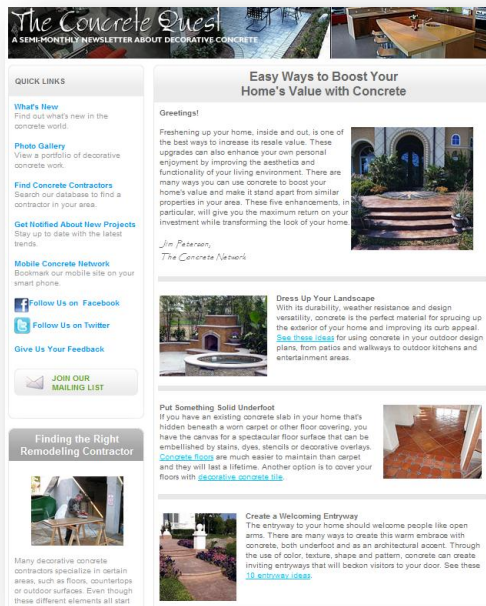
By Jim Peterson, President of ConcreteNetwork.com



ConcreteNetwork.com

About this report

In August 2010, we asked our consumer newsletter recipients eight questions to garner their opinions about concrete floors. We received 454 responses, and their answers and comments were quite enlightening.



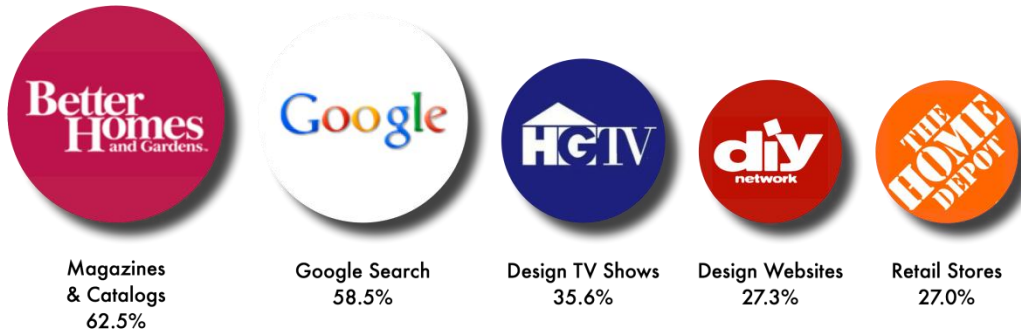
As you review the results, be aware that these respondents are subscribers to our newsletter—thus this group is predisposed to liking concrete. But you can still learn much from the responses.

About the Newsletter

The Concrete Quest is a free semi-monthly newsletter about decorative concrete trends in and around the home. It provides design ideas, technical resources, advice on working with contractors, money-saving tips, and more resources homeowners, builders and designers can use to make wise decisions during the building process.

So here we go...Question #1

Where do you get design ideas for flooring surfaces?



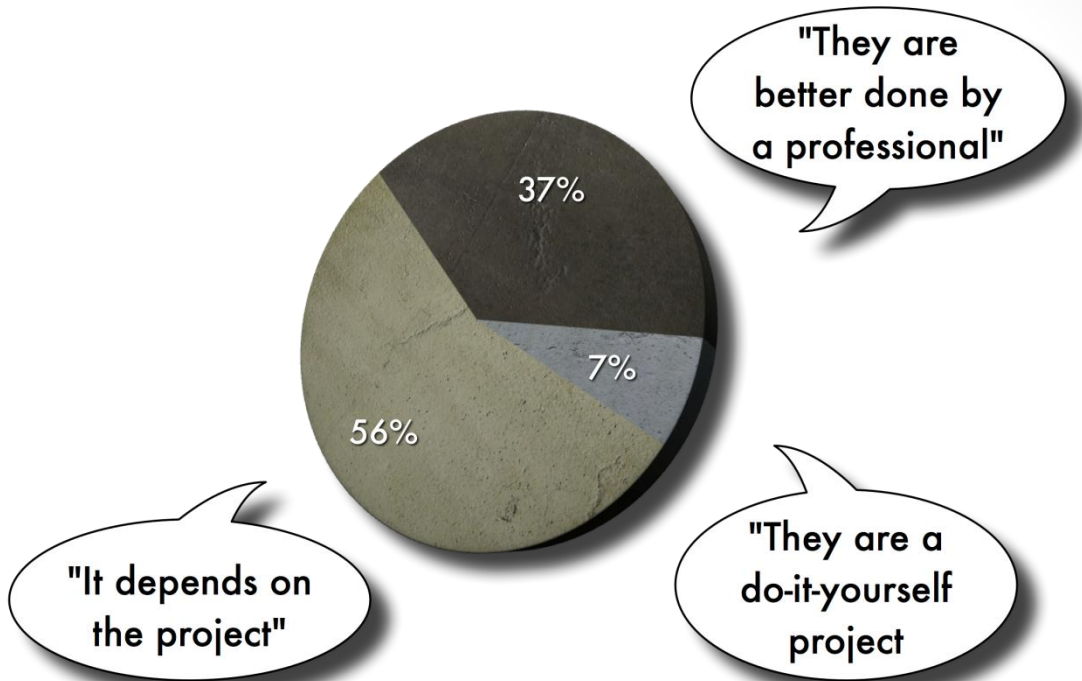
Despite the growing popularity of the Internet, people still turn to magazines and catalogs as sources for design ideas. Popular magazines include *Dwell*, *Woman's Day*, and *Better Homes & Gardens*. People are also perusing Pottery Barn and Restoration Hardware catalogs for ideas.

Opportunity

The concrete industry has no or very little representation in the shelter magazines—in fact, an article about flooring choices that ran in one of these magazines earlier this year did not even mention concrete as an option. The Concrete Network can help in raising awareness of the concrete option to shelter magazines by conducting surveys, such as this one, and sharing the results with editors. If they know the extent to which consumers are choosing concrete and why, they are more likely to include it in their coverage.

Question #2

Which of the following best describes your perception about coloring concrete floors?



Note that only 7% of the respondents unequivocally think concrete floors are a DIY project. The 55% of respondents who say “it depends on the project” need to be given complete and honest information on what is involved to do the job right. In short, these respondents are saying, “I need just a little more information as to why I shouldn’t expect to do this work myself.”

It is the responsibility of industry and contractor websites, contractors and manufacturers to convey the truth about the complexity of decorative concrete work. However, we suggest not going on the defensive in describing why it is not a DIY project, which may be regarded with skepticism. Instead, proudly state the steps the contractor will take to ensure the job is done right—from protecting surrounding surfaces, to surface preparation, to installation, to sealing and protecting the floor.

Opportunity

*Create collateral sales materials that give a basic overview of the concrete floor installation process (what is going to happen, not **how** it is going to happen). Instead of explaining what is involved and why it is not a good idea for the client to attempt it themselves (the defensive approach), you are saying “here is what is involved in doing this floor and I’m going to do it right for you.”*

Question #3

What has the greatest influence on why you like concrete floors?



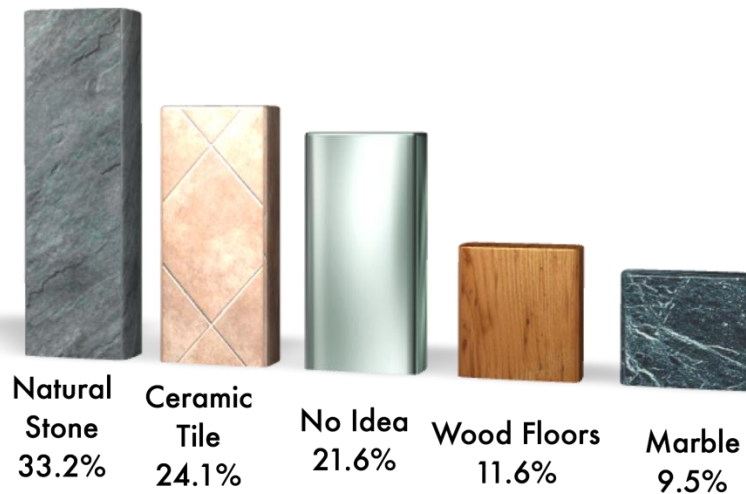
The look of concrete (aesthetics and ability to be customized), and the durability and ease of maintenance are the top benefits that draw consumers to concrete floors. Consumers decide what their top priority is early in the buying process. Focus your discussion and sales presentation on the one or two main benefits that draw them to concrete floors, and then bring up the other benefits if they still aren't convinced.

Opportunity

Get to the real benefit of concrete floors that most influences your buyer. They don't need an overwhelming list of reasons why concrete floors are so great, when only one or two of the attributes really resonates with them. Use your discussions with customers to find out what is really motivating them, and then tailor your sales presentation around that desire.

Question #4

What other floor surface material do you think is most comparable in price, quality, and aesthetic appeal to concrete floors?



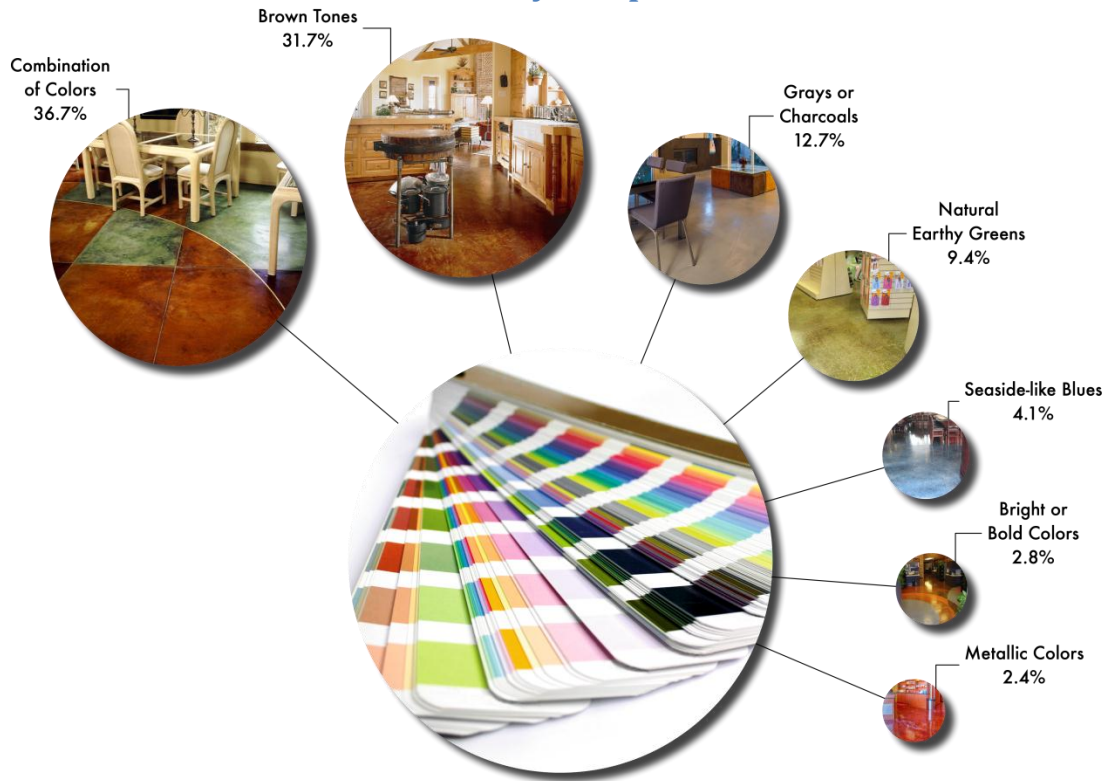
Concrete is in the ballpark with the heavy-hitter surface materials such as natural stone and tile. It's up to us in the industry to promote the added-value benefits of concrete. It's also important to note that many people don't see concrete as comparable to any other material (reflected by the "no idea" responses). To many, concrete is completely unique...and this is your *best* customer!

Opportunity

If concrete is just one of the choices on the table for your client, find out what factors are drawing them to stone or tile or another flooring material, and then point out what makes concrete a better alternative. For example, emphasize that they won't need to cover their decorative concrete floors with carpet or another surface material, making concrete easy on the environment. Talk about how easy concrete is to clean and maintain. And showcase the many design options not possible with other flooring materials.

Question #5

If you were installing a concrete floor in your home or office, what color scheme would be your preference?



Colors make grand statements in a room, and consumers have strong opinions about the colors that appeal to them the most. Although warm browns and grays are the most popular solid-color choices, the most important takeaway here is that consumers want a choice. Show them the color combinations that are possible and emphasize that you can give them any color they want. Remember, though, that people are opinionated about what colors they like. So if they prefer brown floors, don't hand them a color chart. Instead, show them the many tones of brown they can choose from.

Opportunity

Group your photos and show samples of floors within each floor color type. For example, Sherwin-Williams organizes their paint colors in categories such as "beach theme." Help your customer by narrowing down their preferred color choices and then showing them all the ways they can have a floor in the color they select.

Question #6

How likely are you to include a personalized design, custom logo, or emblem if you were installing a concrete floor in your home or office?

Likely 79%



Not Likely 21%



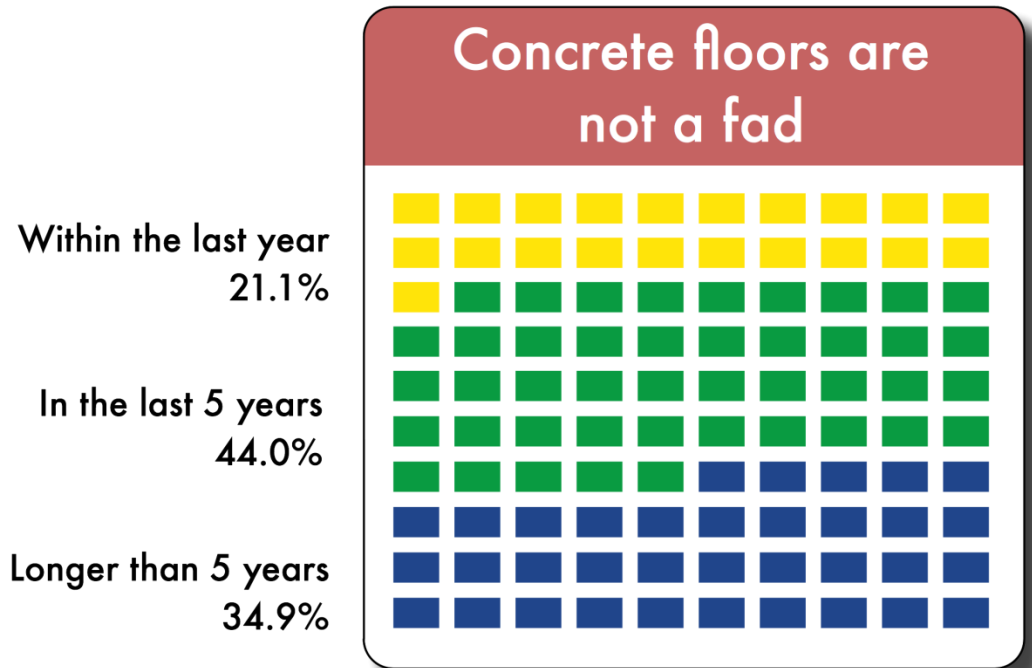
Every concrete floor is customized and unique, and two-thirds of respondents say they like that quality and want to give concrete floors their own personal touch. Personalizing a floor might include adding a border, sawcutting a pattern, or getting more complex by installing a stenciled logo or emblem.

Opportunity

No matter what their budget, show your customers how they can personalize their floor. Show them your portfolio of past projects to give them examples of possible patterns and colors. Emphasize how that special personalized touch will make their concrete floors unique.

Question #7

When did you first learn about decorative colored concrete floors?



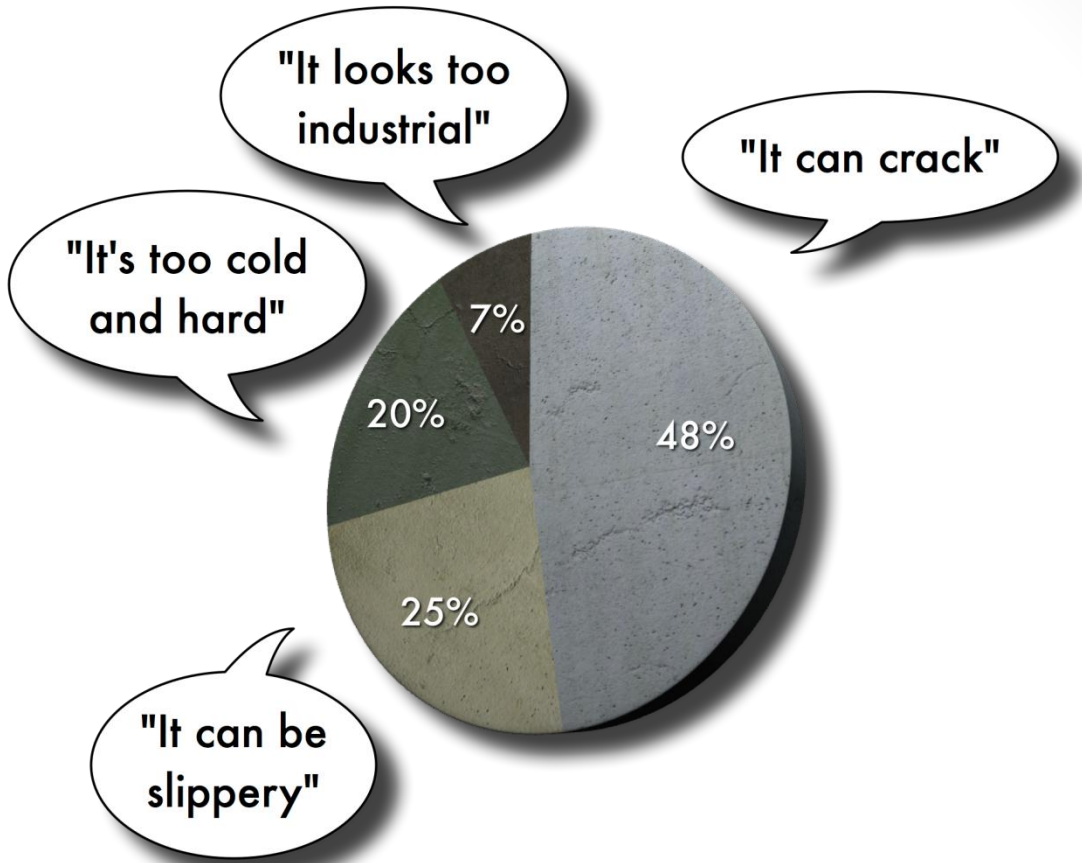
Over 82% of respondents have known about concrete as a finished flooring surface for over five years. Almost everyone has encountered decorative concrete floors in restaurants and retail stores and are familiar with what they look like.

Opportunity

Awareness is the first step in the sales process and, as an industry, we've hit that. The vast majority of people know what decorative concrete is. Now we need to move them through the sales cycle (awareness, interest, desire, action). When you have a client that you're working with, they've already progressed through the awareness and interest phases. Now in your sales presentation, you need to build the desire and lead them to action.

Question #8

What is one thing you DON'T like about concrete as the finished surface for interior floors?

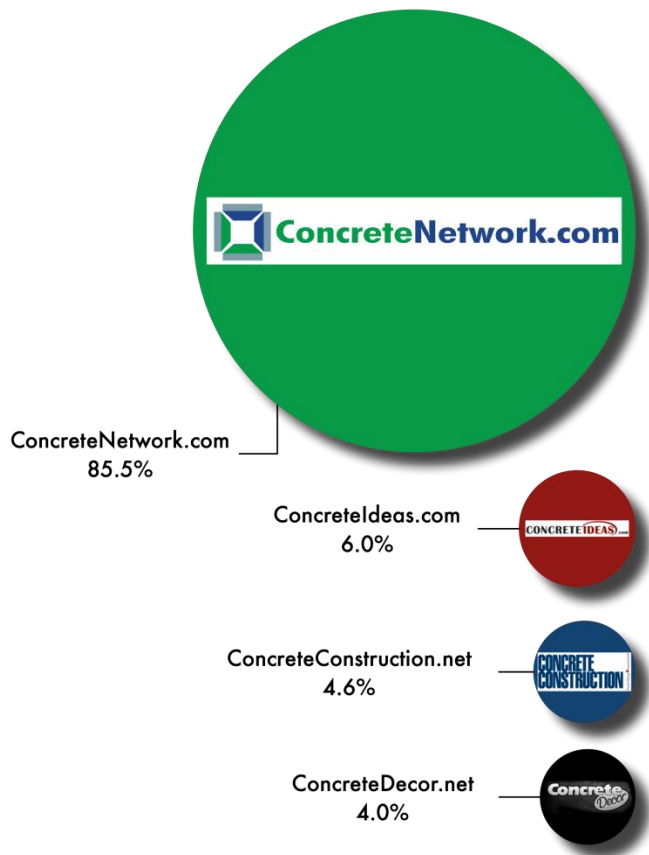


The most common objection to concrete floors is the inevitable cracking. For some people, cracking is part of what's appealing about concrete floors, giving them a natural aged look. For those concerned about cracking, you can educate them about how cracks can be repaired or covered with a microtopping. Regardless, give them solid, honest answers to their concerns.

Opportunity

If you have a prospect that doesn't like concrete floors for any of these reasons, dispel those objections by offering suggestions on how to overcome them. Just keep in mind that you may not be able to sell concrete to everyone. If a perspective client voices too many concerns, accept that the person is just not a good candidate for concrete flooring. The good news is that the market is established, and people recognize that concrete is a viable flooring option.

Additional Comments



Although it couldn't easily be incorporated into a graph, 32 respondents typed 'Concrete Network' into the comments section of the survey when asked where they get their design ideas. Using site traffic statistics from Compete.com, this graph compares concrete-industry websites that provide information about decorative concrete. ConcreteNetwork.com is the clear resource for consumers to find information, design ideas, and styles for their concrete floors.

2010 Concrete Floor Trends

Concrete floors continue to gain strength in the surfaces market. A majority of people have heard about decorative concrete and have likely seen it in a restaurant, a retail store, or even a private residence. The benefits and value that concrete offer continue to spread, introducing more and more people to this established medium.

One common theme evident through the analysis of these survey results is that consumers need a contractor to be helpful—to help them execute their ideas and give them tangible results. That's why it is important to find the one benefit that resonates with your buyer, and remind them and show them how concrete can perform for them. Guide them through the design process by anticipating what they need—by grouping photos of similar floor colors, for example, and by showing them various ways they can personalize their floor.

In addition, it's important to show value. Sales presentations should show **why** the project will be done right with you, the contractor, at the helm. Emphasize the attributes of concrete and the host of benefits it offers. Educate the consumer on how concrete compares favorably to more common flooring materials.