

CWA Member Spotlight, December 2012



Mike Palmer of Cascade Specialty made the switch from gyms to flooring after installing a new floor at his own facility. When Palmer is not working with gyms to solve their flooring issues, he is leading multi-pitch routes in the North Cascades and enjoying the views. We are excited to hear his unique perspective in this month's member spotlight.

CWA: Tell us a little about the history of Cascade Specialty

MP: I started selling floor materials after putting a new floor in Cascade Crags, my climbing gym in Everett, WA. After selling the gym to Vertical World in 2005, I started Cascade Specialty to continue to help climbing gyms with their flooring needs. Prior to opening my own gym, I helped build several other gyms in the Seattle area.



CWA: What sets Cascade Specialty apart from other flooring providers?

MP: I provide design, materials, and installation for the latest in landing surfaces. My designs are one of the most cost-effective and low maintenance systems available. I'm willing to work with the customer to offer a package that works for them, such as helping them install the floor themselves if that is what they want to do.

CWA: What is your biggest challenge as a flooring company, and how have you overcome it to achieve your current success?

MP: One of our biggest challenges is getting the right information in the customers' hands before they are locked in to designs that create problems. Ideally customers would ask all the right questions up front when they are doing their business plan, and not wait until the end to find out they didn't budget enough, or have overlapping fall zones. We have been successful through finding a niche and by having a gym design, management, and construction background. Our unique combination of experiences makes us more than just a place to buy materials.

CWA: What is the biggest obstacle that the climbing industry faces?

MP: Getting consensus on Industry practices and implementing them before they are legislated. The CWA is doing a great job in this area, but there is more room for gyms to join the mainstream community. They are an independent bunch, and they don't always see the need for change.

CWA: What is your favorite thing about your company?

MP: I love being my own boss and being able to work from home. I also really enjoy working with people who have a vision, and feel I can help them fulfill it. I get to spend a lot of time educating our customers about flooring. It may not guarantee I get the job, but at least I know the customer got something that will protect their climbers, and didn't throw their money away on something that wouldn't work.



CWA: What is the biggest lesson that you have learned in the climbing industry?

MP: That getting consensus in the industry takes a lot longer than you think, but that it is worth it to persevere, even if the changes seem small.

CWA: What's next for Cascade Specialty?

MP: Continue to work with the CWA and the other flooring manufacturers, on Guidelines for landing surfaces, and to keep working to design floor systems that are cost effective and state of the art.

For more about Cascade Specialty, visit www.cascadespecialty.com

Visit the Climbing Wall Association website at www.climbingwallindustry.org

**Pictures display Cascade Specialty products in action at The Factory Bouldering Gym in Orange, CA*