

Spotlight

Marketing executive takes the floor for flooring company

By Jackie Pilossoph | Contributor

WILMETTE

Doug Stein got into the flooring and carpet business by accident.

The owner of Kashian Bros. said his friend, who was the former owner of the business, asked Stein in 2004 to help turn it around.

"The business was being run part-time," said Stein, who holds an MBA in marketing, and who spent most of his career in marketing for various houseware companies. "It became apparent to me that someone needed to be focused and on the site at all times."

So, in 2006, Stein bought the business and became the sole owner.

Located on Greenleaf Avenue, just off the beaten path in downtown Wilmette, Kashian Bros., with more than 5,000 showroom carpet samples, sells carpet, area rugs and wood flooring. The company also has a huge cleaning business, servicing carpets, area rugs, air ducts, and upholstery and refinishing wood floors.

"Because of the cleaning business, we have an ongoing relationship with our customers," said Stein. "We're in their homes several times a year and they become very loyal and they come back to us and tell people about us."

Stein said when he started working at Kashian Bros. almost seven years ago, he had to learn the carpet business, and relied heavily on the help of two salespeople who have both worked at the store for 25 plus years.

"Anne and Penny know every



Doug Stein, owner of Kashian Brothers was a marketing executive before buying Kashian Bros. in 2006. | JACKIE PILOSSOPH-For Sun-Times Media

product in the showroom. They both amaze me," he said. "Someone can bring them a piece of carpet from a closet and say, 'Do you still have this?' and they'll both be able to tell you who the mill is, if it's still available, and give similar options if it's not."

Carrie Portland, who has lived in her Winnetka home with her family for eight years recently built an addition to the upstairs, and needed

new carpet for four bedrooms.

"I like their layout here," she said. "I've been to some other places and it's not the same. They have everything sitting out here and it makes it easier to see all the different styles."

This is Portland's second time buying carpet at Kashian Bros. She said she chose to come back because the carpet she purchased seven years ago still looks brand new.

"We view our role in this as trying

Kashian Bros.

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to solve our customers' problems," said Stein. "We listen to their environment. How many kids do they have? How many pets? How much traffic in the room? What is the look and feel they're trying to recreate in the room? It's really important for us to find a product to fit their needs."

Stein considers his business a "small company," but said the company has been first in a lot of ways when it comes to technology. He said Kashian Bros. was the first to introduce a wood floor refinishing process that captures most of the dust, as well as new UV cured finishes for onsite floor finishing.

Kashian Bros. was originally built and started in 1910, and was a rug cleaning company only. The store began selling rugs in the '30s. It has been in the same location since the mid '90s.

"It's a challenging business because we're competing with so many big companies," said Stein. "I like the challenge of going up against them and being able to beat them because we're flexible, our service is personalized, and we're quick to resolve issues and problems that might come up."

"Carpet is an investment," said Portland. "You don't buy it very often, so it's a pretty big decision." ■