

Photos courtesy of Diacon Decorative Polished Concrete



Adrian C. Henry

Diacon Decorative Polished Concrete

Manteca, Calif.

by Kelly O'Brien

ALTHOUGH Diacon Decorative Polished Concrete is only six years old, polishing contractor Adrian C. Henry's years of experience, not to mention his infectious enthusiasm for both installing and educating about polished concrete, have made him something of a rising star in the polishing world.

Henry, 36, is vice president of operations and co-owner of Diacon, based in Manteca, Calif. "There's something about taking a gray slab of concrete and transforming it into whatever the client is imagining," he says. "That's what motivates me."

Henry came to Diacon five years ago after spending the previous eight working as a consultant for polishing companies, as well as on-staff at national flooring company QuestMark Flooring and Seattle-based Concrete Restoration Inc. Diacon was brand new, not three projects under its belt, and its co-owners, CFO Robert DeFraia, 36, and sales and marketing VP Jonathan Williams, 37, were new to concrete and in the market for a decorative expert. Henry had experience growing polishing divisions at larger companies, and he says he was "intrigued by the idea of

going to a smaller company and generating the same buzz, getting them on board with what it took."

Now, five years in, generating buzz in the design community and getting the polishing industry on board with what it takes to do consistent, high-quality work are goals that Diacon and its three owners take very seriously. "We try to see ourselves not only as an installer but as an educational company for others, too," says DeFraia. Williams is currently on leave from Diacon's day-to-day, but both DeFraia and Henry spend a lot of their time — with their clients, as well as at industry events and training seminars — working to educate people on the potential of polishing. "We do work with our competitors closely too," says DeFraia. "We spend a lot of time helping each other out, and that makes for a better product."

Of course, the other way Diacon generates buzz for the polishing industry is by putting down a ton of quality polished concrete. In addition to its main California office, Diacon maintains a branch in Seattle and recently acquired a third in Dallas, Texas. With a total staff of about 25, they





average 50 projects a year, and for every single one of those, Henry takes responsibility for making they get the job done right. “He’s the guy who makes sure, every day, that the work that we do comes out quality,” says DeFraia. And indeed, when DeFraia and Williams brought Henry on as their decorative expert, that’s just what they were hoping for.

For his first job with Diacon, Henry drove down from Seattle to the job site at the California Academy of Sciences, in San Francisco. Henry’s philosophy, especially when on the road, is: “When you roll in, it’s dark. When you roll out, it’s dark.” Upon his 6:30 a.m. arrival at the job site,

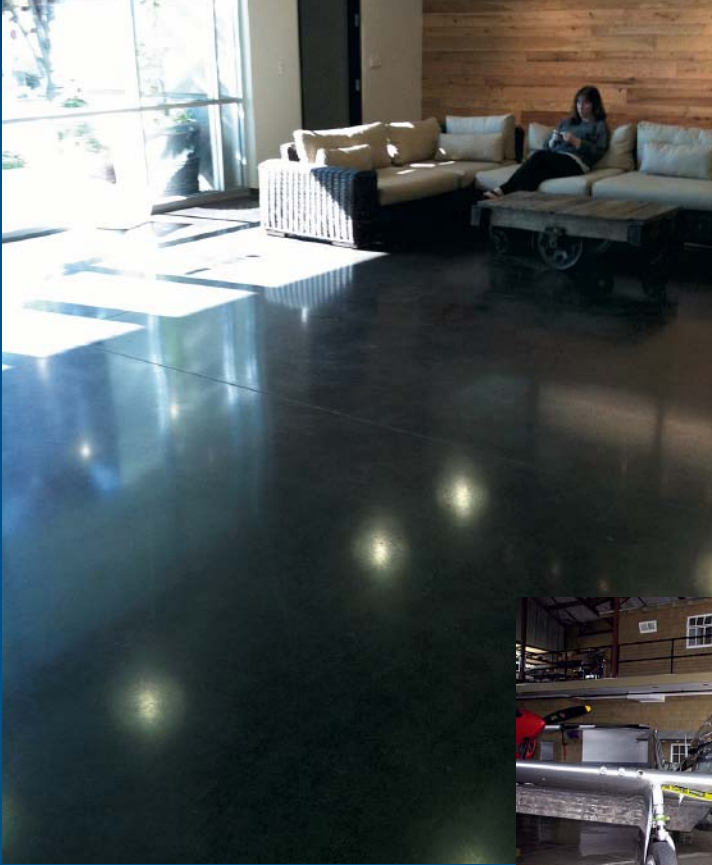
he was perturbed to discover that he had it to himself. When DeFraia and Williams joined him (considerably later), Henry told them exactly what he could offer them. “You need to have an operations guy,” he said, “someone who’s familiar with what it takes to maneuver throughout your day but still be profitable.”

Under Henry’s direction, the Diacon motto has become, essentially, never surrender. “We do not throw our hands up,” he says. “We will not stop until we give our clients what they want.” While that conviction has certainly been put to the test more than once, Henry is an expert at rising

to challenges.

Take the supermarket project where they discovered that substrate under the tiles they were removing was half gray and half crimson, thanks to a shake-on hardener they hadn’t known about. After a quick consult with the client, Henry mixed together a couple of AmeriPolish dyes and colored the gray sections to match the existing red. He was able to get his team back on the job without missing a beat.

Or the project where they were staining and polishing concrete floor panels that, for some reason, wouldn’t take the soy-based stains they were using consistently. Working



with the GC, the architect, and eventually the panel manufacturer, Henry eventually discovered that the panels had been bleached by the water used during the fabrication process. By working with Smith Paints to find a color of their water-based stains that matched the project specifications, Henry came up with an application that wasn't affected by the bleaching and gave the final floor a consistent look.

One of their largest recent projects was for a manufacturing facility that required matching the finish on each of dozens of slabs, as well as making each of the joints look smooth and consistent. Although Henry and

his team worked through those challenges, the project hit them with one last obstacle that was more difficult to overcome. The client was Solyndra, the solar power company that went famously belly up, and they reneged on their contract with Diacon. "We lost a bunch of money with Solyndra," says Henry. "And when you talk about a company that's five years old, that money could've done wonders."

Whether the job-site challenges are technical or financial in nature, though, Henry is ready to meet them. "He's always 100 percent ready to go on any challenge," says DeFraia. "So if we have a complicated job, he's

the first one who wants to get us out there and get our name on it." And Henry wouldn't have it any other way. "If you continue to do same thing day in, day out, you're bound to get nothing but better," he says, "and our goal is to be best installers in the industry."

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Adrian Henry will present "Polished Concrete 101" and "Fundamentals of Polishing Concrete" at the 2012 Concrete Decor Show. For more, go to ConcreteDecorShow.com.

