

# COMMERCIAL Construction & Renovation



## Contractors Profit with Functional Fabric Wall Systems

**Contractors are discovering a new profit center by installing versatile, stretched fabric wall finishing systems** instead of going with the usual options of paint, traditional upholstery, or wrapped panels.

The benefit of a stretched fabric wall surface is that it transforms a wall into a beautiful, functional surface. It is tackable like a bulletin board; has acoustical properties that reduce noise and sound transmission through walls; and can withstand high impact in high wear areas so is very low maintenance. The system is also versatile since refreshing the walls or updating the colors requires only changing out the fabric.

Such fabric wall finishing systems are easily installed on site. A variety of fabric types, colors and patterns are available. Even floor-to-ceiling, high definition graphics can be printed on the fabric.

Various multi-panel designs can be installed from railroad track designs to abstract, curved, and custom shaped patterns using flexible track. With so many options, site fabricated wall coverings can be used to conform to most architectural features.

Best of all, there are no up-front costs for contractors – and free training, support, and assistance is available to help them thrive when adding such offerings to their existing services.

“When I first installed a stretched fabric wall finishing system in my studio, I never dreamed it would lead to doing contract work in so many homes, offices, schools, restaurants, companies, and movie studios,” says John Cox, President of John Cox Integrations (JCI), a Southern California based contractor of residential/commercial remodeling and new construction.

“We have even done work on Steve Carell’s home theater, and Snoop Dogg’s production studio,” adds Cox. “The system has created a profitable business for us because there are so many opportunities for installing it.”

### **A Versatile New Approach**

In Cox’s case, the fabric wall finishing system he utilizes is manufactured by Fabricmate, a Ventura, CA based producer of innovative wall finishing systems.

To accommodate the diverse needs of contractors, the wall finishing supplier offers its products in a wide range of sizes from ready-to-hang premade panels and ready-to-install modular panel kits to site-fabricated wall finishing systems. The covering can be installed on top of any existing surface, so it can be used to quickly refresh a site’s look, or for complete remodels and new installations.

Each panel consists of three parts: a fabric covering, a backing material, and a fabric mounting frame. The fabric covering is stretched over the backing and held taut by the fabric mounting frame. This allows the panel surface to spring back when struck, effectively mitigating visible damage allowing for years of performance. The excess fabric is rolled into the frame for a clean look. The frame and backing can be reused, and the fabric changed out as desired.

The backing fills in the frame and covers the wall, providing a pinnable bulletin-board like surface for tacking things up, along with impact resistance and the ability to absorb reverberated sound waves that would otherwise bounce off the walls. The fabric mounting frame holds the fabric in place.

For contractors concerned about ease of installation and productivity, installing the wall finishing system can actually be faster than painting when preparation and clean -up is taken into account.

"We can install a typical site fabricated Fabricmate wall finishing system faster than a drywall company can tape it, texture it, and paint it, including drying time," says Chad Cossey, treasurer and lead foreman at Santa Maria Acoustical Co. Inc., a Grover Beach, CA based acoustical contractor specializing in suspended ceilings, acoustical/tackable wall panel systems, and wall protection systems.

The system can also install over unfinished drywall, so there is no need to mud, texture or prime; just tape the drywall joints. Additionally, the system can adjust to match out-of-true conditions so it can be installed on walls, ceilings, soffits and alcoves with no unsightly gaps.

"With traditional wrapped panel systems, we previously had to make the panels fit every spot," says Cossey. "Now with the stretched fabric wall system, we can wrap columns, go around windows, and essentially do everything. The one system handles it all."

### **Help with Projects and Profitability**

There is ample help available at no cost to contractors of any experience level looking to add the fabric wall finishing systems to their professional repertoire.

Cossey, for instance, appreciates the hands-on training and instruction that some manufacturers provide at the outset to get contractors started, teach installation shortcuts, and other tricks of the trade.

He acknowledges that online webinars are available today, as is access to best layout practices and instruction sheets. He notes, however, that early and ongoing manufacturer support can really make a difference in how quickly a contractor can learn the trade and become profitable.

"On our first project, Fabricmate sent a crew of people to work alongside us at our jobsite for a couple of days," says Cossey. "This helped us quickly get up to speed, work through any questions, and successfully complete the job. Years later, I still consult with them once in awhile to get ideas and advice. I may ask 'How do you think this would work?' on more complex projects."

Other job support is provided to contractors as well, such as online access to various project resources. These can range from a material calculator to a submittal and substitution builder, which can help contractors quickly gather all the data sheets, testing documents, and certifications needed to create a complete submittal or substitution.

Some manufacturers will also work directly with contractors in the concept and planning stages of a project. This can assist in the design, functional requirement analysis, layout, material selection, and setting of installation schedules to help contractors meet client requirements as cost effectively as possible.

JCI's Cox relates how good manufacturer support can help contractors profitably expand their opportunities along with their skillset.

"Installation on square walls is easy, but when you get to more intricate work like wall soffits, ceilings, and curvy, wavy designs, that is when consulting with a manufacturer like Fabricmate can really help," says Cox. "They will tell you where and how to run the track, where to cut it, and how to go around obstacles to get the job done right, while saving time and money."

Cox appreciates the manufacturer's help on a recent sophisticated job.

"When I installed a fabric wall system at a home studio, they helped me achieve a look like the cockpit of a Star Wars spaceship, with a circle and a graphic on it," concludes Cox. "They have helped me from day one and are a major reason my business has grown to where it is today."

**For more information, call (866) 622-2996; email [fmsales@fabricmate.com](mailto:fmsales@fabricmate.com); visit [www.fabricmate.com](http://www.fabricmate.com); or write to Fabricmate Systems at 2781 Golf Course Drive, Unit A, Ventura, CA 93003**