



- Home
- Subscribe
- TILE eNews
- Online
- Breaking News
- Web Exclusive
- Flooring Insider
- Tile Blogs
- Current Issue
- Cover Story
- Features
- Columns
- Industry News
- Products
- Resources
- Product Info (Free)
- Archives
- Digital Edition Archive
- eNews Archive
- Gold Book
- Buyers Guide
- Radiant
- Flooring Guide
- Calendar of Events
- Market
- Research
- Industry Links
- Services
- Classifieds
- Career Center
- AEC Store
- TILE Info

Search in: Editorial Products Companies

## Why Certification?

by Scott Carothers  
December 7, 2007

### ARTICLE TOOLS

Email Print Reprints Share

TILE Q & A

For centuries, we have been blessed with the beauty and functionality of ceramic tile. In Europe and the Middle East, we can enjoy the enduring value of centuries-old, beautifully intricate mosaics on floors, walls, and ceilings. These fine examples of craftsmanship were installed by talented tile installers who learned their trade from a skilled and seasoned master mechanic.

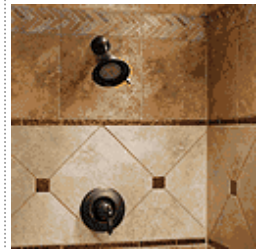
In North America, we have likewise enjoyed the beauty and long lasting qualities of ceramic tile installed by competent tile installers.

The difference we encounter today is that the tradition of handing down "the trade" to the next generation is all but lost. Herein lies the problem.

### How do present training practices impact our industry?

Since generational training is no longer functioning in adequate quantities, we must take action to fill the void left by this previously long-standing "apprentice training" tradition. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the U.S. Department of Labor predicts we will need 23% more qualified tile installers by 2014 to address the demand for ceramic tile.

In addition, the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation (CTEF) routinely receives calls about installation failures. The daily number of calls continues to climb, indicating the need to bolster both the perceived quality and competency of U.S. installers.



[CLICK HERE  
AND JOIN](#)

Our industry has changed from a skill-based to knowledge-based labor force. This is not to say that skill is not required, but today we have a wealth of installation materials, each with specific nuances. The installer must be very well versed and up-to-date in all the technical aspects of each component of the system.

A strong U.S. tile installer pool plays an intricate part in the continued growth of the ceramic tile market. We need to utilize the few training and education facilities in the U.S. to offer basic educational and hands-on training to potential tile installers. Installers with a good foundation of product and installation knowledge can grow into true tile mechanics.

### **What's next?**

While we continue to train and educate new recruits in the tile industry, the time has come to move to the next level. To accomplish this, it is imperative that the perception of the tile installer be raised to that of a tile professional. Certification offers our industry a method to acknowledge the abilities of tile installers.

Certification provides an industry standard and a commitment to a level of knowledge and learning. Like a professional license, certification offers structured, reliable evidence of skills. Certification exams are built on rigorous and standardized criteria.

### **What is available?**

There are several certification programs available. To distinguish the caliber of a program, review the prequalification requirements, curriculum, and testing process to understand the level of expertise being certified.

For instance, CTEF is launching the Certified Tile Installer Program the first quarter of 2008. With a newly developed curriculum and textbook, students will be required to pass a written and hands-on practical test to demonstrate their knowledge and skill.

The three-tiered program includes: Level I-Thinset Floors and Walls; Level II-Mortar Shower Base, Waterproofing and Crack Isolation; and Level III-Mud Floors, Complicated Layout and Design. The prospective tile installer must meet the prequalification process of a one-year minimum of field experience and verifiable trade references. The CTEF certification program will be available in 2008 at six locations to assist students in cutting-down travel and hotel costs and reduce the time away from work.

### Why support certification?

Certification is good for our industry and its future growth. Certified tile installers will enjoy the notoriety and have the credentials to work in all areas of the country. The marketing potential is huge for the installer and will provide them or the firm for which they work with the ability to advertise the quality of their work. Certification provides architects and designers with a pool of pre-qualified tile installers that will raise both the quality and expectation of a beautiful ceramic tile installation.

*Scott Carothers*

*Scott Carothers, Executive Director of Ceramic Tile Education Foundation, has 26 years of experience in the ceramic tile industry. Mr. Carothers has served on the Board of the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) for 12 years and was President of NTCA from 2003 to 2005. He has been a member of NTCA's Technical Committee for 15 years and was Chairman of the committee for 5 years. Visit [www.tileschool.com](http://www.tileschool.com) or call (864) 222-2131 for more information about the CTEF Certified Tile Installer Program.*

Did you enjoy this article? [Click here](#) to subscribe to the magazine.

