

# Q & A with Carmen.

## There really is a Carmen behind Carmen's One-Step.

**How did you get started in the wood flooring industry?**

It starts with my childhood in Romania. My granddad was a carpenter and as a child I helped him and watched him create beautiful on floors. He truly created something beautiful out of nothing. He was a real craftsman who made beautiful floors using primitive tools. I got inspired by his certainty that he could create anything out of wood. When I came to USA, I had an opportunity to start my own business and I choose the flooring industry.

**What was your perception of the trade when you were just starting out?**

It was important to be expert in the industry to succeed. There were lots of obstacles, surprises, and moments where I thought I wasn't going to succeed. But overall, I knew, that I would break through.

**Wood flooring has been traditionally viewed as a male-dominated industry. Was that intimidating when you were starting out?**

When I started, I didn't know about that fact, so I was not intimidated by it. But very quickly, I found out that it is so. I was rejected for one year. That facts were very challenging. I first had to establish a product line, a store, run business and be a Mom. Plus, I barely spoke English when I started. This made it harder to establish good communication with vendors. Despite all those odds I knew I could achieve anything I set my mind to. During the process I started to realize what was needed to succeed: I started developing the organizational skills needed to run the company successfully; getting the product knowledge I needed to select the best products and learning about how the industry worked. I continue to do this today.

**Is the perception of the flooring industry being a "guy-dominated" changing it all?**

Yes. It is our responsibility as women to change that perception by showing our viewpoint on things and knowing we are here to bring value to the industry in our unique way. Therefore, we help and support each other.

**Do you think there are challenges women face in the industry?**

Yes, there are. You must prove your credibility in the industry. And that might take a while. After you achieve that, the sky is the limit.

**Are there any changes you think that would encourage more women to enter the wood flooring industry?**

One of the changes would be to promote this industry to women and help them understand the value they bring to the industry. Women create the beauty and aesthetics in unique ways.

**What advice would you give to a woman considering a career in the wood flooring industry?**

Do it with a passion and persistence. Focus on what you want to achieve in the industry and welcome challenges with a smile instead of being afraid. The mechanics of any business can be learned and mastered but your creativity can't be duplicated. So create!

