Retail environments are demanding. High traffic levels, changes in weather and humidity, and constant impact take their toll on surface materials. Even high pressure laminate (HPL), the undisputed durability leader in horizontal surfacing, can show the effects of continual abuse. Many other materials have entered the market with performance characteristics rivaling HPL. Specifiers, however, should remember that vertical surfacing seldom takes as much abuse as horizontal surfacing. They should look to the wide range of matching programs—which include HPL, thermally fused laminate (TFL), three-dimensional laminate (3DL), foils and other paper laminates—as they value-engineer solutions.

1 In this shoe store, the walls are tiled in different finishes, with concrete-finished tiles on one side and fir veneer tiles in a randomly organized mix of horizontal and vertical grain on the other. The use of MDF for the tiles reinforces the store’s branding, with nods to natural materials it holds important and sustainable man-made materials seen in its products. 2 This is a perfect example of a varied mix of our industry’s materials. Digitally printed high pressure laminate on particleboard creates a dramatic back wall. The majority of the back wall is used to create slatwall fixturing. Three-inch powder-coated lightweight panel shelving gives the display dimension and stability. 3 These architectural wall panels employ custom images and graphics infused into wood veneer panels. Available in Class A fire rated options, they are well-suited for retail markets.
The architectural system in this shop replicates wood slats and louvers but actually consists of aluminum coated with a non-pvc surface. The combination of these materials makes the product perfect for “green” building. Benefits include lighter weight, less cost, less waste, easier installation, as well as more consistent color and finish than real wood.

The right materials play a key role in making airport shops attractive, alluring and functional. Durable decorative surfaces such as high pressure laminate often fit the bill. In upscale gift shops with carefully curated merchandise, the display surfaces are often as important as the products they present. Beautiful, durable, high gloss HPL rises to the occasion.

For the custom millwork in these shops, the architect chose powder-coated steel in combination with laminates for the shelving and cabinet components. Laminates play critical roles because of their durability, ease of maintenance and attractiveness.

See pages 36-82 for more detailed product descriptions and performance characteristics.