

contents

June 2021
vol. 98, no. 5
www.paintmag.com



38 Safety



36 Advice

FEATURES

- 20 Crew Spotlight**
Marc Helmrich of D'Franco Painting demonstrates exceptional leadership skills.
By Jerry Rabushka
- 26 Mission: Vacation**
Kxxxxxxxxxxx
By Emily Howard
- 29 Make Your Own Video**
Making quality videos may be a lot easier than you think.
By Jerry Rabushka
- 33 Addressing Addiction and Mental Health Issues**
Best practices for dealing with these important issues.
By Jerry Rabushka
- 36 Yes, Try this at Home**
Get to know new products before taking them out to the field.
By Jerry Rabushka
- 38 Ding Dong, OSHA Calling**
How to handle (or not to handle) a surprise OSHA inspection.

COLUMNS

- 6 Emily Howard**
xxxxxxxxxx
- 8 Paintmag.com**
Your guide to this month's news, videos and podcasts.
- 18 From the Field**
Why meeting your employees' expectations is as important as having them meet yours.
By Scott Burt

DEPARTMENTS

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Contributors | 10 |
| New Tools | 12 |
| Product Showcase | 24 |
| In My Experience | 41 |
| The Wall | 43 |
| Advertiser Index | 43 |



20 Lifestyles



On the Cover

xxxxxxxxxx
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

paintmag.com

Master your craft, master your business — Read. Watch. Listen. Subscribe.

Paint TV: Learn From the Best



Boost Efficiency With Training and Tools, Part 2

The Imhoff Fine Residential Painting team continues to discuss how to boost efficiency and revenue by using tech in the office and quality tools at the jobsite. Scan the QR code to learn more about these tools.

Sponsored by Purdy.

scan me



Paint Radio Podcast: Listen Anywhere



Time Management With Breakthrough Academy

Need help staying on task? Whether your day is centered on solving immediate problems, future planning or you're looking for new ways to organize your time, check out this episode featuring Danny Kerr of Breakthrough Academy.

Sponsored by Benjamin Moore.

scan me



Paint News: The Biggest Stories



Will Painters Vaccinate?

In response to the hesitancy of many contractors to get a COVID-19 vaccine, a California trade association has launched a "Roll Up Your Sleeves" campaign to encourage them to get the shot. Leave your thoughts in the comment section.

scan me



OSHA Fines Contractor \$104,000

OSHA throws the book at a company that has repeatedly violated safety requirements, one of them seven times.

scan me



Follow us on social media to stay up to date on the latest news.



@PaintMag



@american_painting_contractor

APC Contributors

APC Thanks Its Contributing Contractors & Businesses



Joe Biestek
Rust-Oleum
Vernon Hills, IL



Cindy Howard
Decorative and Faux
Finishes
Sugar Land, TX



Brian Nolan
Nolan Consulting
Conshohocken, PA



David Chism
A David Creations
Frederick, MD



Tim Kenney
W.T. Kenney Co., Inc.
Arlington, MA



Matt Pisaeno
Pisaeno Painting &
Construction
Union, NJ



Michael Craine
Craine Painting
Lake Geneva, WI



Zach Kenney
ZK Painting
Coventry, RI



Matt Rathgeb
Matthew Rathgeb
Painting
Philadelphia, PA



Jeff Dupont
Sound Painting
Solutions
Seattle, WA



Peter Lawton
Parker Safety Group
South Berwick, ME



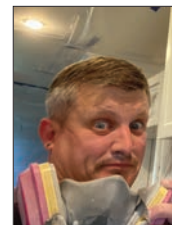
Matt Schmohl &
Curtis Tankersley
Just Add Paint
Shiremanstown, PA



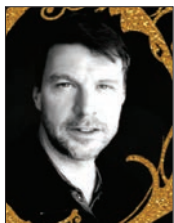
Yanni Fikaris
Custom Renovations
Haddonfield, NJ



Arlene Mcloughlin
Arlene Mcloughlin
Murals
Massapequa, NY



Brandon Smith
Brand New Again
Refinishing
Bismarck, IL



Erick Gatcomb
Gatcomb Painting &
Design
Hancock, ME



Dimitri Nidis
Omega Painting
Services
Reading, PA



Weston Spivey
Premier Painting
Dothan, AL

**Wanna Contribute? If you'd like to be a contributor to APC,
email editorial@paintmag.com.**

New Products

Want more info on our new products?
Scan the QR code with your phone's camera!



Tighten Loose Screws

Have a screw loose? Fixing it has never been easier or faster than with Tank Bond Thread Stopper Tape from DAP.

Thread Stopper Tape absorbs shock and vibration while holding screws tightly in place. It works on all fastener types and sizes and is ready immediately — no dry time required. Simply wrap the tape around the threads of any loose screw for a fast and effective solution. Screws treated with Thread Stopper Tape can still be easily removed and reused up to three times. It works on metal, wood and plastic, and a single roll covers up to 150 screws so you can fix every shake, slip and rattle on the job.



More information at www.dap.com

Long-lasting Wood Coating

Eco Wood Treatment is long-lasting, environmentally safe, and nontoxic. After one application to any wooden structure, there is no need to reapply ever again! It will not wear off, fade or peel. It can be applied to decks, fences, siding and more. It is a proven wood treatment that gives all wood — interior and exterior — a silvery patina/high-end aged, weathered look. The product mixes completely with water; no inert particles are added. It is a natural organic product with no harmful chemicals. Eco Wood Treatment is a member of The U.S. Green Building Council. The eco-friendly product is LEEDS certified.

More information at
www.ecowoodtreatment.com



One-coat Paint

With EVOpaint, you never need a primer or second coat over new drywall. One gallon of EVOpaint replaces 2 to 3 gallons of conventional paint. While a one-coat product, this is not “paint and primer in one.” Carry less product to the jobsite while you and your customer save money on product and labor!

At the manufacturing level, each gallon of EVOpaint is made with Self-Build Technology. The products work by “building” onto themselves in real time while you’re rolling, giving you the equivalent of multiple coats in one application. This is achieved through an exclusive treatment and sequencing of raw materials coupled with unconventional processing methods. Products are low VOC, LEED certified and Green Quantified for maximum life cycle waste prevention.



More information at www.evopaints.com



Pro Drying Rack

The Paint Line’s ProDryingRack EX Plus Series is a heavy-duty rack that can be configured with either three or four towers, each with 15 removable shelves, providing up to 180" of horizontal rack space on each level. The PDREX Plus uses the two-towered, expandable PDREX as the base rack configuration for the series. Each tower includes heavy-duty, 5" locking casters and anti-torque stabilizers for rolling the entire rack to the desired shop area, even under load.

PDREX3 features:

- Three-tower rack with stabilizers and shelves.
- 120" (10') of horizontal rack space on each level.
- 1,350-lb. weight capacity.

PDREX4 features:

- Four-tower rack with stabilizers and shelves.
- 180" (15') of horizontal rack space on each level.
- 1,800-lb. weight capacity.

More information at www.thepaintline.com



Mess-Free Paint Can Spout

The Paint Can HERO is the tool painters need to effortlessly prep, pour, apply and store paint. Designed to nest inside a one-gallon paint can, the extendable spout makes stirring and pouring mess-free. When doing pot and brush work, utilize the extended spout with integrated brush wipes to simplify painting and eliminate mess.

Between uses, there's nothing to clean as the Paint Can HERO retracts back into the can and seals with the original air-tight metal lid. When finished, leave clients a spotless, perfectly sealed can of paint for touch ups while you take the reusable spout to your next job.

More Information at www.pntworx.com



Hydraulic Airless Sprayer

Titan's Elite 3000 electric-sealed hydraulic airless paint sprayer is a versatile one-gun sprayer that delivers a consistent finish and is easy to operate. It is outfitted with PermaStroke Technology so there are no pistons, packings or clutch to wear out or replace, and the fluid pump and electric motor are backed by a lifetime warranty. Designed to spray up to 150 gallons per week, the Elite 3000 is a durable, contractor-grade sprayer.

Titan's PermaStroke Technology provides top performance at all pressures, even when using smaller tips or spraying coatings that are prone to shearing. Maintenance is minimal with only two-cartridge style wear parts, the inlet and outlet valves, which are field serviceable and can be changed with common tools.

More information at www.titantool.com





Flexible Corner Bead

ClarkDietrich Strait-Flex Original is a versatile, multi-purpose drywall corner bead that delivers high-quality results in less time. Its composite construction readily accepts paint, allowing you to finish corners with up to 50% less joint compound when compared with standard corner beads. The first finishing coat of joint compound can be applied immediately, which gets you to painting faster. It creates a clean inside and outside, 90-degree and off-angle corners with much less compound than conventional corner beads.

The slotted edge design facilitates superior bond to the drywall substrate, providing clean corners without paper fuzz-up during finishing and sanding. Original is ideal for bay windows, coffered ceilings, or any inside corner where gaps are present. Apply with all-purpose joint-compound. Available in 100-foot rolls.

More information at www.clarkdietrich.com



Cordless Airless Sprayer

Graco's 390 PC Cordless Airless Sprayer is the first and only high-performance airless sprayer on the market built to spray anywhere with freedom from power cords, electrical outlets and generators. It combines multiple patented technologies to provide the ideal portable solution by combining high-performance spraying with long battery run time. The RAC X Low Pressure SwitchTip provides a professional airless finish at lower pressures while the compact, brushless DC motor delivers higher efficiency and consistent performance.

The sprayer runs on high-capacity Dewalt Flexvolt batteries that allow you to spray anywhere, delivering up to six gallons of spray power before needing to charge. The 390 PC cordless sprayer ships with two batteries and a fan-cooled fast charger for consistent, all-day spraying capability.

It is the lightest weight high-performance professional airless sprayer on the market, for easier use around the job site.

More information at www.graco.com



Adhesive and Sealant in One

Red Devil's Strong Bond is specially formulated with premium performance in mind. This advanced hybrid polymer technology holds heavy applications quickly and achieves a strong, permanent bond to both porous and non-porous substrates. Use Strong Bond for fast instant strength, eliminating the need for nails, screws, or fasteners in most applications. This all-in-one adhesive and sealant provides more than double the initial bond strength of most other adhesives.

It is paintable, VOC Compliant/low odor, great for interior and exterior use, and is mold and mildew resistant when cured. This hybrid polymer remains flexible, will not shrink, and allows for vibration and movements. Strong Bond meets or exceeds federal specifications ASTM C920 Class 25, is USDA Compliant and comes with a lifetime durability guarantee.



More information at www.reddevil.com



Extreme Temperature Paint

Sherwin-Williams new Latitude Exterior Acrylic Latex gives painters more flexibility in their schedules and extends the painting season. Latitude is formulated with ClimateFlex Technology, which provides exceptional early moisture resistance, applies smoothly at extreme temperatures (application at 35°F[2°C]-120°F[49°C] air, surface and material temperatures) and resists early dirt pick up. The technology in Latitude develops resistance to early moisture in as little as 30 minutes even at 35°F(2°C). Professionals can paint confidently in extreme temperatures or when rain is forecasted.

More information at www.XXXXXXX.com

Can't Find Painters? Who's To Blame?

Out-of-date employment practices might be keeping good people away

By Scott Burt

One of the things I enjoy the most about being a paint contractor is my clients. I didn't always feel this way in the early years of my business. They drove me nuts at times, but for better or worse, I learned a lot from them. These days, as I have learned (or perhaps earned the opportunity) to be more selective about projects and clients, I am gathering more insight than ever from those with whom we work.

Collectively, there are so many issues on our minds these days. Health and lifestyle are more prominently in focus than ever before. Many people who have worked from home for the past year will likely not return to a conventional workplace setting. The way businesses are doing business has changed, perhaps forever.

At the same time, interest rates are friendly and people are investing in their homes on a pretty impressive scale. This makes for favorable market conditions for us in the home services industry.

Where are the goods?

What started out as a mass lumber shortage and spiking prices seems to be crawling its way into other arenas. I was talking with a customer recently who is in the automotive supply business, with a pretty robust shipping and receiving department. They are paying \$54 per sheet for oriented strand board, one of the lowest forms of sheet goods used in building shipping crates. That is considered a good deal right now, but you have to buy hundreds of sheets to get that deal. As recently as two years ago, you could buy cabinet-grade plywood at that price.

I was talking with the longtime manager at one of my paint suppliers

the other day. For several awkward moments, I think we both tried to avoid pointing out the remarkably empty shelves in the room — shelves that should be full of dozens upon dozens of gallons of paint, racks that should be overflowing with roller covers of all sizes and colors, and bins that should have numerous choices of caulking tubes.

She told me that, in some cases, there are issues with raw material shortages but that the ability to move product is also now a huge challenge ... literally, as in getting trucks from point A to point B. It's not because of traffic or fuel prices but because of a sudden lack of people interested in driving the trucks that deliver the products to the paint stores. As in our industry and many others, the truck-driving population is starting to age out, and there are fewer people entering that field. As I got in my truck to go about my day, I heard on the radio an ad for truck drivers. They were offering six-figure salaries with impressive benefits packages. Go figure.

Where are the people?

That same day, I found myself chatting with a current client as I loaded my truck for the weekend. This guy is very much in demand as a sales consultant — very well-regarded and skilled in that field. He works with top companies locally, regionally and nationally. We were talking about market conditions, and he asked if my business has enough work. Most good clients want to refer you if you are good. I told him that we have more work than we can handle, and that in good conscience I really can't take on any more until we solve staffing issues.

It is a frustrating position to be in when you can sell at a high rate but

doubt your company's ability to deliver the services. You become your own supply chain problem. I asked him what he is hearing from the companies he consults with. He said that while millennials (current 25-40-year-olds) have always gotten a bad rap for not being as interested in work as their predecessors, it is an actual fact of life now and not a trend.

The reality, according to this consultant, is that people have cracked the code on how to make money without the constraints or physical exertion of traditional occupations. He took his cell phone out of his pocket, held it up and said, "This, right here." Research points to the reality that there is a whole economy of people making money by just flipping items all day long right from their phones. They're buying and selling without touching any of it. Load up your phone with apps for venues like Facebook Marketplace, eBay, PayPal and Venmo, and you can do business from anywhere. Moving items and moving money ... it's amazing to think that major corporations are suddenly crippled in their ability to do that, but individuals are doing it in large numbers. And here I thought these kids tied to their phones were just watching videos

and playing games. What to make of it? It's kind of inspiring, really.

Options

I had to ask my client, the consultant, how people “cracked the code” to decline traditional roles and forge a new lifestyle. He said that throughout history, when the game changes and the status quo becomes outdated, a common denominator is that people look around and see clearly what their options are. In the past decade or two, there have been exponentially more options than ever, brought about by technology and the convenience that accompanies it.

That is an empowering concept, that a person can look at their situation and say, “No, I am not going to do that.”

Now our reality in the paint industry is that people are looking at our businesses and the employment opportunities we offer, and they are on a pretty large scale declining to do this type of work. Certainly, this raises the question of how we adapt and evolve so that we can capitalize on the new market.

I think an obvious answer is to rebrand how we are perceived — right down to the language we use when we talk about what we do. If it looks like just a whole bunch of jobs and work, that isn't so appealing. It used to be that people wanted security and to know that there is plenty of work. But now the model of the traditional 40-hour workweek is in serious question.

The band Dire Straits may have been onto something when decades ago they suggested in the song “Industrial Disease,” that we should “abolish Monday mornings and Friday afternoons. But seriously, it is time for us to take a good hard look as an industry at our own model. I think the focus in the past has been customer facing, delivering high-level service with appealing customer experience.

Now it is time to look at the employee experience. No one wants to be your “helper.” That's just not a career goal that many people are going to go along with. I think it will be important going forward for paint contractors to customize the employee experience. This breaks from much of the conventional wisdom in our

“We are building schedules around the needs of our people by getting to know their interests and passions outside of work, then creating a schedule that is convenient and practical and meets their financial goals.”

industry — to systematize and work toward a franchise model of plug-and-play employees. I think that is too impersonal and not appealing to the people we want to recruit into our companies.

This season, I am going with a younger and more flexible model for staffing than ever before. The oldest person I employ will be 24 years old. We are building schedules around the needs of our people by getting to know their interests and passions outside of work, then creating a schedule that is convenient and practical and meets their finan-

cial goals. I encourage all of us to sharpen up our listening skills and gather information from customers and employees to continue crafting our companies to be strong into the future. **APC**



Scott Burt is senior editor of APC and owner of Topcoat Finishes in Vermont. He enjoys communicating with paint contractors at topcoatreview.com.

From Corporate Analyst to Field Manager

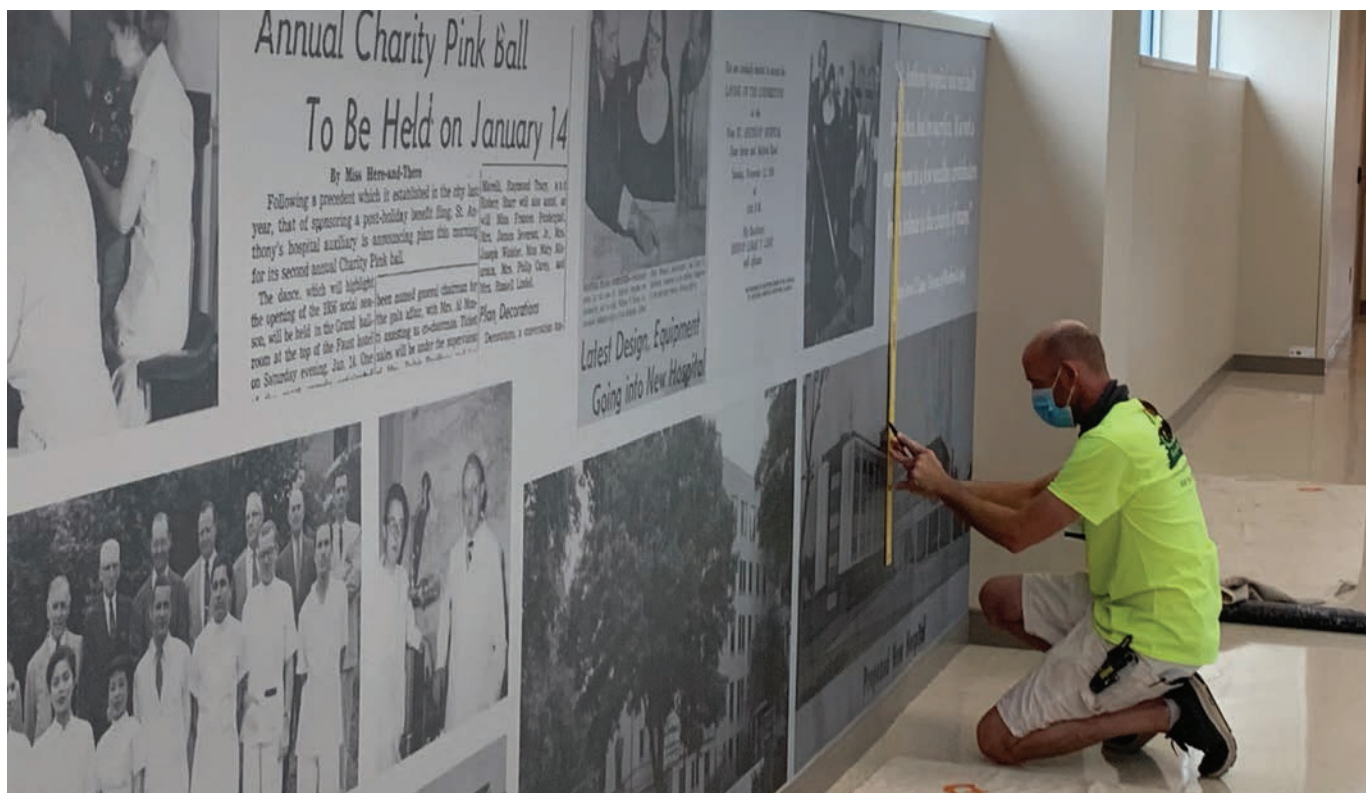
Mark Helmrich of D'Franco Painting and Wallpaper

By Jerry Rabushka

Marc Helmrich learned how to treat a crew in the field from his experience behind a desk. Mainly, it was what *not* to do. "I learned a lot of things that I didn't like — that I vowed if I were ever in a leadership position, I would never do to anybody on the team. There were things that I saw that I didn't appreciate, and I didn't want to be that type of leader," he said.

We owe his presence in the painting industry to the recession of 2008, when he was downsized out of a longtime corporate analyst job and couldn't find similar employment. As he ticked off his options, he thought back to his younger years, when he and a friend would paint together — for fun. "When we were teenagers, I would help him paint at his house, and then he helped me paint my bedroom," said Helmrich. "I wanted a different color, and my parents said, 'That's fine; we're not doing it. You do it.'"





Helmrich installs a graphic mural wallcovering for a nearby hospital; joining D'Franco has given him the opportunity to become proficient in fine finish work as well as wallpaper and mural installation.

Marc knew a bit about brushing and rolling, but it had been a long time. Was it a viable alternative? “I remembered how much I enjoyed painting when I had the opportunity, so I thought maybe there’s something that I can make of this,” he said. “When I was a younger man, I liked working with my hands, but I kind of got away from that in the office.”

His rudimentary skills were ripe for improvement, and his return to the bucket put in him just the right place. He got on with a company owned by some former union painters who had struck out on their own. If there’s one thing they knew, it was how to paint. “I started learning the ropes and soaked up as much knowledge as I could,” said Helmrich. “I knew how to roll a wall, but how do you roll a wall really well? I got the benefit of learning from those guys who had done it the right way for so long. I was blessed by not picking up some of the bad habits that some people develop along the way.”

There wasn’t enough work to keep him busy, so Helmrich took some side

jobs and then made a go of it on his own. Turned out that business ownership wasn’t for him. “I realized quickly that I didn’t enjoy owning my own company,” he said. “I did not enjoy the headache and the stress of where’s the next job going to come from, that after I’m done working, I’m running around all over the Chicago-land area trying to close bids.”

Despite a long drive to the Chicago suburb of Elgin, the help wanted ads from D’Franco Painting and Wallpaper spoke to him the loudest, and company owner David Cook hired him on as lead painter. From there, he became crew leader, and shortly after that Cook promoted him to his current position as field manager. He’s seen the company contract during the COVID-19 pandemic and is now helping it not only regain its position but also grow from here.

“When I started with Dave, it was a really small shop; there were four of us out in the field. We started growing, but of course COVID hit, and nobody was really sure what was going to happen,” Helmrich recalled. “We lost most

of the guys — we went down to two. I was still on board, and then another guy was helping out from time to time. If we got into a vacant house, he was okay to work, but he didn’t feel comfortable being around people.”

Since then, the two have turned into 11, and Helmrich sees the company as only growing from here. “I like that I get the chance to work with Dave,” he said. “I can bring my perspective and experience from working in other shops and working with other people and help this company grow the right way, making sure we have the things we need and that the growth isn’t out of control to where that we can’t provide the level of service that our customers deserve.”

David Cook tells us he was impressed with Helmrich right off the bat. “The moment we met, I knew I had to hire him,” he said. “We connected instantly, and I knew he was going to be a great fit with our business. Marc has a great attitude and dedication to our business; he cares as much as [my wife] Daphne and I do about how we do business, meet our goals, and

live up to our mission statement. It is fun to see him grow into this role, set an example, and show our new painters and people without a trade background that this is a great career path.”

Apple picking

Finding good painters is a challenge, or as Marc says, without hesitation, “There are a lot of bad apples out there, and it’s difficult to choose which are going to be the right ones and which are going to be the wrong ones.” They do a lot of screening before they hire and check in after to make sure everyone is doing OK. “We’re in constant communication when we get a guy in: How is he doing? Is he struggling? What’s his work ethic like, what’s his attitude like, does he come across as trustworthy? These are the sorts of questions I’m asking my lead painters and job leaders all the time.”

He lets the crew know they are part of an elite corps. “I’ll sit down with a new painter and I’ll tell them that we are extremely picky about who we bring in,” Helmrich said. “I let them know that they should feel proud of just getting in the door.”

Once there, they’re treated well, in part thanks to Marc’s bad memories. “We let them know that this is not like a lot of other shops where your boss is screaming at you to get it done on time or you’re going to lose your job,” he said. “That’s something that we really try to stay away from. Letting new painters know that they don’t have to deal with that, that we’re a different sort of company, sets them at ease and allows them to work to be the best they can every day.”

Look for the good

While it’s on Marc to call out a slack performance or point out a blunder, he takes even more care to point out the accomplishments. “If I hear about or I see that you’re busting your butt and you’re doing it right and you’re making that customer feel wonderful, I’m going to make sure that everybody knows what sort of a job you’re doing,” he said. “Everybody makes mistakes. What’s im-



Helmrich topcoats a kitchen cabinet.

portant is that we learn from the mistake and we work hard not to repeat it. Dave and I both think that it’s far more important to recognize when you do a good job than to recognize the mistakes.”

He’s willing to acknowledge that he, as well, can mess up. “I’m always asking the guys for feedback. ‘Hey, if I miss something, if I screw up, if I aggravate you or frustrate you, don’t hesitate. You’ve got to let me know,’” he said. “I don’t wake up thinking about ‘how can I piss the guys off?’ My job is to make their job easier because at the end of the day, the guy with a brush in his hand is the one that’s making us money.”

Off the clock, Marc likes to go outdoors. “I like to do things that make me feel alive,” he said. “I do a lot of hiking,

some rock climbing; I’m an avid scuba diver. I’ve gone skydiving a number of times. My stepdaughter and I will go on nature hikes and I get to explain things to her and teach her things — expose her to new things that she’s never seen before.”

Back on the clock, he’s happy with the opportunity a painting career provides. “Painting can be viable career choice, not just something that gets you a little bit of quick money,” he said. “Just like with any career, it’s what you put into it. If you join a company and you work hard and look for ways to improve and to become more efficient, you can take that job that looked like it might just be parttime or short term and turn it into a career.” **APC**



need a different pix

Make Your Own Video

Tips on getting started ... and finished

By Jerry Rabushka

One salient piece of advice on video production is to get right to the important content. So, with no further delay, let's talk about putting together a video for your website or social media. The contractors we talked to do most of it themselves, and with today's equipment and technology, a minimal investment can lead to a maximal payoff.

What do you need?

First, get not only into the 21st century, but into the 2020s. David Chism of A David Creation Company in Frederick, Maryland, helps contractors create content and market themselves on social media. He'll tell you that you can make a darned good video with your phone, but you should use a phone that's only a year or two old. That goes for your crew as well if you want them to take photos or video at the jobsite. You might have a four-year-old phone that you think is doing a great job, but you won't know the difference until you wrap your hands around a current model. Currently grasping an iPhone 12, Chism says one perk is great interior shots with minimal lighting.

Erick Gatcomb, proprietor of Gatcomb Painting and Design, Hancock, Maine, edits a video with InShot. "It's free, but I paid the whopping \$9.99/year for the filters that replicate silent films," he said. Gatcomb enjoys making his videos look like silent movies, with dialogue boxes and century-old banjo recordings. "I'm still getting my feet wet, but everything's done on my phone through (mostly) free apps," he said. "The setup's a lot like Pro Tools or other digital recording software with layering, cut/paste, overdubs, etc. I like that can put together videos on my cellphone at the kitchen table while I'm cooking a frozen pizza."



o Refinish Kitchen Cabinets-Part 4 Prime and Finish Cabinet Bases

Just be yourself —Michael Craine finds that keeping it real is the best medicine for getting new business.

“Get a selfie stick that can hold two cameras,” advises Yanni Fikaris of Custom Renovations in Haddonfield, New Jersey. “I hold my phone vertically for a live video, and then I’ll use a GoPro to do my horizontal shot,” he says. “This way you can edit your horizontal shot in post-production.”

Michael Craine of Craine Painting in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, places his bets on a Gimbal Stabilizer for some straight

shooting. It will keep your camera in place while the world beneath it totters. “No matter much your hand shakes, the phone stays steady,” he said. “It gives you an almost cinematic shot.”

How do you begin?

Chism says to begin with a pen and paper and write down what you plan to accomplish. What’s the purpose, what’s your message, and how long will it be,

for example. You don’t want your two-minute video to turn into 35. Also think of it from your customers’ point of view; what do they need to see that would encourage them to get in touch? Customers know you paint, but what makes you different? Check for their pain points and try to be the salve. “Yes, you do residential or commercial or floors or whatever, and you can highlight that, but you want to talk about people — how people hire you because you’re clean and you show up on time,” said Chism.

Think of those FAQs, says Fikaris. “If I’m going to your website, I have questions,” he said. “I could watch a three-minute video or I could scan your website and look for my answers. So preemptively, if you know what the homeowner’s going to ask, knock those questions out in your intro video.”

Fikaris strongly suggests that the person selling to customers in the field should be the on-screen personality. “Basically, your salesforce is going to be that person, so it’s great if that’s the person who does the sales calls as well, so it’s not just this untouchable character personality,” he said. “I would really, really, really emphasize that the person selling should be the one in the videos.”

Be yourself, adds Craine. Leave the glamour at home, or in real life you might come out as fake. “I found that just being me and the way that I am in real life has actually won me a lot of jobs,” he said.

Before and after tells your story

It’s nice that your father started painting when he was 5, but that shouldn’t be the first thing your client sees. People want to know that you can do the job and that you won’t steal. “Before and after is gold,” says Craine. “Everyone always wants to see a before and after, and that will get you more clients.” Craine adds to make sure to take your after shots at the exact spot that you took your before so people don’t have to squint to see what you’ve done.

Fikaris explained that a good before and after can answer a lot of your customers FAQs, and he suggests a separate before, during, and after video. “Your before walk-through

best practices...bullet points

should explain what you are going to do, the color selection, maybe costs, the timeline, any procedural events that the homeowner needs to know, about' he suggests.

Your during video should show your crew at work, preferably being neat, clean and professional. Get the Gatorades, lunch wrappers and romance novels out of the way — you can't very well charge a top-notch price if you look like a bottom-shelf company. "Video number three is either a setup to the end or a final walk-through," he said. "I like to show when the crew is putting stuff back together and cleaning up, and then you could do a final walk-through at the end."

Let the pictures tell the story

If you're watching a movie in which someone is talking about what's for dinner and you see a 6-foot cockroach

slobbering behind them, it sends a stronger message than words can tell. Chism reminds us that in our videos, it goes the same way.

If you want people to know that your painters wear masks or dress neatly, don't just talk about it, show it while you do a voice-over. Also, plan before you talk. Think about how you surf channels — or how your spouse does and how aggravating it is — but if something doesn't catch your attention in a few seconds, it's on to the next. "So a lot of people will push record and just keep talking, and that's boring," said Chism.

In general, you might need less time than you think to make your impression. If you want to show a house being pressure washed or a baseboard being brushed, just show a few seconds of it, not from start to finish. Shots from a couple of different angles are good as

well. Think of your favorite show — the angle changes all the time. You don't have to be all high tech about it, but you can be creative, for cheap.

Hot topics? Don't touch.

No one cares what you think about the current or former president of the United States. Oh wait, they totally do ... and they may or may not hire you based on that opinion. John Quincy Adams might be fair game, but that's about it. "I avoid any kind of hot topic," says Craine. "You'll have people who say you don't stand for anything, and I do, but this is business and realistically it's for my family and for the amazing people who work for me. I want to make sure that I can appeal to as many people as possible."

Your musical taste can also make people click NEXT — think twice before you open a video with the explicit



Steve Adickes, Adix Painting, Phoenix, Arizona, in production for APC's Paint TV Series "Fit Your Whip."



Zach Kenney of ZK Painting, Coventry, Rhode Island, likes to finish off with a professional touch. "We use a top architectural photographer named Aaron Usher to photograph our projects after completion," he said. "His skill at shooting and editing are so valuable for documenting our work in its best light." Here, Usher documents a ZK restoration project in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

version of your favorite song. If someone in a corporate setting is looking for a contractor, says David Chism, hard-edged music can disrupt the workflow or the Zoom meeting and even make the boss wonder what's going on. "You're looking for a painter? Doesn't sound like it."

"But it's not any goooood."

If you look at someone's videos over time, you'll notice that the recent ones are usually more polished than the earlier oeuvre. Crain acknowledged that his first attempts weren't Oscar contenders. "The first post that I ever made was about a brush," he said. "It sucked.

Your first couple of things are going to suck, but eventually things will get better. And then all of a sudden, you have too much business that you don't have to pay for."

Once your video is posted, he reminds us, it sells all day and all night. If you have a video on how you turned some 1970s wood-paneled cabinets into a wonderful two tone, years later someone can still see it and ask for that treatment or color scheme. So what you post now might even bring in business in 2028.

Are your best scenes on the

cutting room floor?

Editing is fun if you're really into it. But if you're not, it's easy enough to hire out. "You can find someone on Fiverr or a freelancer, perhaps even a crew member, who is good at such things," said Fikaris, who prefers not to edit. "A three-minute video is going to cost you between 60 and 80 bucks. It's not worth my time to do, because I never think my video editing is as good as it could be, so I'm constantly going back and recreating it. The ironic part is that when you give the task to somebody else, even if it doesn't even meet the standards that you would give your first shot, you're a little more thrilled because somebody else did it."

Craine does his own; he likes using QUIK but also mentions Splice and iMovie as editing options. "There are a lot of different video editing apps that are simple to use and intuitive," he said. "It will let you pick your music, make transitions — it'll do everything. And it'll make this beautiful video for you. You can put your logo at the end along with your call to action — whatever you want."

If you do hire an editor, says Chism, don't let them talk you into stuff that, however cool it looks, obscures or delays the point of your video. You might live in Utah, but a half minute of spinning logos and mountain scenery does what, exactly? Back in the '90s, he said, people would be more inclined to watch your whole video because such things were new and unique. Now they're a dime a thousand. "The attention span of your audience today is not what it was," he says.

Hey, while you're here let me show you my new ... CLICK. **APC**

Addressing Addiction and Mental Health Issues

Best practices for difficult situations

By Jerry Rabushka

Most likely, dealing with substance abuse, alcoholism or mental health issues wasn't on your radar when you signed your incorporation papers, but perhaps lately you've noticed a change in some long-time employees. Or you're afraid that hiring someone with a "past" will haunt your future. While this is far too deep a subject to conquer in a short article, we hope the advice below will help you better understand how to work through these problems.

Recognizing the signs

We met Matt Rathgeb last year in our Contractor Comeback series; Matt shared his story of conquering alcoholism and substance abuse. Now as owner of Matthew Rathgeb Painting in Philadelphia, he's lauded as one of the city's finest painting companies and devotes much of his time to helping others towards recovery. But he didn't do it alone; much of his success was thanks to another contractor who had faith in him making the change.

Rathgeb knows the signs; use or abuse of different substances will bring about different behaviors. Someone who drinks a lot will start missing work or showing up late with a variety of excuses, for example. People on opioid painkillers tend to overwork, they talk a lot either to you or your customers, and they scratch themselves a lot — opioids make people itch.

Your first step, says Rathgeb, is to alert your crew member that you're aware of the problem — privately. "Keep it between you and that person and not anybody else in the company," he said. As a recovering addict himself, his first inclination is not to fire someone but to

**Strength.
Determination.
Grit.**

CHARACTER TRAITS THAT GET HARD WORK DONE.

The same traits can be a barrier to asking for help.

SPEAK UP TO
STANDUP

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK. BE BRAVE - SPEAK UP FOR YOUR TEAM. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF.

CONTRACTOR SUICIDE PREVENTION
INFORMATION & RESOURCES AT
preventconstructionssuicide.com

THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
1.800.273.TALK (8255) or
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

CRISIS TEXT LINE
TEXT HELLO TO 741741
Free, 24/7, Confidential
crisistextline.org

help. "I'll let them know that I'm aware," he said, but this is followed by a reminder that he's still running a business that demands professional behavior.

"The second step is to offer that person some sort of help; get them into detox or rehab or something like that. I'll blow my own cover if they don't know already," he continued. "I'll say, 'Hey, I've been there. That's why I'm able to see where you're at. I'm not guessing.'" If Rathgeb notices no effort, or if he feels he's working harder on the recovery than the painter in question, it's time to part company. "Then it just becomes a busi-

ness decision for me," he said.

What if it's you? Recognize it and get help, fast. "There's no way you're going to have a successful business," said Rathgeb. "Leadership starts at the top, and people are unconsciously looking up to you when you're the owner. If you're drinking and messing around, how could you expect your employees to take your company seriously? Anyone with an ounce of self-respect would be out of that company." Plus, what kind of help will you hire? "I'm a big believer in you attracting who you are," he said. "If you're struggling with alcoholism or ad-

diction and you think you're going to get help on your own, you're wrong. I always say, 'Don't walk to get help — run.' You're not going to do it on your own, because it would have already been done."

Take a chance on someone

Yanni Fikaris, owner of Custom Renovations in Haddington, New Jersey, often works with at-risk employees, perhaps those with a "record" or who have a history of addiction. When it's successful, it can be wildly rewarding and even a boon to your business, he says. Someone in recovery has a lot to prove to friends, family, even a government that has given up on them. "They are often your most valuable asset because they're so committed to success," he said. "It might not be financial success, but the success of overcoming an addiction."

Chances are likely that in your hiring efforts you've already come across someone who has been in prison or has had issues with alcoholism or addiction. "Most often, people don't give anybody the chance because they say, 'Okay, you've been locked up,'" said Fikaris. "My take on that is you don't know who these people really are. I'm not telling you to have them paint the inside of a bank or a high-end hotel, but it's a growing process. If you're not willing to take the chance, you're never going to get anywhere."

First thing, set guidelines. It's still a place of business. "They have to be willing to change the mentality from 'they're in charge' to 'you're in charge,'" he said. If the rules are to come to work dressed neatly and smelling clean and sober, and on Day One that's already gone to heck, Fikaris will make the call — quickly — that it's not going to work out. It's still on them to put in the effort. "If you don't think that the attitude is going to change, then you sever the tie," he said. "You have to make sure that you're upfront about this in the beginning."

In most cases, he attests, the experience is going to be stressful and likely unsuccessful, but when it succeeds, it's glorious. "It's not fun, but it is rewarding," he said. "These are the individuals in this country that really have no support system, and they're often great

**Strength.
Determination.
Grit.**

CHARACTER TRAITS THAT GET HARD WORK DONE.

The same traits can be a barrier to asking for help.

SPEAK UP TO
STANDUP

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK. BE BRAVE - SPEAK UP FOR YOUR TEAM. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF.

INFORMATION & RESOURCES AT
preventconstructionssuicide.com

THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE AT
1.800.273.TALK (8255) or
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

TEXT HELLO TO 747474
Free, 24/7, Confidential
crisistextline.org

employees over time."

Finally, he advises, only do this if you have the heart and the guts. "This isn't for everybody," he said. "It's hard. If you're very haphazard and just looking for bodies on-site, then this isn't something you should do."

Help with Suicide Prevention

Suicide in the construction trade is a huge issue — more construction workers die by suicide than by ladder accidents, and according to the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention, the trade has the second-highest suicide rate in the U.S. "The macho, tough guy, and stoic nature of construction workers can discourage those who are most at risk for suicide from seeking help," says the CIASP website. There is also a high count of veterans in construction, and they are

already at a higher risk for suicide than the general population.

Painting is a hard job. The work can be demanding, the deadlines harsh, the pay might not be the best and there's the danger of a layoff if work slows down. A painter who feels he can't provide for his family or is in imminent danger of losing his job may have added pressures beyond just getting a wall coated on time. The physical demands of the work can lead to chronic pain, which in turn can lead to self-medication with alcohol, opioids or other drugs. Opioid abuse, CIASP reports, is linked to an increased likelihood of a suicide attempt.

By making sure you're open to discussing mental health issues, and that you are a safe confidant, you could save somebody's life. If someone finally gets the courage to tell you they're not doing

well and you say, "Snap out of it, looney-tunes," that might be the last time they ask for help. "Think about what you are saying and whether it will make you seem approachable for someone who is experiencing mental illness or suicidal thoughts," CIASP advises.

Look for these warning signs in your crew — or even yourself: talking about self-harm, self-criticism or self-hatred, withdrawing from others, self-destructive behavior, no hope for the future, decreased productivity, talking about being a burden, extreme mood swings, and increased tardiness.

CIASP offers the following prevention tips:

- Don't ignore the signs — speak up if you're worried, and offer help and support.
- Show concern that you've noticed they are acting differently and inquire why they don't seem like themselves.
- Respond quickly if you believe your friend/coworker is in crisis.
- Contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK or text HELLO to 741741 if you need help or for ideas to help your co-worker.

Proactively addressing this issue in team meetings and fostering a supportive work environment will also help people have the courage to come forward with mental health issues.

More information at www.prevent-constructionssuicide.com

Mental Health; a Business Owner's Point of View

Tim Kenney, of W.T. Kenney, Inc, Arlington, Massachusetts, has seen his business and his family affected by suicide when they lost his nephew Kevin some years back. In response, the company maintains an open-door policy for those with mental health issues. "No one has a crystal ball but we each need to look out for each other both at home and at work," he said. Here is his advice on how a business owner can look out for the crew:

- There's a lot of anxiety, depression and uncertainty in the economy these days.
- Often people will hide the problems in their life while at work.

SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, offers this advice for dealing with someone you suspect has an addiction problem, be it friend, family member, or co-worker.

- Find a private setting with limited distractions in which to bring up the subject.
- Ask how they are feeling and describe the reasons for your concern.
- Listen openly, actively and without judgment.
- Provide reassurance that mental and/or substance use disorders are treatable. Help them locate and connect to treatment services.
- Recognize that change doesn't happen overnight. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

More information at www.samhsa.gov or 800-662-HELP.

- You need to humanize the relationship. It's a good practice to get to know your employees on a personal level, for example, what do they like to do? Any hobbies? Are they married; any kids? This can be tricky because some people will try to draw you into their problems, which are often financial. I've given out thousands of dollars in loans that I've never recouped but the other employees see that we care and that's important to them.
- Through an open door policy you may create better communication with your field employees and be more comfortable asking them to look out for each other's well-being.
- Another good practice would be to have mental health counseling contacts in your employee manual, or readily available to them through the office. If you can arrange to pick up the co-pay, it might make them more apt to go. **APC**

Yes, Try This at Home

Advice for testing and learning about new products

By Jerry Rabushka

Before you take a product into the field, you should make sure it won't embarrass your crew and rile up your customer — or bring you back to paint for free. Read on for how some contractors learn about and test products before they give them a permanent place in their repertoire.

See how it works

"The most important thing is to get a gallon and play around with it," says Jeff Dupont of Sound Painting Solutions, Seattle, Washington. "Paint walls in your house, shop, millwork — prime some molding, see how it goes. Any time you take a new product and apply it to someone's house, you're taking a risk. I would never get a brand-new gallon of something I hadn't tried and put it on someone's house. It's a recipe for disaster." There have, after all, been products that have come to market too soon. "Sometimes a product has problems when it comes out," he says. "If they had tested it, they'd know there were air bubbles in it."

At one point, for example, Dupont was working with a new thick wall paint. "The first time I sprayed it, it ran. All the cracks and crevices got runs; turns out, it needed to be sprayed like an oil," he said. That's the last thing you want on a customer's project, and why he recommends having your crew do some work with it as well. "I have painters play with it, put it on whatever substrate it's designed for and see how it performs."

It's also good to try it out on your customer. "We do mock-ups with custom stain work," says Dupont. "We do the process to make sure the customers like it. Don't just stain 20 doors and hope they look good."

Learn from others

Weston Spivey of Premier Painting in Dothan, Alabama, finds that networking



After Brandon Smith applies a new finish, he applies some close scrutiny.

with reps, retailers and other contractors is the best way to help get a product off the ground. "If you have a good sales representative or store manager at your local paint store, that person can more than likely put you in contact with a contractor that has used the product," he said. "I have found this to be true with new products especially. As a small paint contractor, I use every way possible to learn from other industry leaders. We all have information that other contractors can use to better their end result and overall help the coatings industry."

Brandon Smith of Brand New Again Refinishing in Bismarck, Illinois, tests out the overall industry reaction to a product before he tests it out in his shop. "I don't test a large variety of materials," he says. "Operating an extremely small team, we cannot afford to test every single product that comes to the market."

Instead, Smith pays attention to other contractors who test the product. If it shows promise, he'll bring it in for a test run himself. "If other contractors have

made conclusions that I feel can help my refinishing schedule or outcome, I will order select materials to test in small batches before running them on full jobs," he said. "By the same token, no matter how effective the product was for them, it might not always work for me."

Between Durock and a Hard Place

Matt Pisaeno of Pisaeno Painting and Construction in Union, New Jersey, is a fan of creating sample boards to learn about a new product and then to show its potential to his clients. "Epoxy is new to me, and it has a learning curve. I don't have a huge portfolio, so to present a few boards, in my opinion, is beneficial," he said. "I make the sample on Durock cement board by throwing some flakes into a base coat," he said. "Once it's dry, we sand it lightly and then apply a polyaspartic or urethane topcoat. We use these samples for garages, boiler rooms, basements and utility areas. It allows the client to feel and see how the floor will turn out."

Pisaeno makes a stain testing board by cutting down a damaged birch



Putting stain on an old door provides a real world view for how the wood takes stain, giving Pisaeno and his clients a real world view of potential results.



Sample boards help Pisaeno learn how a product works but also explore options with his clients. In this case, he's showing different amounts of flake application over flooring epoxy. By experimenting in your shop, you can learn how to create a variety of effects with a new product, with no harm done if it doesn't work out.

veneer commercial door, useful for his purposes since he is largely a commercial contractor. "I stained the squares on the boards with popular stain colors, then put polyurethane over them," he said. Again, he can see how a product is going to look before he applies it on a project, and the customer can make a more accurate determination as to what they like.

Learning how to apply decorative products can be a challenge, even for an experienced painter. Joe Biestek, senior brand manager, industrial coatings at Rust-Oleum, shared some ideas for getting a decorative product off the ground.

Q. How is learning a faux/decorative finish product different from learning how a conventional coating works?

- With decorative products, there is a degree of both art and science to it.
- With most conventional painting, the goal is to achieve an even, consistent appearance to the entire area, whereas with decorative paints, the variances in appearance are what give the finish a one-of-a-kind look.

Q. I'm opening my product for the first time. What now?

- Read the technical data sheet and instructions.
- Make sure you have the manufacturer's recommended application equipment.
- Watch the manufacturer's installation videos online.
- Experiment with the product on your own prior to using it on a job.

Q. What if I am new to decorative painting altogether?

- Experience and exposure to various



Modern Masters Stenciled Metallic opens up amazing possibilities, but make sure you're well versed in it before you try it on a client's wall.

products and application techniques make a difference.

- Experiment with the products, learn from others and bank the lessons learned from all sources.

Q. How can I be sure I'm ready?


- First, try it in your own home or a friend's home after you have developed a comfort level with application techniques.
- Look at your finished project through the eyes of your prospective clients and get opinions from your family and friends. Make sure you tell/show them what the

product is supposed to do/create prior to showing them your work.

- Gather their observations (the more honest the better!) and make adjustments to your technique as needed.

Cindy Howard of Decorative and Faux Finishes boils down testing a new decorative product to four quick takeaways:

- Check the TDS for proper prep instructions.
- Try it in your own home.
- Ask industry peers if they've used it and what products it's comparable to in another brand.
- Take a class to learn about it. **APC**



Ding Dong, OSHA Calling

It's not a singing telegram; it's OSHA! Now what?

Peter Lawton, certified safety and health official with the Parker Safety Group, spoke with Andrew and Emily on what to do when OSHA comes calling — unannounced. For one, don't be a donkey to the inspector. For two, know your rights and responsibilities. For three, have a plan in place before the visit. And for four, follow OSHA safety guidelines to begin with! What follows are some highlights of APC's Paint Radio interview with Lawton. Catch the whole interview at www.paintmag.com/paint-radio.

Andrew: How common an occurrence is the surprise OSHA inspection?

Peter: It seems to go in spurts, because many people believe there are a lot more OSHA inspectors than there really are. Surprise inspections do happen, but they have everything to do with the availability of that inspector's time.

Andrew: We've heard rumblings of increased OSHA inspections as the years move forward.

Peter: Without a doubt. The last administration almost demolished the funding for enforcement, and this administration has already restored it to previous levels, plus some increase.

Andrew: So if the inspector comes a-knockin', what happens?

Peter: There are certain rights that you have that you should be aware of, as well as knowing how to approach the person with a badge. You have a right to refuse entry; however, if you exercise it, within an hour they will return with a court order and I guarantee you that inspection is going to be much different.

It's a matter of developing a cooperative attitude with this person — another human being just like you. They have their job to do, but unless they see something close to imminent death, they basically collect information and report back to their superior. Then a process goes through the superior to decide what, if any, citations are going to be issued.

Andrew: So the inspector shows up. How does it work from here?

Peter: After the presenting of credentials, the officer has to hold an opening conference and basically explain why they're there. If you do not have a safety officer on-site, but you have someone in your company or someone like me available, you have the right to call us and ask if they can wait for us to get to the site so that we can represent you.

That's a smart move because while you ask people to wait, someone else in your company should be going around the site — and this is my suggestion: everything gets shut off, everything gets de-energized and unplugged, and everyone goes home. There are many times I've seen workers do stupid things right in front of the enforcement officer out of nervousness.

Emily: I think one of the things that we're talking about here is that the hour between when you've refused entry and they're coming back with a court order is the improper time to be planning for this. It's something that you need to be planning for right now.

Peter: Exactly. I've suggested many times not to take the road of refusing to cooperate. You're not going to escape this. It's just under what attitude are you going to get it?

You have the right to demand an inspection warrant, but it's just not a very smart way to go. What would be smarter would be to listen in order to make the inspection work smoothly. Then tell them, "You told us you're here because of fall protections. Can we ask you to limit your inspection to those issues?"

Emily: If they see something else while they're looking for trip-and-fall hazards, does that lead to probable cause for a later inspection?

Peter: It might, but you've just dodged the bullet for a day so that you can correct those issues.

Andrew: Let's talk about what the reasons for the inspection could be.

Peter: Let's assume that it's not because there's a fatality or a serious injury, because those are pretty obvious. But after that come worker complaints, and whether they're anonymous or not, they have to be followed up on. They're also called referrals, which could be from your competitor — we used to call that ratting out. They could also be targeted inspections due to a national emphasis. It could be that springtime is coming, so they look around for ladder hazards. So they're driving around, they see ladders and they seem not to be set up properly. Once you've been visited, they can follow up to make sure that you have corrected the violations and you haven't gone back to your old ways.



Is your safety gear up to date and right for the job?

Emily: We've noticed too many stories about people being hurt. This is something that a business owner is responsible for. Keeping people safe is an important part of your company and your job.

Peter: It's a federal law and people just don't pay heed to it. You can tell me that you can't afford it. You can tell me your customers aren't willing to pay, you can tell me everything like that. Then you should get out of business. It's black and white in the federal law that workers have to go home — today — the way they came in. It's such a tough industry, and all these things are really overwhelming to the person who just wanted to get a painting company going. I understand where they're at; I was there myself. But you're going to learn the hard way if you learn it through OSHA.

Emily: So back to the inspection: Your company's safety person shows up. Now what?

Peter: The inspector is free to walk around, and if they did not agree to

limit the scope, then they can go anywhere. But if you ask them to explain the probable cause and ask them to limit the inspection to that, then they'll limit where they go. Remember that you are you allowed to be next to that person and walk with them. If they take a picture, you take a picture. If they take a measurement, you take the measurement, so you gather the exact evidence this person is gathering. It's very important that you do this.

Also, they can meet privately with any of the workers on the job site; however, you have the right to be there because if it's written in a report that one of your workers said this or that, you want to make sure that you believe it's true.

Andrew: Is there any chance that they're going to quiz your crew?

Peter: Yes. If you say to the inspector, "All my workers have been trained on ladders," it's quite possible that they're going to ask several people, "What's the difference between a stepladder and an extension ladder? When was the training and how long ago was it? Where was it? When was it?" Because a lot of people have false certificates.

Emily: So, as you're walking around with the inspector and he's asking questions, is there any reason that you should say, "I'll get back to you," as opposed to answering all the questions immediately?

Peter: If you are not sure of the answer, then be honest about that so that you're not incriminating yourself. We do make mistakes, and if you've not been inspected before you are nervous right now and less is better.

Andrew: If a contractor hires somebody like yourself, would they call you a safety consultant?

Peter: Yes. I'm a certified safety officer, a CSA. Most OSHA enforcement officers understand what that means and

that they're getting someone who's educated in the regulations so they're not going to be dealing with very innocent or immature questions; it's going to be a professional inspection.

Andrew: So if Dwyer's Painting hires you to be my safety consultant and I call you and you show up on the job site, are you now doing all the speaking on my behalf or are you simply advising me?

Peter: I'll be answering them. And I'm going to suggest that you be quiet.

Andrew: So my guess is getting safety consultant early might not be a bad idea.

Peter: Obviously, my answer is biased; however, the sad fact is I meet almost all my clients in the informal hearing process. The best medicine to get out of this alive is to already have things in play.

I hate the phrase "safety pays." It's going to cost you money to change the culture in your company, but you will get it back tenfold because it doesn't take much more than one claim to erode everything you've done. It's easier to do it right from the start, because once you're under their target, it's not going to be the last time you see them.

If you've never seen an OSHA agent on your site, it could be luck or it could be that you do everything perfectly. Most likely it's the first. That's how casinos make money — they just expect people to throw the dice one more day, but eventually it catches up. So I know it's difficult, but please start thinking about safety now, because it could impact you in a serious way. That you've worked so hard to build a business, and then to see it go in one day, one incident — it's just a shame. **APC**

Peter Lawton can be reached at peter@leadsmartraining.com.



in my EXPERIENCE

Have a question? Curious how other contractors solve application problems? APC can help. In each issue, we'll aim to answer some of your technical questions by reaching out directly to the product experts. Send your questions to editorial@paintmag.com, subject: In My Experience.

What are your best tips for Cabinet Finishing?

Matt Schmohl and Curtis Tankersley
Just Add Paint, Shiremanstown, PA

Be patient. Cabinet refinishing is not an easy process, no matter how many blogs and Pinterest articles may say so. It is a learned skill that takes hundreds of hours before you get really good at it. The best way to learn is by doing, which means a lot of failure and trial and error to gain knowledge and achieve success. That takes time.

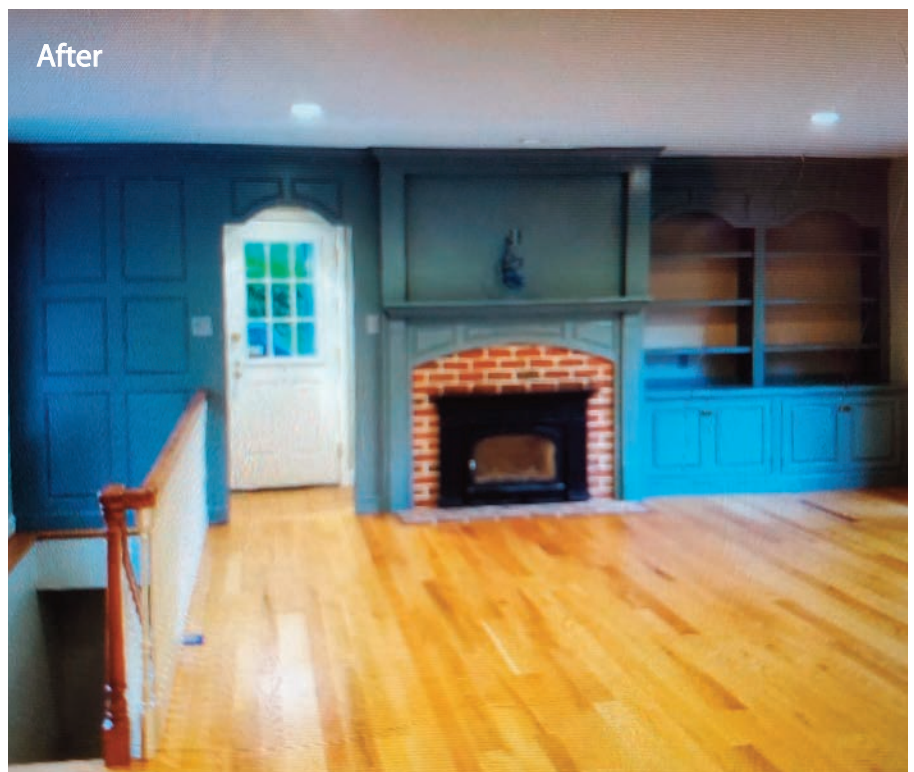
Not allowing coatings to dry properly, sanding something too soon, or rushing the prep process to get the job done faster will lead to more issues in the long run. So just chill. When you have an issue or things are not going as anticipated (which is most of the time), sometimes the best thing to do is nothing — just walk away and come back to it later.

Another very important tip is to get educated on the processes, standards and products in the industry and how to use them. While having a thorough prep process and using the right tools is very important, knowing which primer/topcoat to use on certain substrates, knowing which grit of abrasive to use between coats or for surface preparation, and knowing what spray tips, pressure, temperature and humidity the products need to be applied at is crucial to achieving a nice finish. We take notes on everything we do and have a dedicated iPad specifically for this task.

Dimitri Nidis

Omega Painting Services, Reading, PA

There are two types of cabinet finishers: those who really know about wood species and how to prepare the surface, and those who grab a brush and a roller and change the color with very little success in the final finish. I use an airless sprayer unless there is a specific type of finish (for example, a faux finish) that the customer requires.



Dimitri Nidis shoots his before and after photoro from the same angle to better show the transformation. Nidis uses a sprayer for cabinets in most instances.

Starting correctly is key. Were the cabinets previously painted or stained? Are there any existing top coatings that you need to remove? If you're painting over previously painted cabinets, a good coat of primer will ensure the success of your finished product. On stained cabinets there are a lot of unseen imperfections, but once you prime them, they will show dings and cracks.

First, use 180 grit sandpaper and sand the entire surface. Next, vacuum and wipe off any dust, then Bondo-patch all the imperfections and let them dry. Sand again with 180 grit sandpaper and repeat by vacuuming and wiping off the dust. Now you're ready to prime them and repeat the same process all over again. When your last coat of primer is completely dry, sand again with 220 grit sandpaper, vacuum and wipe. Make sure there's no dust, then apply two coats, sanding between coats with 220 grit sandpaper.

How do you prepare for a decorative painting project?

Arlene Mcloughlin

*Arlene Mcloughlin Murals
Massapequa, NY*

- I always have my client sign the back of a faux sample and keep it on-site for reference.
- I gather my supplies the night before.
- I try to have a visual reference of a similar room so the client can see what the finish will look like.
- I always have extra rags, ceiling paint and trim paint in case of bleed onto any areas that shouldn't be painted.
- Mentally, I prepare for a big job by planning it room by room, tackling the hardest areas first.
- Having a good playlist and my speaker charged always helps too!

APC



Mcloughlin makes sure to have a big project like this mapped out ahead of time.



Taking a break is an important part of a large detailed project, especially if you're painting a ceiling.