



## IN THIS ISSUE...

- ☛ From the President
- ☛ Propel Your Sales
- ☛ Annual Planning Is A Must!
- ☛ From the Editor
- ☛ The Crucible
- ☛ To Discount or Not to Discount?
- ☛ Email Marketing: A Word of Caution
- ☛ Letter to the Economy Gods
- ☛ Promises
- ☛ Advanced Shop Talk 2009
- ☛ Summer Help: Hiring Kin?
- ☛ Editor's Note



## From the President



**H**ey, economy got you worried? I've always found waking up at 2:00 am with an anxiety attack a very effective way of managing my com-

pany. There's nothing like the gloom of the pre-dawn hours (which by the way is when most people die), to put the absolute worst possible spin on life and business. These days I don't require 2:00 am to bring on an attack – I just look at our sales forecast and P&L statement.

So, what are you doing to get through these trying times?

- Putting the whites back on?
- Liquidating decimated investments?
- Selling off equipment, vehicles, teenage children?

### TURNING LEMONS INTO LEMONADE

Last month we were asked by a realtor to submit a proposal for a condo in Boston's Back Bay. I first 'zillowed' the unit to find the selling price, \$1.4M, reviewed

the unit and wrote up a detailed, 2 page estimate describing the condition of the existing coating, preparation steps and application of 2 topcoats allowing for color changes and a superlative finish, our usual proposal in scope and detail, totaling \$15k.

The client emailed back that our price was 300% higher than our competitors, both of which she claimed were reputable, high-end painting companies. I laughed so hard my stomach hurt. I laughed some more, then cried a little.

I'm still laughing, and still crying, 30 days later. Price sensitivity in this climate is almost insurmountable.

But the saving grace of this ordeal is that this debacle is not of my own making. This particular firestorm is actually not my fault – finally! Hence, the complications posed by my standard emotional response to my standard ineptitude (embarrassment, shame, procrastination, and then finally, action) are avoided and I find myself proactively and deliberately making the adjustments necessary to survive.

... continued on page 4

## What's New?



### Advanced Shop Talk 2009 *Don't Just Survive... Thrive!*

July 16 - 18, 2009  
Portland, Oregon

- Roundtable Discussions.
- Designing a website
- Tour of Purdy Brush and much more!

# Propel Your Sales

by Paul Licari Licarpainting@aol.com

I recently finished a job and by the end of the third day the homeowner had riddled me with pot shots about how expensive I was. Although it was done in jest, I had become frustrated by all her comments, so on the last day, after yet another jab, I said "well, let me ask you something, why didn't you hire one of those cheaper guys?" Surprisingly, she turned serious, reflected a little bit and said "I don't know, I guess it's because I trusted you, and, as it turned out, my instinct was right!"

I've won the majority of my bids by purely winning over the homeowner. I am writing this article minutes after receiving news that I was just rewarded another job. The owner ended that conversation by saying "I was going to get a few bids, but I'm not going to bother now, I feel good about this, so let's just do it!" The great thing is, I've heard that before!

What's the secret, you may be wondering? Well, I think it's hidden in a few simple principals that I always follow. Follow these and propel your own sales.

- Preparation
- Respect
- Ownership
- Proof
- Empathy
- Listening

## PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE ESTIMATE

This means everything from your own personal appearance to how you plan to present your company to the buyer. Keep in mind, they know nothing about you or your company. Your first impression is crucial. Make sure you look your best, you have a solid compilation of sales materials, and it all appears neat and organized.

## RESPECT THE OWNER AND THEIR HOME

This is also part of the first impression. If you walk in and trample across their floors with your shoes on they are probably going to second guess the amount of care you are going to give their

house while you are actually working there. Even if the homeowner tells me "don't worry about it" I still remove my shoes.

## OWN IT!

Owning it means that you are going to take full and complete responsibility for the task and their home. Say things to them that let them see it. Also, let the customer know that they are doing you a favor by hiring you. They are providing you with an opportunity to work and you appreciate it. One of the easiest human traits to effect is one's need to feel important.

## PROVE YOUR INTEGRITY TO THE CUSTOMER

This is two fold because it has to be done during the sales call as well as through the completion of the job. We offer proof of our integrity with our professional sales materials and reference list.

Empathy is defined as understanding another's feelings. I'm not implying that we should all become therapists, but empathy

is a key element to completing the sale. In addition, it will aid in earning you high marks during the job because you will have obtained critical information of what the customer considers to be the most important factors of the job, their "hotspots". For instance, during the sales call you may see that the owner grows angry when talking about how the last guy left dust all over the floors when he left. Well, when you finish the job you can point out how you cleaned all the floors with extra care because you remember how that bothered them so much. Moreover, hearing about these things in the beginning of your conversation and then highlighting those same points at the end of the estimate will show the owner you have been paying attention and

that you clearly understand their needs and desires.

Listening is the tool that allows all of this to happen. Don't try to lead the conversation, or spend too much time professing your attributes. Listen intently to your potential customer and then, when it is clear that they are finished, use short and deliberate comments to make your points, express your desire to work for them, and your understanding of their needs.

I will be presenting a seminar at the NYS PDCA Mid Winter forum on March 13, 2009 in which I will further discuss these and other great sales techniques that have worked for me. I hope you can attend. ■



# Annual Planning Is A Must!

by **Jeremy Brooks** [Jeremy@brookspainting.com](mailto:Jeremy@brookspainting.com)

**H**ow many of us have been told that if you keep things in your head they will never happen. Goals are best written down. I did not practice this until 6 years ago when I join Advisors on Target. We had been successful for the first five years in business, always had work and money in the bank. The problem was that I wore all the hats, and never took time to write out any kind of plan. The first year with AOT planning consisted of learning about my financials, making a business plan, and just getting things out of my head onto paper. The next year we had a much easier time doing those things and added a marketing plan. Then we dove into sales goals, and really planning how we would hit those goals. Over the past 3 years we have gone away for two full days of intensive planning for the year. The first year this was overwhelming, scary, and took a tremendous amount of time for me to plan out. I am your typical type A, anal planner and wanted everything to be perfect. The results were phenomenal.

So what is annual planning? Here at Brooks Painting it is two days of diving into our business. We go to Lake Tahoe where we can get away from the business needs. This year we took our two sales guys, our business manager, our stellar administrative assistant, and me. Our agenda for 2009 was as follows: We spent 2 hours talking about marketing; what we are currently doing; what each of us can do to promote

the company; what is prospecting – really; our home alliance group we are forming; how to use our website more effectively; and how to market to our customers better.

Then we reviewed our marketing budget and marketing plan. We broke into small groups for the sales guys



to draft prospecting plans, meet and greet plans, and other items. The rest of us planned out our company events for the year. We looked at cost cutting measures, reviewed our company flow chart, and planned our charity paint. Then we regrouped for some role playing, and to evaluate the sales guys plans.

We then looked back at 2008, listing our accomplishments, regrets, and action plans for 2009. We also did a

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. We each set our individual goals with detailed action plans. Then we went out to dinner, and our sales guys went home to sell the next day.

On day two we reviewed our office procedures. We planned worst case scenarios if things don't improve in 2009. We discussed how to restructure our crews, and our additional work orders that our crew leaders sell. We spent time looking at what we are doing in regards to going green and how to promote that. It is a lot

of work, but it gives great clarity. The biggest benefit is the input you get from your key players.

So planning takes time, it gives you written goals and a way to accomplish them. Things cannot end there, you need follow up. Goals are great but you have to have accountability or they fall by the way side. So we review our plans at our office meetings to get updates. This gives us an opportunity

to adjust our plans as needed. Then we are prepared for when the unforeseen arises, and we have to decide what to do.

This past year we have all had to deal with a struggling economy, but at Brooks Painting that was our smallest problem. In March of 2008 my field manager that had been with us for 8 years disappeared. No calls; and I still have never heard from him. We found out from friends that he had cancer, and has just shut out everyone. Next my top sales guy attempted suicide

in May, and in August actually succeeded in taking his life. He had been a part of our company for 4 years, and was loved by us all, and is greatly missed. These events were much more stressful and draining than the economy or any thing we had ever faced. We lost friends and coworkers that both owned 1% of our company, and managed vital parts of our business. So I had to choose to sink or swim. It would be easy to mope around, be depressed and let business suffer. But after 11 years of doing this, I chose to

take care of the other 21 people we employ. We still have had a profitable year and accomplished a lot of things. Did we do everything we planned at our retreat for 2008? NO! But that is ok. Because we planned, we know what we did accomplish, what we did not, and have adjusted.

No matter what happens, if you have a plan you can cope and adjust. If you don't have a plan, then you are in for real trouble. So as we try to ride out these difficult times, don't forget to plan. ■

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*From the President, continued from page 1*

So how do we succeed this year? Some of our competitors are obviously working off the books to stay busy or they are sacrificing profit to keep their crews busy. At Catchlight, we're not willing to do either, but we are looking for ways to reduce overhead and for ways to cut our bid rate without impacting our gross profit target. We're cutting back on benefits to reduce our payroll burden. Gone is the paid day off at Christmas and New Years day – that saved us over \$5K. Sick pay and vacation pay are next to go and we will likely ask our foremen to take a 15% pay cut. Every line item is being scrutinized for potential savings.

While I'm not enjoying this environment particularly, I take comfort knowing our laid-off people are receiving unemployment insurance and so I'm finding this a useful exercise. I believe this experience will help me manage my company with more competence. Our only natural advantage is change, after all – as long as I am able to change our company structure quickly and adroitly, we should be able to survive – which in my mind is the same as succeeding. Anyone else see the silver lining in this economic climate?

Cheers, sort of,  
Nigel Costoloe [nigel@catchlightpainting.com](mailto:nigel@catchlightpainting.com)

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## From the Editor: Opportunity 2009

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by Tom Reber [tom@jalapenopaintwerx.com](mailto:tom@jalapenopaintwerx.com)

It may not seem like it, but there is opportunity for your business in 2009. Despite the economic conditions around us, you must believe one thing: someone, somewhere needs to paint something!

The Residential Forum Board has put together an issue of The Rag that is meant to inspire you to fight on. Many of your competitors are shrinking back, folding up and walking away. Many are simply sitting around and hoping to ride things out. Did you ever see Castaway with Tom Hanks? He survived on that island because he found a way to fish, make fire, a friend (Wilson) and shelter. He returned home because he made a raft and attacked the ocean in hopes of getting rescued. He took a chance. He took action. He did not wait.

In this edition of The Rag you'll read about:

How years of building right means you'll better weather the storms that will come

How you can improve as a salesperson, be strategic in your discounts, and be inspired to NEVER fail to deliver on a promise

How business planning is a must and even when goals aren't reached having a plan allows for adjustments that will keep you alive

And, while you are in the planning mode...please put July 16 – 18, 2009 at the Nines Hotel in downtown Portland, Oregon on your calendar for AST 10. The forum board is committed to making 2009 the Best AST yet in order to help you "THRIVE" in this difficult economy.

Sincerely,  
Tom Reber & Julie Gehrke

# The Crucible

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by Doug Imhoff [djimhoff@msn.com](mailto:djimhoff@msn.com)

“The path to nirvana is not safe and wide, it is tricky and steep. If you walk only when the sun shines you will never reach your destination.” In the past, great masters of wisdom bestowed upon mankind many such truths, few of which weather the centuries like that one.

Let me set the table: I missed Denver, dearly. That fabled western city played host to my misspent youth, my formative years; the town where I learned how to straighten a bent nail and ski through trees; where I attended college and found my dream girl (and married her) and fathered my first daughter. Among friends and colleagues I talked frequently of returning there and carving-out a piece of the action. In June of 2005 I decided that the time had come, by the end of August I was leading the family caravan heading west toward Denver. We settled with kin and I quickly set up shop and went to work spreading the word about who I was and what I did. I crashed the city like a college boy crashing a high school party. It felt good to be back.

And I joined everything: PDCA; On Target; NARI; ASID; HBA; NKBA; Remodelers Council; BBB, there were few trade/professional associations I didn't get involved in. I spent many nights at events, volunteered for committees, pressed the flesh at every opportunity and showed my face everywhere. With some luck and lots of schmoozing I got my first job in

the new city, November it was. More jobs followed and I was working a lot, but the working part didn't last long. By May of 2006 the phone was ringing so much that I hired several painters to keep the schedule moving and I got busy managing the growth. I was so busy managing, estimating, schmoozing and putting out fires (so busy being busy) that there wasn't time to work the tools any longer. I'm certain there are readers who know intimately the details of the place I was in. In any case, I was growing the business and I was excited. I put my wife to work sorting through the debris I called an office and I kept my head down. I had set a destination, took off fast and I was on the path to success. In my cartoon bubble I pictured a company that served the professional design and remodeling sectors with some incidental activity in the residential redo sector. And that's exactly what we had created.

## MAN PLANS AND GOD LAUGHS

I hadn't counted on the credit bubble bursting - I wasn't even aware that there was one. But as we all now know, there was. The collapse of the financial markets last fall changed my company instantly; I went from 3 projects concurrent and a 3 week back log to nothing in a period of 2 weeks. Sure I noticed some signs, but I knew from lots of experience (2 ½ years) that this was an anomaly. I wasn't worried. After all, what could go wrong? Going from '7 plus me' to 'just me' in a period of a couple

weeks was a breathtaking change; suffocating from the sudden loss of cash flow the business was rushed into triage, only the pressing debts were serviced, others were begged-off. When the dust settled I began to recognize familiar shapes: projects started, resolutions sworn to, promises dusty. Now in post-op there's just enough work to keep my head above water. And, although the sun is no longer shining, I'm back in the tools and couldn't be happier.

## SALVATION THROUGH HARD LABOR

My happiness at being back in the tools is one measure of gratitude (many are not working) mixed with one measure of the joy of work. At last I've come up for air - and a look around. Hey, it's nice here; now I remember why I moved back - I've always cherished the thought of alpine skiing on a Saturday afternoon and 18 holes the following Sunday - truth be told I have yet to do it. But I digress. During those weeks of deceleration I discovered many things that had previously eluded me - or me them. Things about me, my business, relationships, employees, I realized (with the aid of oxygen) that careful, measured expansion does not have to be an impediment to real growth; that selectively and politely saying "no" will aid in restful nights and enjoyable weekends; that there is no substitute for direct supervision; that paying bigger wages doesn't mean getting more production; that having your own skin in the game makes you better, faster and tidier than even the best hourly worker; that if you don't know your financials you're probably losing money; that if your best employee isn't thinking about starting

... continued on page 10

# To Discount or Not to Discount?

By Linnea Blair

Do you sometimes feel trapped in a price war?

As customers become more price conscious or at least we perceive them to be, there is often the temptation to discount in our pricing. Can it be advantageous to discount and what should you be wary of in using this tactic? There are several ways of discounting.

## **RUNNING "SPECIALS" DURING TYPICALLY SLOW SALES CYCLES**

If this is well executed meaning that you promote it well, keep it to tightly controlled time periods and limit exposure by capping amounts, it can be helpful.

## **DISCOUNTING AS A "FAVOR"**

Some business owners use this tactic to get their "foot in the door" with a potential referral source or as a reciprocal agreement with good referral partners. I would caution that you don't give too much away with a potential partner especially if the initial project is a large one, and make sure that reciprocal agreements are equally fair to your company.

## **CUTTING PRICES TO GET UNDER A COMPETITOR'S BID**

This is the tactic most fraught with peril for small businesses. You run a number of risks including not making enough (or any!) profit, not being able to cover expenses, and perhaps worst – "commoditizing" your service, so that you undercut your value

proposition that you have worked so hard to create as the contractor of choice for quality work and skilled professionalism.

Many business owners that I know use discounting as an effective tool to obtain work in

slower periods as outlined in the first example. So at times, I can agree that there can be a time and place for discounting. As a rule, though, I caution against discounting without being fully aware of what the consequences will be.

For example, did you know that if you discount your price 10% and your Gross Profit Margin is 45% typically, you will need to increase your sales volume by 29% to maintain your original profit dollars? That means you need a lot more leads to make those sales. Conversely, if you increase your price by 10%, you can actually afford to decrease your sales volume by 18% to get the same gross profit dollars.

I have a nifty set of charts that I am happy to share with you that show the various percentages at different gross profit margins and discount percentages so you can tailor this analysis to your company. Just email me at [info@AdvisorsOnTarget.com](mailto:info@AdvisorsOnTarget.com) and put "Discounting Chart" in the subject line.

One question I am often asked on this topic is "If I have already met my budget, wouldn't it make sense for me to discount additional work in a given month if by doing so I could close more sales?" My answer is: Maybe. I would say I

have seen this strategy backfire more than I have seen it succeed so approach it with caution. First make sure you really are on target to produce profitable jobs that will cover your overhead AND provide your budgeted profit for the month. Then if you have the additional capacity to produce the lower profit margin work, it would bring some additional amount of dollars to your bottom line. That is assuming that your other jobs all come out with the desired gross profit, and that you don't undermine your core differentiator by getting a reputation for coming down on your price so that your market begins to expect it.

Bottom line – discounting used judiciously can have short term benefits in your slower season, but make sure you know your numbers before you start! ■

Linnea Blair is a Business Coach and Consultant at [AdvisorsOnTarget.com](http://AdvisorsOnTarget.com)



# Email Marketing: A Word of Caution

By David Chism [dmchism@san.rr.com](mailto:dmchism@san.rr.com)

Just a few years ago emailing was a rare form of communication. Today email is used by billions of people and has become commonplace. When have you heard someone say, "Just send some information in the mail or fax me something"? Rarely!

Emailing has become so popular

that we've all been bombarded with advertisements encouraging us to market our companies by sending emails. People love receiving personal emails, so why not email them your weekly newsletter and special offers?

While email marketing has its place, I offer a few words of caution before utilizing this relatively new form of marketing.

## PEOPLE HATE SPAM

Direct mail used to be considered "spam." Not anymore. People no longer get upset over receiving a mail piece from you in their mailbox, but getting an advertisement by email is practically "evil." People don't like it!

## GET THEIR PERMISSION

Make sure you get people's permission before you send an email to them. A personal email is always best but takes more time. Companies like

"Constant Contacts" have an unsubscribe area for use when you send



emails through their system. This is very helpful to your viewers.

## DON'T SEND TOO OFTEN

Of course we love our paint company and think that everyone shares the same passion for paint. I hate to

break it to you but people can care less about receiving a painting newsletter every week in their inbox. I recommend sending 2-3 times per year and no more than 4 times. You want to leave your customers with a good impression, not irritate them. If you email or mail to your customers 3-4

times a year, they won't forget you, honest!

## KEEP IT SHORT & SWEET

I've perused lots of newsletters and email marketing pieces and have to say that I am not impressed with most of them. Keep your emails short so as not to bore your reader, and keep it "sweet" by making the information relevant and helpful to your clients. Talk about things that will whet potential client's appetites for more.

## DON'T MAKE IT PROMINENT ON YOUR WEBSITE

Many websites have a "sign up for our newsletter" button on their home page. You will not receive much interest from website visitors, though the concept sounds cool. Don't clutter your site with that button. Instead, have people sign up on a more relevant page such as your blog or news page.

Remember to be respectful of your client's privacy and get their permission before sending them anything electronically. Consider a personal

*Keep your emails short so as not to bore your reader, and keep it "sweet" by making the information relevant and helpful to your clients.*

survey to see what clients really think about business emails.

If you have a question related to your website, web marketing or email campaign, please feel free to email me anytime. I would love to help! David can be reached at: [dmchism@san.rr.com](mailto:dmchism@san.rr.com) ■

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# Letter to the Economy Gods

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by Julie Gehrke [julie@signetpainting.com](mailto:julie@signetpainting.com)

If you “google” it you’ll find that Hermes and Mercury were two of the more famous gods of commerce among lesser known names in ancient cultures. I’m just going to pile them all into confundity and call them the economy gods. And by the way, confundity is not a word in the English language but it came to my mind so I decided it must mean something. Turns out part of it is a Latin word. Confundit means: to bring into disorder, destroy, to pour together, mix, blend, confound, confuse, trouble. This means I almost technically used the word correctly. Feel free to steal it from me - confundity.

I heard a song on the radio today and if you’ve heard it too, you’ll be humming it in your head soon. This song, which I am not going to reveal yet,

had the perfect lyrics for my letter to the economy gods.

So dear economy gods, here’s the scoop. I was on my way up, you know, to the peak (not part of the song yet). There were only a few slopes in front of me and then the glass castle containing the income in colorful multiples and the freedom to go with it. All I needed to do was follow the correct map and poof, I would be there. That’s when it happened -the avalanche.

What did you think, dear economy gods, would happen? Or more precisely “which” did you think would happen? Suffocation? Falling? Brokenness? Or merely a live burial?

Here’s what I need you gods to know (get ready – this is the song part); it’s too late to apologize. You’ve got me

on a rope hanging ten feet off the ground. I’m hearing what you say but I just can’t make a sound. You tell me that you’re sorry... but it’s too late to apologize. I’m turning blue.

There, I mixed up the lyrics in case the recording company’s lawyer reads the Painter’s Rag and sues me for copyright infringement. Except wait! I didn’t make a dime on this article. Shite! What’s wrong with me anyway? What have you done to me, you economy gods of confundity?

Well my friends, it’s an interesting world when you can’t afford your overhead but you also can’t sell it. I think it really is too late to apologize but there’s something everyone reading this letter knows. It’s never too late to turn the corner and see what lies ahead. That’s just what we do – we mere mortals.

To my colleagues in the business: When you make the corner, do me a favor and give the economy gods a big smack in the face. Tell them Julie sent you. ■

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## Kudos for Painter’s Rag

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by Aaron Wallace, [aaron@suncoastpdca.com](mailto:aaron@suncoastpdca.com)

*When I first joined the Residential Forum I took a quick glance around the site ([www.pdcaresidentialforum.org](http://www.pdcaresidentialforum.org)); looked at the Business Systems area and said, “yeah, yeah, I already have my own version of that stuff.” I thought that was all there was to this forum. Well, tonight after work I was doing my usual researching, surfing and seeing what was new on some of my sites in my Favorites when I casually started clicking on the past issues of The Rag. I started with the latest and made it to the 2005 summer issue when I felt compelled to write and apologize for not seeing the real gems that were right in front of me! I really enjoy reading the articles by fellow residential contractors. Their thoughts, opinions and business perspectives help me to better understand where I am with my business.*

*Again my apologies for not recognizing this compilation of great information and knowledge.*

# Promises

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by John Peek [peekbros@sbcglobal.net](mailto:peekbros@sbcglobal.net)

I was with a client on a Saturday afternoon. I had just spent most of the day and a couple of other late days prior, fixing a problem at the jobsite. Like many of you, we have slowed down a bit and the foreman could not be sent out to fix the problem as he had been laid off. The client was very impressed that I went to the length I did to rectify the situation and leave them very happy....as a matter of fact, he committed to the remainder of the interior, which was really nice as we have to fight for every job we get. But that is not why I went to the length I did to properly fulfill the contract. On my way out, the client thanked me profusely and I said to him, "Thank you for your patience as we got things corrected for you... I am in the business of making promises; my promises just take the form of a properly done paint job".

Isn't all we do in our relationship with others based on promises made? It does not matter what we do for a living, whether we own our business or work for someone else; whether we paint, give legal advice, sell securities...there are explicit and implicit promises that are made by us or assumed by those with whom we are in relationship. If the relationship is to flourish, then promises must be kept.

For the past few months, I have never worked so long and hard in my

life. The slower the economy gets, the fewer staff I have to rely on and consequently, the more responsibilities I have to shoulder as the chief "promise maker". One of my favorite presidents, Harry Truman, had a plaque on his desk that said, "The Buck Stops Here". Old Harry knew

to be valued above riches". How do I plan to have a good name at the far side of these difficult times? By keeping promises and thus have a good name that goes before me...which will always be a better business bedrock than any advertising or PR that can be bought with mere money.

The business is an extension of my person. When I sell a project, the scope of work is my explicit promise. Along with that comes the implicit promise that the project will be done in a way that is consistent with high



that if a national problem was not dealt with properly, ultimately, he would be held responsible. In the old days I could send someone out to deal with a difficult client or sub-par craftsmanship, but now, it is often up to me to personally be the promise keeper.

My good friend Mike Chism has always used, and lived by, a verse from the Bible that states: "A good name is

ideals. People choose to do business with those they perceive to have the requisite skills and the character to see it to proper completion.

I write this with the distinct feeling that it is really to remind myself that, when I am feeling tired, overwhelmed and stressed, I can get my motivation from remembering that, "A promise made is a promise to be kept". ■

# Advanced Shop Talk 2009

by **Tony Kozak** [tonykozak@roadrunner.com](mailto:tonykozak@roadrunner.com)

AST 10 will be held on July 16 – 18, 2009 at the Nines Hotel in downtown Portland, Oregon. This year's conference theme "Don't Just Survive...Thrive" is sure to have something for everyone. AST 10 committee Chairman John Peek and his committee are busy preparing an exciting program with a bit of a different format than previous Advanced Shop Talks.

For those who want to arrive a day early a "shop hop" is being arranged for Thursday. Begin the day with a tour to some of our PDCA member shops in the Portland area and see how they operate their businesses.

Our Thursday evening Welcome Party will be held at Purdy Brush. Enjoy a tour of the Purdy facilities followed by a BBQ, compliments of our host Purdy Brush.

Friday morning will feature a seminar on Website Design presented by Residential Forum member David Chism. Learn from the masters on how to design and improve your website with "live" visits to other websites.

This year's luncheon speaker will feature a staff member from Mercy Corps whose National headquarters is located in Portland. They will give you an insight into what Mercy Corps is doing to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression in the world.

The afternoon will feature a number of mini presentations on topics relating to the residential painting contractor. Each presentation will be followed by a round table discussion on that particular topic. Some topics under consideration are water-borne clear finishes, shop organization, faux finishing, field techniques, generating leads and sales in an economy in recess and blue ocean strategy.

Friday evening we will be on our own to explore the local cuisine in downtown Portland.

Saturday morning begins with a session on website optimization and SEM presented by Bill McKinney.

Our afternoon will conclude with more mini presentations and roundtable discussions.

If you have never been to an Advanced Shop Talk now is the time. You can't afford not to!

John Fattor from Wooster Brush had this to say about last year's Advanced Shop Talk, "AST is, in my opinion, the ultimate PDCA program. The format is awesome."

Don't hesitate. Make your reservations today to attend AST 10.

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*The Crucible, continue from page 5*

his own business then it's likely he's either shining you on or he's holding back on you; that if you took the time to know what was going on in your absence you may conclude that if you cannot personally do a task, it is a task that should remain undone.

## **KNOW THYSELF**

Ok, you may be thinking that this is an exercise in pointing out the obvious. "[He] dove into a sea of platitudes, and with the strong breast-stroke of a channel swimmer made [his] confident way toward the bright cliffs of the obvious."- W.S. Maughm. And you would be right. But, these things are only obvious to me now because I have lived through them. You, my consultants and my bookkeeper, can tell me all day long about this and that, but until I drink from that cup of pain it's just you saying it. I have

tasted deeply and I now pass the cup. Had the bottom not fallen out I would have continued (my head was down, remember?) rushing down the path. It reminds me of a German proverb: Was hilft laufen wen man nicht auf der rechten weg ist? What help is running when you're not on the right path? It may have taken a decade, maybe longer because I'm stubborn, but it would have burned up eventually. I'm grateful it came quick. Now I can begin again, walking in the rain. This time I will take the time to do it the artisan's way, building slowly but with certainty that each stone is secure and fits snugly.

The 3 years I've briefly described went by so fast - like time itself was tele-scoped and BAM!, here I am. Changes? I'll be making plenty. Like documenting my rates of production and

material usage, working my field paperwork from the field side, completing project reports and monitoring the financials. Recovery? Color me skeptical - I'm playing this hand close to my vest, nobody knows where the floor is. It could be 1932 all over again, Hoover hands the baton to Roosevelt. Painting? Yes, I'll be doing plenty of that. Getting home tired and dirty, smelling the aroma of a simple meal or special repast, hearing the cries of "daddy's home!" and listening to the dramatic events of a day in the life of a teenage daughter, thinking about a Saturday skiing at Copper Mountain, followed by a Sunday at the links.

I'll be here in Denver, drinking deep from this cup of simple pleasures, taking good measure of my stores, and above all being grateful. ■



# PDCA RESIDENTIAL FORUM

Painting & Decorating Contractors of America

## **What do I get if I join the PDCA Residential Forum?**

For your Annual dues of \$95.00 you will receive a one year subscription to "The Painter's Rag" newsletter, back issues of the newsletter, the current edition plus all previous editions of the Business Systems Workbook for Residential Contractors. You will also receive additional mailings on events planned by the PDCA Residential Forum and the availability of support from fellow residential contractors around the country.

## **What are the requirements for Membership in the PDCA Residential Forum?**

You must be a PDCA member – Nationally, Council or Chapter. The Residential Forum is designed to be an additional level of membership information and benefits specifically for the residential contractor.

## **APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Please send this form, along with your check made payable to "PDCA Residential Forum" to:

**PDCA Residential Forum, 8560 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221**  
**tony@pdcaresidentialforum.org**

## PDCA Residential Application

\_\_\_\_\_  
 COMPANY NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
 CONTACT PERSON

\_\_\_\_\_  
 STREET ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY, STATE, ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE & FAX

\_\_\_\_\_  
 EMAIL

\_\_\_\_\_  
 WEBSITE

**Payment:** Send check payable to PDCA with your Visa or Master Card #

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Exp \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 SIGNATURE

Mail To: PDCA Residential Forum, 8560 Main St, Williamsville, NY 14221

To help us provide services for our members, please tell us:

How long have you been in business? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in the PDCA? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend the National PDCA Convention? \_\_\_\_\_

How many employees do you have working for you (on average)? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of residential work do you do?

\_\_\_\_\_ % Residential new

\_\_\_\_\_ % Residential repaint

\_\_\_\_\_ % Residential custom

Do you provide specialty finishes? Please list

\_\_\_\_\_

Please check PDCA Membership information:

\_\_\_\_\_ Current National Individual Member

\_\_\_\_\_ Council/Chapter Member

Council/Chapter Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

PDCA Residential Forum  
8560 Main St.  
Williamsville, NY 14221  
(800) 697-7322



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## Summer Help: Hiring Kin?

edited by Julie Gehrke, Signet Painting, [julie@signetpainting.com](mailto:julie@signetpainting.com)

*The following clip is from an article that my daughter (Jessie Salchert) wrote for her high school newspaper in the year 2000 after working for her dad during the summer.*

My summer job started in the last week of June when the decision was finally made that I was going to go to work for my dad's painting company. On the morning of my first day, ten dollars an hour seemed like dirt when I saw my clock at 4:45a.m. Yet somehow I drug myself out of bed, into my sexy painter's pants and into the pick-up truck with my dad.

My summer job was never uneventful. I survived quite a bit including three electrocutions from taping off outlets, one that left my fingers burning for the rest of the day. I learned that if you drop paint on a fellow employee's head on purpose he will tape your feet to the ladder you are standing on.

I experienced my first toxic buzz of enamels and dye stains. I dealt with the male species incredible fascination with "passing gas". I became efficient with sanding sponges, putty knives, drills and brushes. I dealt with the pressure of "cutting-in" walls. My dad showed me how to hold the brush a certain way and then five minutes later my uncle told me a completely different technique.

I learned logistical things like two port-a-potties in a new home development with sixty workers of all trades is not enough. I learned to hold the four cups of coffee I consumed until lunch. Yet on the worst day of all I was helping my uncle spray cabinets. We both had on charcoal filter respirators but the smell of the biffs being cleaned penetrated right through.

Now I ask you, was it worth ten bucks an hour?

*Editors Note: Apparently it was worth coming back for after four years of college. Jessie is the sales manager/ project manager/ and self-appointed CEO (that would be her dad) - manager.*