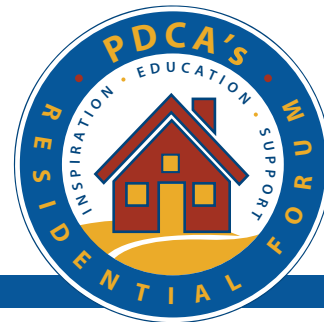


The Painter's RAG



PDCARESIDENTIALFORUM.ORG

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AST 13



From THE PRESIDENT



Task: Write the President's Letter for the Painters Rag
Problem: I have writers block

As I stated in the spring issue of the rag, for us, spring arrived early and we hit the ground running. Unfortunately, that pace has kept up since mid-March and with a spring break trip as well as a conference in April, a website crash in May, a Neill Family Reunion and semi-office move in June, (along with all of my regular duties and responsibilities) I still don't feel like I've come up for air yet. It's no wonder that I'm having trouble quieting my mind enough to write something meaningful (or worthy enough) for the front page of the summer issue of the rag, but I have a deadline, so here goes. Below are my tips on surviving the summer (aka – the three craziest months of the year, at least for me).

With regards to vacations - if you don't have one planned yet, block out some time in your calendar now even if you have no idea where you want to go. Otherwise, when you finally realize that you do need to take a break to avoid a breakdown, you may no longer have the option due to prior commitments.

With regards to conferences – with all of the networking groups and online seminars at our fingertips, we could probably all attend some sort of conference once a month without batting an eye, but what do you do with all of that information once you're back in the office? My advice, determine which conferences are the most valuable to you and just commit to those to start. If you can take a second person from your company with you, do it. It will help tremendously in being proactive and holding

July 2012

you accountable to putting what you learned into practice when you get back to the office. AST will always remain in my yearly rotation (and not just because I'm now required to be there) and I strongly suggest you block out September 13-16 for AST 13 in Chicago. Even if for some crazy reason you decide not to come, you'll want to have the option open.

With regards to websites – make sure all of your login and email passwords are super strong. While we were never able to pinpoint how or where the virus got into our site, it most likely had to do with a weak password somewhere. I don't even want to begin to tell you of the headaches that come along with having a lovely "this site has a virus" notice pop up when a customer tries to find you online, or the many attempts it took to convince Google that we had in fact de-bugged and solved the problem. You'll also want to make sure you have a clean back up copy of your entire site, just in case you need it. And last but not least, with regards to family reunions – get together with your extended family as often as possible (assuming you all get along, for the most part). Both of my parents come from large families and I was lucky growing up to have so many cousins within my age range to hang out with at family gatherings. Now that all of us who make up the second generation have started families of our own, it's the neatest thing to be able to pass the tradition of family time onto a new generation. With the rate of technological advances skyrocketing with each passing day, it's easy to forget the most important "connections" in your life – people, so make sure to slow down every once in a while and re-connect. Here's to an incredible summer.

Yours Truly - **Suhaiba Neill**

***save THE DATE!** more details in the next issue...

SEPT. 14-15, 2012 AST 13 Oakbrook Marriott, Chicago IL



Editor's **NOTE**: "Loss of Use"

By Mike Kelly, mike@crestwoodpainting.com

At a recent breakfast group meeting our resident insurance agent spoke about What Everyone Should Know About Insurance.

It was the segment on rental cars that was of particular interest. Your auto policy may or may not cover the cost of renting a replacement vehicle while yours is in for repair. It also may or may not cover "Loss of Use" – revenue the rental company would have earned had you not damaged their vehicle. Ask your Agent about both.

Here's where it pays to speak the language: "Diminution of Value" means their \$20,000 car is now worth less because of your accident. The rental company wants you to pay that difference. This is usually one of the areas on the contract you quickly initial – don't. "Before & After" is the other phrase and is a close cousin to Diminution. The rental company often will not want the liability of putting a previously damaged car back into their fleet and will sell the vehicle. They determine the "fair market value" before and after your accident – and you pay the difference.

The good news is that you can usually buy your way out of these clauses. The agent at the counter has the authority and it usually adds \$10 - \$20 per day. An example was given of a \$20,000 car that, between the deductible, Loss of Use and Before & After cost the renter \$14,000. For a car rental. Not a good way to end a vacation or business trip. Be careful this summer.

**A Note
From the
Editor**

I Don't Miss **MY SERVER**

Julie Gehrke, Signet Painting Julie@signetpainting.com

I was driving down the road the other day and I thought about my IT (Information Technology) guy. He was a great guy with his polo shirts embroidered and his van proudly lettered with the slogan, "We heard you need a nerd".

He gave out plastic pocket protectors to his favorite clients. He made a lot of money during the Y2K scare and said he was free to select the accounts he really wanted to work for; he was free to win a seat on the local school board and start his own non-profit. He wore his hair slicked to one side and had a sizable pair of glasses that had enough side distortion to make it clear he needed them.

The thought that occurred to me was, "I haven't seen Chuck in a long time." Oh yeah, that's because we got rid of our server two years ago. I don't miss Microsoft Exchange Small Business Server; back-up tapes, storms that took the server down, or rebooting the server. I do miss Chuck.

Why I Have No Server

Blame technology. Blame my proclivity to be an early adopter, which has gotten me into trouble more than once. But this time, I'm happy

with the results. Here is how I did it:

- I switched from Quickbooks Enterprise to Quickbooks Online. Not a transition for the weak of heart. The two do not function the same and there is a frustration curve to tackle, not to mention saying good-bye to rapid page opening and multiple tabs available at the same time. But now I can access my books anywhere, – even on my Android phone (Tablet or phone access is view only).
- I switched from Microsoft Outlook to Gmail. This gives me online access to the Signet calendar, my calendar and any other users' calendar as well as the email and contacts functions.
- I use Dropbox for document storage. No more need for "Public" folders; "User" folders etc. on the server.

Years ago I vowed to find one software solution to create estimates and invoices, and enter job/employee hours through the time sheet function. I chose Quickbooks. We have a large menu of Service Items in Quickbooks, each with a general description and unit rate, both of which can be edited to customize an estimate. All we do is select the

Continues on next page...





item and enter the measurement. This also gives us a simple solution for sales tax items. I do not use Quickbooks for payroll. I'm very happy, after trying Quickbooks, and Paychex, to be using a simple online entry program through my business bank, Wells Fargo.

The Future

My son who does IT and ET for the Coast Guard is always helping Ma and Pa push the envelope with technology. The next step is to bring the laptop to the estimate appointment, and punch the measurements into Quickbooks before leaving the site. This will require purchasing a "hotspot" internet connection. But here's the real test – we are going to install voice recognition software. This means the estimator can speak to the laptop or to a Bluetooth device and when the cursor is in the correct field of Quickbooks, it will type a customized explanation. This brings great joy to the current estimator, also known as Pa.

Are you READY?

By **Greg Sattler** greg@sattlerpainting.com



Earlier this year, we had our out-going mail stolen from our mailbox. I thought the little red flag was to help the postman. I guess it is a signal for the criminals too. The thieves used the information from the stolen mail to make counterfeit

checks which they attempted to cash at area banks. They were very bold, but not very bright and were unsuccessful. We closed two of our checking accounts immediately to prevent further attempts. We opened new accounts and our banks were very helpful and proactive. But in this digital age, we have several accounts with utilities and other recurring monthly accounts that are paid automatically and electronically. We also have some tenants from our real estate rentals that pay us electronically. It was a lot of work to change these automatic payments over to the new bank accounts. We keep good records, but it would have been much easier if we would have had all the information in a "disaster plan" file, ready to be executed. We didn't loose any money over this crime, so long as we don't count the

amount of time fumbling to re-create our new accounts, talking to police departments and banks, all while trying to run a painting business too!

If this were to happen to you, would you be ready? What if your wallet with credit cards was stolen? How about an office fire, earthquake or tornado? What about identity theft, computer glitch or hacking? How fast could your company deal with one of these, control the damage and get back to business as usual?

Each year brings more technology, with faster, more efficient ways to do business. The computer and smartphone are almost as important as the paint brush. But, advancements should be accompanied with a plan to brace our business for newly upgraded hazards as well. I am a painting contractor, not a disaster planning expert, so I don't have lots of advice except for what I learned from Boy Scouts... Be Prepared.



Our Newly Redesigned Website is up & Running



Check it out now!

PDCAResidentialForum.org





T&M for SURFACE PREP

by Doug Imhoff, imhoffpainting@msn.com

I'm generally not prone to declaring "one way" statements, but have found an exception: surface prep to PDCA Standards on pre-'78 buildings.

Like most of the readers of this esteemed forum, we're EPA certified. And, also like most of you reading, have had both good and bad experiences. So here's the declarative statement: on surface prep phase of pre-78 buildings the ONLY way to do it is time plus materials.

Assuming a couple things of course: one, your client isn't eager to sign a contract in which you've accounted for sending your children to college, buying a cabin cruiser and a new Porsche, second; you have done it incorrectly and drank deeply from the cup

of pain on at least one occasion and are eager to avoid that recurrence.

For the record, I'm a decent estimator, as are most of you reading, probably. But there are processes in our trade that defy accurate estimation: the first that comes to mind is wallpaper removal and subsequent surface

repairs; the second is exterior surface prep on old buildings. For me, it's far simpler to explain to a client why T&M is a smart way to proceed on such projects, and why it is fair to both the client and the contractor. Most reasonable clients understand and agree. For purpose of this argument I will not define 'reasonable', each of has a picture of it in our cartoon bubble, insert picture of reasonable client here. And don't forget that this conversation includes the lead-safe process you'll be adhering to, and don't whistle past this either; the client should know the details of why & how, show photos of a staged area in process so they can envision it happening at their house.

To continue; first, the client should have a copy of P14-06, and you should go over it together, talk about DSD (degree of surface degradation) levels, explain differences in DSD-2 v DSD-3, on her house, pointing to examples that clearly highlight the differences. Next, discuss the differences between the levels of surface prep, from Basic (level 1) through Standard (level 2), Superior (level 3) and finally Supreme (level 4). With this in mind, a proper spec and scope of work can be contracted and both



parties are in agreement about the target, and what the finished product will look like.

Second, the contract should stipulate to what level the surfaces will be prepped, and where such prep is to be done, in detail. For example: "Level 4 surface prep will be performed on the ceiling of the entryway porch. Level 3 surface prep will be performed on front of main house and bottom 10 feet of south side of house, and on north side of garage (facing back yard). Level 2 surface prep will be performed on all other sides of house and garage." This, coupled with the very clear descriptive

language in the Standard is a setup for both parties smiling when the job is done. But, there's two more crucial steps before we arrive at that happy place.

Third step: having explained why T&M is the fairest way to contract that part of the project, you must include in your contract a cost assumption. Use surface prep production rates in the estimating guide as a basis,

unless you have historical production rates that suit you and your production team better. Either way, put something in there. For example: "112 man hours are estimated for the completion of surface prep, lead-safe work, clean-up and disposal, at the hourly rate of \$45 per man hour, plus approximately \$350 in materials for an estimated cost of \$5390..." –or whatever word combination gets past your picayune legal department. The important point here is that you have a starting point stipulated, you may get it done faster, maybe a little longer, either way you're covered, and so is the client.

Finally, you'll want to make sure your production team knows the standards, the targets for each area and, of course, the budgets for each area. Monitor progress, take photos and good notes, have daily conversations with the client and not only will you avoid a loss due to surface prep surprises, but this can be a valuable tool for profit in your company, a good selling point for you, and a good experience for your customer to share when referring you to neighbors and friends.





Not A PERFECT WORLD

by Mike Kelly, Crestwood Painting mike@crestwoodpainting.com

There's an old adage: Ask ten painters the same question, you'll get twelve opinions - and maybe 15 business cards. Of course, painting is no different than any other profession. So, too, there is a range of thought when it comes to the exterior backrolling debate.

With that in mind, I asked two paint manufacturers about the necessity of exterior backrolling at the Residential Forum's Advanced Shop Talk (AST 12) in Chicago. As they were both marketing guys, they said they'd get back to me after checking with their product guys. Yeah, right – assuming that was the end of it. But three weeks later, both companies shocked me – personal notes from the product guys. Kudos!

First, some personal bias:

All Spray, No Backroll. Some exceptions, yes - but not many. Backrolling creates stipple; stipple is uneven film thickness. It's an imperfect business in an imperfect world, and rare is the customer willing to pay for perfection. Rarer still is the customer that won't fall asleep while you explain all of this. So we make tradeoffs: a sprayer and a backroller may satisfy painting purists and product tech guys, but they will never be as productive as a sprayer and a masker/assistant/apprentice. Someday painting may be a hobby for me; for now, it's very much a business.

The short answer from the Product Dudes: Backroll. It depends on the substrate material (wood? always backroll), the consistency of the substrate, the quality of the product being applied and the skill of the sprayer (backrolling evens out poor spray practices). To these "depends" one could add structure height and accessibility, wind and temperature. Paint skins over mighty quick when there's a light breeze in ninety degree weather – even a slight delay in backrolling may well disturb an otherwise adequate paint film.

The following two paragraphs from the Product Guy are in reply to this final question: Are there any estimates or rules of thumb for the practical difference in life expectancy between spraying only and spraying/backrolling?

"The service life of the overall coating system, if the coating is applied consistently, whether spraying or spraying/backrolling, still comes down to having a uniformed (sic) dry film thickness on the substrate. Also, the service life of a coating system is only as good as the substrate and only

as good as the surface prep.

"It would be great to have one magic bullet from an application standpoint, to help ensure all of this, but it still comes down to treating each job uniquely and compensating for the type of substrate and the environmental conditions."

There seems to be no definitive, quantifiable answer. If backrolling adds X% to the service life (factoring in geography, product, substrate, etc.), it can be incorporated into the sales process and added as an option for customers to consider. Until then, it's nothing more than anecdotal contractor preference.



Successful businesses require systems (nod your head Yes) to achieve repeatable and predictable results. Treating each job uniquely does not fit within a business systems framework and so may mean there is more than one system to paint a house. Tough to build a profitable and growing business when each project has its own unique set of processes and procedures.

Of course, there are two extremes: The Artisan Approach (laboratory perfect, no matter the cost or time) and the College McEntrepreneur Approach (slap it on and

cash the check). Yes, there is a middle ground – you, the painting professional, factor in the business, environmental and architectural considerations in your particular marketplace and decide on an approach that balances your personal ethics, business objectives and market demands.

Most pure tradesmen/technicians, no matter the trade, take heart in knowing that only their way is the truest and best practice of their craft. At least as far as backrolling goes, there is "more than one way to skin a cat." The manufacturers' recommendations put their product in the best light; customers walk their own price/quality tightrope. It is the professional paint contractor that weighs the many factors and (ideally) offers an above-average (and very competitive) contractor experience that customers see great value in and will gladly pay for. These are the tradeoffs in an imperfect world.

BLOG

Join the Conversation!

Regularly updated blog content,
current Advanced Shop Talk info & More!

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PDCA RESIDENTIAL FORUM PRESENTS

Advanced Shop Talk 13 "Back to the Drawing Board"

Join us for 2 full days to work both **IN** and **ON** your business.

When: September 14 – 15, 2012

Where: Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel
1401 West 22nd St.
Oak Brook, IL 60523

Conference Schedule

Thursday – September 13, 2012

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm Registration Open
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm Welcome Party
sponsored by Sherwin Williams
The Reel Club

Friday – September 14, 2012

Working "IN" Your Business

All seminars will take place at the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel

7:00 am – 8:00 am Continental Breakfast and
Registration for AST 12
8:00 am – 9:00 am Welcome and Opening
9:00 am – 10:30 am Crew Leader Training
John Peek, presenter
10:30 am – 10:45 am Morning Break
10:45 am – 12:15 pm Panel discussion on
Scheduling and Productivity
Scott Lollar, moderator
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm Lunch
1:15 pm – 2:45 pm Encouraging Employee
Accountability
John Neill, presenter
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm Refreshment break
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm Hot Topics Q&A
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm Wrap Up
6:00 pm Networking Reception
sponsored by Benjamin Moore
Maggiano's Little Italy

Saturday – September 15, 2012

Working "ON" Your Business

7:00 am – 8:00 am Continental Breakfast
8:00 am – 8:30 am Awards and Election of
Officers
8:30 am – 10:00 am Exit Strategies
Linnea Blair, presenter
10:00 am – 10:15 am Morning Break
10:15 am – 11:45 am CRM Software Review
Mark Lane, presenter
11:45 am – 12:45 pm Lunch
12:45 pm – 2:15 pm Marketing Your Company
John Nubert, presenter
2:15 pm – 3:00 pm Role Playing Activity
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm Refreshment break
3:15 pm – 4:00 pm Conference Wrap Up



AST 13 Registration Form

Company Name

First Person Attending

Additional Person Attending

Additional Person Attending

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Telephone & Fax

Email

Credit Card

Exp. Date

Name on Card

Billing Address

REGISTRATION COSTS

(includes all materials, breakfast, lunch and snacks)

	Cost	Qty	Price
AST 13 2-Day Conference	\$349	1	\$349
Additional Attendee(s) - same company	\$250	___	___
PDCA Residential Forum Membership - Join Today!	\$95	___	___

TOTAL DUE

PAYMENT OPTIONS

To register online and pay with a credit card go to:
www.pdcareidentialforum.org.

To pay by credit card, fax completed form to Tony Kozak at:
(716) 844-8248

To pay with check make check payable to PDCA Residential Forum
and mail payment and registration form to:
PDCA Residential Forum
63 Marne Road
Buffalo, NY 14215

**PLEASE NOTE: Registration will not be accepted without
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Hotel Reservations:

Call the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel directly at (630) 573-8555 or
(800) 228-9290 and ask for the special **PDCA Residential Forum Group rate of \$109** or reserve **online**.
<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/chiob?groupCode=pdcpdca&app=resvlink&fromDate=9/13/12&toDate=9/16/12>

Hotel reservations **must be received on or before 5:00 pm, Wednesday, August 22, 2012.**

Getting to the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel from the Airport

The Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel is served by both the Chicago/O'Hare Airport and the Chicago/Midway Airport. Please note the hotel does not provide shuttle service. To reach the hotel from either airport it is recommended you take the **Windy City Limousine service**, approximately \$28 one way for one person and \$10 for each additional traveler. You **MUST** make a reservation at Windy City Limousine service **prior** to your arrival. To make a reservation for your pick up at the airport call the Windy City Limousine service at 866-949-4639 or book your reservation online at www.windycitylimos.com and click on "Book Now."

We have been advised and strongly encourage you not to use the Airport Taxi service.

For additional information on the Chicago Marriot Oak Brook Hotel and the surrounding area click on
www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/chiob-chicago-marriott-oak-brook.

Confirmation and further details will be emailed to all registrants.

Questions? Please call the Residential Forum office at **(800) 697-7322** Office hours 8:30 am – 4:30 pm EST
or email tony@pdcareidentialforum.org





PDCA RESIDENTIAL FORUM

Advanced Shop Talk 13

"Back to the Drawing Board"

We survived 2010 (and some of us even thrived).
We innovated in 2011 (so we wouldn't die).

Now it's time to go back to the drawing board and update our playbooks.

Join us for 2 full days to work both **IN** and **ON** your business.

Crew Leader Training & Productivity - John Peek

What is "productivity" and how can we best realize it in ourselves and in our team?

In this workshop will we delve into the topic of crew leader training and how it directly relates to productivity. Developing positive attitudes in yourself and your team will help cultivate a desire to excel, leading to a greater level of productivity. Keeping a proper work/life balance is also crucial in keeping the quality of workmanship at the highest level.



John Peek is the owner of Peek Brothers Painting Contractors and has been painting homes, churches and institutional buildings for the past 30 years.

A California native, John has been a resident of San Diego for the past 44 years. A graduate of UCSD and UC Berkeley School of Business, John is now a leader in the painting industry. He spent several years as president of the San Diego chapter of the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America (PDCA) and was a two term president of The Residential Forum.

Scheduling & Productivity - Panel Discussion

Join us for a lively panel discussion on two of the biggest issues painting contractors face day in and day out. We will hear from fellow business owners about scheduling systems that have been successful in their businesses, as well as those that were not. We will also discuss strategies for getting the most productivity out of your employees and creating measurable standards by which to encourage and/or reward them accordingly. Come ready to ask questions and share your own experiences as well.



Encouraging Employee Accountability - John Neill

All business owners have the same issue - "How do I get my employees to care as much as I do?"

There are many different avenues for encouraging employee accountability. In this workshop, we will define ownership and explore the "4 R's". Because possessing a true passion for your work is essential, we will discuss the role of attitude in developing employees who hold themselves accountable and truly take pride in their work. Finally, we will identify the tools and resources needed to empower your employees so that they may truly excel at amazing your customers with both their craftsmanship and customer service.

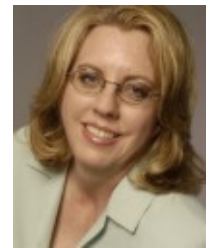


John Neill is the owner of John Neill Painting & Decorating, a residential painting company serving the Greater Philadelphia area and surrounding suburbs since 1974. With a focus on craftsmanship as well as exceptional customer service, the 40-employee company has become know in the area as "The Sign of Craftsmanship".

With a background in education, teaching has always come naturally to John. After thirty years in the classroom, he still enjoys being able to share with others who may benefit from his experiences.

Your Exit Strategy: Plan or Procrastinate – The Future is Yours - Linnea Blair

Did you know that it typically takes five to ten years to prepare a business for sale or transition? Most business owners think that planning their exit from the business is something that they can think about later. Some may have the idea that they will pass their business on to their children or perhaps a key employee. Others may think about selling the business to a third party or worst case scenario, just liquidating the business.



All of these alternatives need a sufficient degree of planning in order for you to exit the business on your terms and with your retirement income secured.

In this workshop we will explore:

- The most common options for exiting your business
- Key considerations when selecting the best exit strategy for you
- Critical questions you need to answer before you can start the transition process
- Specific variables that will add value to your business in preparation for sale
- Essential estate planning considerations for family businesses

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey suggests that we “Begin with the end in mind”. It’s never too early to take that advice when it comes to what you want for your life and your business. It’s unlikely that you want to trust the biggest financial transaction of your life to chance. Take time now to start the planning process to develop the structure, systems and people you need to make a successful transition to the next phase of your life.

The president of Advisors On Target, Linnea Blair provides business coaching and consulting to business owners and executives, who are ready to take action to become effective leaders and run a more profitable and professional business. Her specialties include Business Strategy, Relationship Marketing, Leadership and Financial Management.

Linnea developed the On Target Program for Painting Contractors in 2002 and over the last nine years has worked with over 100 Residential and Small Commercial Painting Contractors to help them develop more successful painting businesses.

CRM Software Review - Mark Lane

CRM-Customer Relationship Manager - it’s not just a contact manager anymore. In this workshop we will take an in-depth look at tools to help manage your customers and staff efficiently and effectively. Learn some new tricks from seasoned professionals on how these systems are working in their companies. Finally walk away with the skill sets and understanding of how CRM can work in your organization.



Mark Lane started painting houses when he was sixteen for extra money. Painting provided him with the opportunity to attend college. After a few years in outside construction sales he returned to painting as his chosen career.

“My vision as a painting contractor is not to be the biggest, but to be the most reliable, and professional. I hear a lot of horror stories from customers about previous contractors. It’s my goal to leave customers with a great experience to share with others.”

Why Direct Mail Should Still Be A Part Of Your Marketing Strategy - John Neubert

With an onslaught of advertising and marketing options at our disposal, many small businesses are missing the heart of their market by “giving up” on direct mail because it’s either too expensive or too time consuming. In this workshop we will discuss why direct mail is still an important part of your marketing strategy, the many options for “direct mail”, how to use it in other areas of your business, and how to track your success rate. We will also touch upon the need for a comprehensive marketing plan to maximize your company brand.



John Neubert is the President of Neubert Painting Inc. Started in 1975 the company has 10 full-time employees and an additional 70-80 seasonal employees who are mainly college students.

John has an undergraduate degree in marketing and an MBA in management from Cleveland State University. He also has additional training in Strategic Planning and sales training from Sandler Sales.

Hot Topics Q&A

While it may feel like we’re all living in our own private bubbles, many of the issues we face and problems we run into are also shared by others in the industry. Here’s your chance to ask your peers if they’ve encountered similar problems and whether or not they were able to find a successful solution. So put on your thinking caps, jot down your questions, and email them to Tony Kozak. We will select a handful to be discussed in an open forum session.

