

The Painter's RAG



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From THE PRESIDENT



The PDCA standards help us to establish the correct viewing distance for a finished paint job – “For the purpose

of inspection a normal viewing position shall be at eye level at a minimum of 39 inches or 1 meter from the wall.” PDCA P1 4.13 -, but what constitutes the correct viewing distance when inspecting your business? Two encounters on a recent business/family trip to San Diego got me thinking more deeply about this.

While having dinner outside one evening, a few sea gulls were brave enough to circle overhead and spotted a cup of cheddar goldfish left behind by a child. They did not hesitate in landing and finishing off the youngster’s snack and hung around through our meal as well to see if we too would leave anything behind.

My second encounter was with the make-up mirror in our hotel bathroom. My daughter discovered it while washing her hands and was quick to reply, “Mom, and look how big this makes my face!” I was more reluctant

to take an up close look at my face, but did so as I explained to her why it magnified things the way it did.

I think it’s safe to say that most of us look at our businesses from “normal viewing” standards most of the time, but when was the last time you stepped back to get the bird’s-eye view or moved in closer for a more magnified look? Sometimes all it takes is a simple change of perspective to notice something you never noticed before, which could lead to a much-needed change of pace for your business.

And if you need some outside assistance in taking a look from a different perspective, be sure to join us this August in Baltimore for AST 14. Surrounded by your peers you will have two full days to evaluate your business and come up with an action plan to make adjustments and changes to ensure the future that you envision for your company. It’s also not a bad spot to plan your own business/family trip. Hope to see you there.

Yours Truly - **Suhaiba Neill**

Spring 2013

Weather OR NOT

By Mike Kelly, crestwoodpainting.com

While talking over an estimate with a homeowner last year, she mentioned her company – Weather or Not. I, of course, asked “Would you tell me a bit about that?” In short, they sell specific and targeted weather reports. I know what you’re thinking – “What’s wrong with the weather on my phone?”

“TOTALLY different product!” she shrieked, and then quickly offered examples. Airports need to know – within a fifteen minute window – when they should de-ice planes on the runway. Cities need to know how much snow will fall so they call in their (highly paid) crews in the middle of the night only when necessary. Roofing crews, highway contractors, etc. all have some stake in knowing just what the weather will do, and when.

And so do painters. How many times have you gone back-and-forth with your guys about just exactly what the weather will do? Some want to work early, some late and some not at all. But what if you knew that it wouldn’t rain until 1pm. Or, that rain would stop at 9am and you could prep a house for the rest of the day?

Here’s how it works: for \$99 per month you can choose up to three targeted work areas. Then select notification hours and add up to five phones (or emails) to the notification list. Run a test and then - ba-da-bing! You and your field supervisors are receiving barely-decipherable text messages that can only boost your Twitter skills.

From a safety perspective this is a home run. Rain is a disruption, yes – but high wind? or lightening? - much more serious consequences. It allows safer production, easier scheduling, eliminates the weather-guessing game and will ultimately make your company more profitable.

Weather or Not is a regional company; there is almost certainly something similar in your neck of the woods. Maybe not a huge payoff in always-nice places like San Diego but a better bet where weather extremes might allow you to turn a couple of non-productive days into revenue producers.



The Soul OF LEADERSHIP

By Julie Gehrke, Julie@signetpainting.com

Recently I had the opportunity to listen to another person, who was in the process of being fired from an important position. They talked transparently about what brought them to this bend in the road. This person admitted the ways they had loosely managed certain events and how those ways were perceived as dishonest by new upper management.

Their intention was not to be dishonest; some of the issues were simple mistakes. For example, he didn’t require his subordinates to clock in with exact minutes. In the culture of trust he had built, it seemed unnecessary - until a new organizational leader unfamiliar with the culture scrutinized it.

I focused my comments to this person on values. Because it was not an issue of clocking-in hours or accidentally signing an authorization that gave an employee access to the salaries of others, it was about the value of honesty. This person valued honesty just like his new superior. But they were viewing the discrepancies through two different lenses because they never took the time to align their values - to get to know each other.

Instead, the new boss was focused on structure. Structure asks the question:

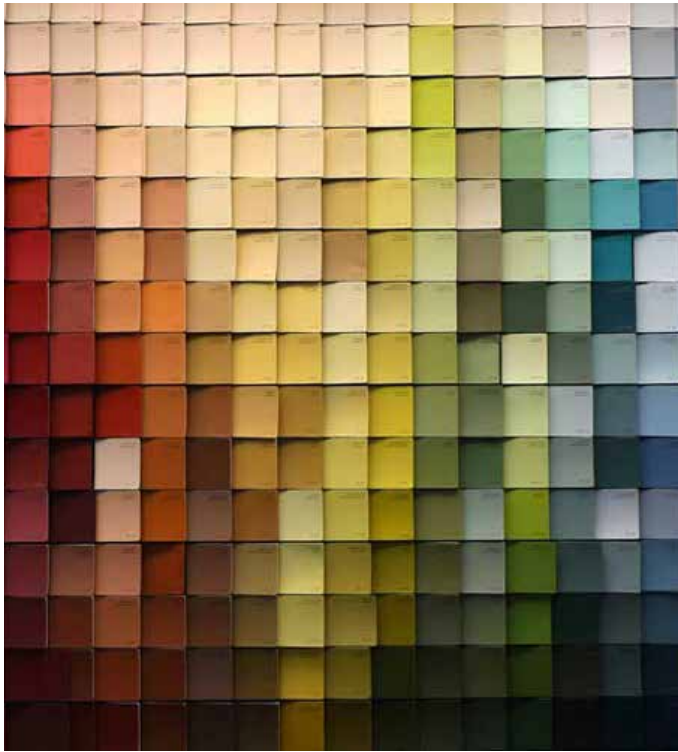


How are we doing this? Managers need to be concerned about “how” – it’s their job. But leaders need to make sure the mission is clear before details of “how” are micro-managed. Leaders are concerned that the team shares the same values and agrees on the mission. And the only way leaders do this is by getting to know the strengths of their team, spending time with them and learning about their history.

For example, you tell someone to start painting in the bedroom and to leave the kitchen for the end of the day (how), but you find him or her in the kitchen when you arrive at the jobsite. Step back for a moment to consider whether they were rejecting your “how” or whether they had formed a value judgment. Perhaps the bedroom required unexpected patching and the painter was starting in the kitchen to let the mud dry. Or maybe they were not listening to you that morning – buy why? What’s happening in their life that has distracted them from following instructions? “How” is important, but look for “why” when things don’t line up. “Why” will point you to values and values are the soul of leadership.

How to Act Like a Color Pro, **EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT!**

By **Noah Loehr**, PPG Architectural Coatings



You're a painting contractor, not a designer.

We get it, but you don't have to be an expert to empower your customers to choose the perfect color combinations for their home. By using the proper marketing tools, you can make choosing a paint color an enjoyable experience for your customers – getting them to the perfect color faster so that you finish the job quicker! Having the proper color selection tools can differentiate you from the competition and add more jobs to your business.

Once a homeowner decides to have their house painted, their main concern is almost always about which colors to choose. They are often simply overwhelmed by the number of color options available. Let's face it, color can be intimidating. A customer may know they want a blue, but sorting through fan decks with thousands of colors and hundreds of blues can leave even a savvy homeowner dazed and confused. Helping them narrow down their options to a palette of colors which are inspired by design professionals and influenced by their own color personality can make you look like a hero while saving you time and money.

PPG's THE VOICE OF COLOR® program offers the following tools and services that are unique in the industry which you can utilize to aid your customers in choosing colors with ease and confidence.

Color Sense Game™

This time saving online program allows your customers to choose color schemes by connecting to their individual personality. By answering a series of unique sensory questions, the program is able to determine a starting point for designing their entire home around their personality, style, and five senses. It takes two thousand options and whittles them down to combinations organized by our Harmony color families which help homeowners match existing décor to a perfect wall and trim color.

Paint Visualizer

The Voice of Color® Online Visualizer allows your customers to upload a photo of their own room and easily paint it with any of PPG's 1,900 colors. With just a few clicks, they can mix and match walls, ceilings, trim and more to find the perfect color for each room.

Pro Painter Portfolio

An essential collection of fan decks and color cards to help you communicate color while on the job as well as color brochures to leave behind which will help you stand out as a true professional. The portfolio includes the Atmospheric fan deck which is comprised of 100 great neutrals that work together from room to room, room to hallway, and with nearly every furniture fabric out there.

Mobile Apps

Because inspiration can be found anywhere, this mobile app allows your customers to instantly match any color they see to one of our 1,900+ colors. It's never been easier for homeowners to find the colors they'll love living with.

Residential Repaint Training Videos

Many of these great tools are demonstrated in an online video titled How to Help Your Customers - Choose the Right Paint Colors which can be viewed at ppgpro.com/propower.t

To find out more about these color tools and services please visit www.ppgpro.com/color and www.voiceofcolor.com.

Book REVIEW: Making Money Is Killing Your Business By Chuck Blakeman

By Doug Imhoff

“Most business owners think their purpose in business is to make money. Surprisingly, it’s not. The business owner’s purpose is to build a business that makes money. These two things are worlds apart, and almost every business owner I work with is absolutely buried in trying to make money, which keeps them from ever making a lot of it.”

The opening paragraph of this book made me laugh. But as I began to read the book I began to nod in agreement with the many gems it contains: “This is not a gifted person’s game; it’s an intentional person’s game.” The book proceeds to set the table with all the familiar objects of ownership, but arranges them in such an order that makes possible the mature development of business operations while still continuing daily operations.

“The two fundamentals of business maturity:

- The owner isn’t the producer
- The business makes money while the owner is on vacation.

Your business is throwing off both time and money. Beyond these, a mature business can look like a lot of things, depending on the owner’s desire for ongoing involvement.”

Most of you reading this spend your 10+ hours of each work day hammering at the levers that make the coins drop. Whether in the tools or not, we business owners know instinctively what activities, among the many that place demands on our time, generate money.

We also know, again instinctively, that there are some activities that- if done- promise improvements in our capacity to make more money, to enhance the return on each pull of the lever, to tap new opportunities using the talent & tools already in our wheelhouse. These vital actions are kind of things we sometimes tell ourselves “we ought to be doing”. Some of you may recall the 4 quadrants concept developed by Stephen Covey, wherein the “urgent” quadrant’s activities often took precedence over those of the “important” quadrant; part and parcel of what Blakeman is observing.

The Big Mindset Shift: From Production To Process

But Blakeman takes it in a different direction, from academic to practical - a very useful direction - with a tool he calls “dual tracking”. Briefly, dual-tracking is the practice (not concept, practice) of asking yourself each time you’re in the process of doing something; “how can I use this task to build a business that makes money while I’m on vacation?” So, while you’re working on the meeting minutes, the pre-start paperwork, the compliance

log, the materials schedule, whatever you’re doing, do it with the future in mind . . . a future that does not require you to do the very thing you’re doing at that moment. Doing key tasks with the intention of creating a process for another person to perform- a nice idea? I think so.

An inspirational thread that wends its way through the entire book is the “while on vacation” thread, or “while golfing”, boating, fishing, etc. Blakeman throws this up on your dashboard frequently but cautions the reader about getting there too fast, too early, too often, etc. And so to help the practitioner recognize his surroundings (what state of maturity he has achieved) he has developmental chart in which he identifies seven stages.

The Seven Stages Of A Business

- Concept & Startup - owner pours time & money into creating/ getting it off the ground (primary role is as salesperson)
- Survival - didn’t think it would be this tough, burned a lot of fuel on takeoff, still urgently driving sales
- Subsistence - business breaking even, totally dependent on owner, focus shifting to craft person role & need to keep clients
- Stability - by hands on, sales expanding, operations are critical, success but business still dependent on owner for all functions; on the treadmill – The Most Dangerous Stage; least likely to risk growing to stages 5-7
- Success - organization expanding, others producing day to day operations, owner is off the treadmill but still supervising everything
- Significance - management through others, owner provides vision & guidance only, business is thriving
- Succession - management by others, owner provides vision only; Maturity

Blakeman spends a chapter outlining and detailing these stages, the roles & risks, I identified with the ones through which I’ve passed, and the one I presently occupy.

In conclusion, get this book. There’s much more to the book than what I’ve highlighted; my purpose here is to present a quick review of the value of this book in hopes to inspire the reader to pick up a copy and start in on it. This work is valuable not just for its novel approach and practical tools, but for the simple and direct prose the author uses - it’s not stilted or high-brow, and at under 300 pages it’s a quick read too. Books are like nourishment, the most valuable of which is that you have yet to absorb.

2012-2013

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Tony Kozak,
PDCA Residential Forum
63 Marne Rd., Buffalo, NY 14215
(716) 844-8174
tony@pdcaresidentialforum.org

President

Suhaiba Neill,
John Neill Painting
(610) 664-5555
sneill@johnneillpainting.com

Vice President

Scott Lollar,
Precision Painting &
Decorating Corp.
(630) 774-6581
scott@ppdpainting.com

Treasurer

Mark Lane,
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(206) 412-9688
mark@ritepainting.com

Director

Doug Imhoff,
Imhoff Painting, Inc.
(303) 650-0933
imhoffpainting@msn.com

Director

Mike Kelly,
Crestwood Painting
(816) 805-4515
mike@crestwoodpainting.com

Director

Randy Fornoff
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randy@mtspainting.com

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Julie Gehrke,
Signet Painting Inc.
(651) 688-9500
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