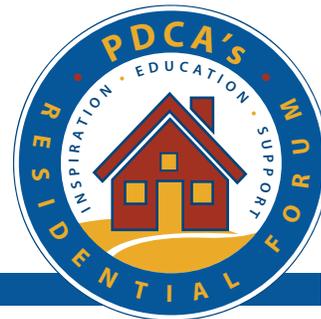


The Painter's RAG



PDCARESIDENTIALFORUM.ORG

In this Issue...

From the President

Editor's Note

"It All Started When..."

10 Tips for A Successful 2013

AST 14 - Save the Date

PDCA Expo 2013 Schedule

Residential Forum Education Sessions

Board of Directors

Sponsors



From THE PRESIDENT



As stated in our kickoff E-News in January, we will be focusing on the Four Seasons of a Business as the theme for 2013.

In nature, winter is a time for rest and rejuvenation. The land gets a much-needed break from the drain of the spring planting, summer growth, and fall harvesting. Similarly, winter offers us as business owners an opportunity to take a deep breath, take a step back and evaluate and plan for the year ahead (especially if you live somewhere with snowfall or temperatures that don't allow for exterior painting).

Strategic planning at the start of the year can have an enormous impact on your overall success. Once you have your year mapped out, I suggest you take it one step further and break out your plan by month. This will allow you to focus on the tasks at hand as the month approaches (i.e.- February – hiring, March – spring marketing blitz, etc). Small bites are easier to swallow and you are more likely to stick with your plan, or see areas that need attention ahead of time, if you're not looking at it all at once.

Hiring and firing is one of the most important decisions you make as a business owner.

Winter 2013

Employees can make or break a company and having a clear policy and procedure for both hiring and firing will help you avoid the many pitfalls and headaches that often surround this task. It also helps to take the personal aspect out of the process. Being able to stand behind a company policy makes the tough decisions a bit easier to swallow.

So, get out your pencil and paper, make yourself a cup of hot chocolate and start a list of the areas in your business that could use some attention for the coming year. Then be sure to take the time now while it's relatively quiet to do the work. And don't forget to reach out to your fellow Residential Forum members. We're all in this together and have a wealth of knowledge to share with each other (and some pretty crazy stories as well, I'm sure).

Last, but not least, be sure to save the date now for AST 14. We'll be on the water in Baltimore on August 16-17, 2013. Come early and bring your family if you'd like to see the sites (more details in future issues) and then get ready for another action-packed interactive conference driven by your peers. Looking forward to a fabulous 2013.

Yours Truly - **Suhaiba Neill**

***save THE DATE!** [more details inside...](#)

AST 14 August 16-17, 2013 Baltimore, MD





Editor's **NOTE**: "Just Do It"

By **Mike Kelly**, mike@crestwoodpainting.com

With some format changes for this year (driven by your Forum's top-notch President) this is an opportunity to look at a book I finished last year – Work The System by Sam Carpenter.

WTS is the third horse in the winning trifecta of small business books. The others have been mentioned before: The E-myth (Michael Gerber) and Built to Sell (John Warnillow). Both have their perspectives; Work The System complements them very well.

Written from a much more "in the trenches" perspective than either the professorial E-myth or the venture capital BTS, it tells the real-life story of a no-glamour telephone answering business that almost goes under, revamps processes a-la E-myth and ultimately turns around a-la Built to Sell. I should note that this is not just "turn around and survive" but a bona-fide real turn-around – greatly reduced work schedule, regular European vacations, etc.

The key for Sam Carpenter was to Just Do It – take the time, write the job description, job process, job responsibility, etc. Every job. Every process. Every. Single. Step. If changes are needed, make them and then change the written process. It's a real treat to read a from-the-ashes success story and get a feel for the nuts and bolts of how it actually happened.

Send your favorite systems story – other painting business owners will want to see how you've done it. Then let me know how you liked the book.

The next issue of the Painters Rag will focus on spring marketing. Do you market your business differently now than other times of the year? What has changed in your marketing program? Any surprises? What's most successful?

And, of course, send in your own "It All Started When..." story. I'm still waiting to meet the painter that went to college with the intent of starting a painting business.

**A Note
From the
Editor**

It all **STARTED WHEN...**

IT ALL STARTED WHEN...

NAME: John Peek
COMPANY NAME: Peek Brothers Painting
LOCATION: San Diego, CA
YEARS IN BUSINESS: 31

The precursor to these shenanigans was the fact that I like being self-employed. When I was 19 and in college I decided that I wanted to paint some houses for summer work. I got a list from somewhere and sent letters to all the real estate people in La Jolla (my hometown) explaining who I was and that I would be back from school in June. It worked - I picked up two houses and went from earning \$2 an hour the summer before as a lifeguard to \$15 an hour as a self-employed painter!

Journey forward several years - after graduation and a stint in law school, I was caught in the Rat Race. I was preparing to go off to grad school after a year internship in what I thought would be my new career (and painting houses on the side to augment my paltry interns' pay) when I decided that painting was more fulfilling. And here I am - a wife, 4 kids and 31 years later!





10 tips FOR A SUCCESSFUL 2013

By Linnea Blair, lblair@AdvisorsOnTarget.com



1. Plan

A successful year starts with a good plan. Review where you want your business (and your life) to be in 3 years or 5 years or 10 years, whatever length of time makes sense to you. Do you want to be doing the same things you are today, or do you want your business and your life to look different 3 years from now? Chances are you do. How does 2013 need to turn out in order for you to be 1 year further on the path to your goal? Create a plan to get there. This includes creating a set of strategies and a profit plan/budget so that you can implement your plan and measure your progress.

2. Work ON the Business Weekly

Don't just wait until you have time to sit down and evaluate where you are and what course corrections you might need to take. You won't do it very often! Take time each week for strategic planning for both the immediate short term (weekly) and to plan for what you can do this week towards your longer term implementation plan.

3. Use Your Calendar

To make your strategic planning and implementation plan work, you need to actually put your "Working ON the Business" time into your calendar. Honor it like you would an appointment with your best client.

4. Communicate

Most problems that business owners have with customers, employees and business partners stem from a lack of timely, honest and respectful communication. Learn from your past mistakes and resolve to communicate with others in the way you want people to communicate with you.

5. Have Regular Meetings

This goes hand in hand with communication. Regular meetings with your management team, your office team, sales teams or other teams in your company are critical to the regular flow of information about customers, employees, projects, initiatives, finances, etc. that keep your business running smoothly. Have an agenda and stay focused on the outcomes.

6. Review Your Key Metrics Monthly

If you have a plan, you have goals and numbers to hit: revenue and profit goals, sales goals, hiring goals, productivity goals, debt reduction goals, goals for how much time you want to work (or not work) in the business, and many others. Your internal process and technology systems should allow you to review the relevant numbers easily. How are you doing? What corrective actions do you need to take, if any?

7. Engage Your Audience

Customers are more discerning now than ever before. They don't just want to be marketed to, they want to be engaged, and they want social proof. Building relationships with your customers and prospects is more important than ever in the world where so many of us are living our lives more transparently through social media, and online reviews and recommendations. Showing yourself as a trusted authority in your industry and sharing helpful information with your audience through your own channels and social media channels is very helpful to the process of engaging your market.





10 tips FOR A SUCCESSFUL 2013 cont....

By Linnea Blair, lblair@AdvisorsOnTarget.com

8. Talk With Your Customers

Make a customer communications plan. This goes along with engaging your target market. Your existing or past customers make up the most valuable segment of your audience since they have already purchased from you. Making a customer communications plan can be as simple as deciding how often to contact your customers, what message (or helpful information) you want to send them and how you want to communicate it, whether by phone, in person, email, direct mail or online social media. Talking with your customers can also mean getting their feedback on their experience with you, or how you can help them better. This is also an opportunity to ask for public feedback in the form of an online review which will help build your social proof with prospective customers.

9. Take Action

With all of the things you would like to accomplish in your business, it's important to chunk your initiatives down into concrete action steps that you can accomplish in a set time frame. That way when you engage in #2 Work ON Your Business Weekly, you know what to work on and when it needs to be done to move you forward in your overall plan. Don't overwhelm yourself with too many things at once. You want to be able to celebrate small successes and milestones to keep yourself engaged and excited about your progress!

10. Get Support

You can't do it all by yourself! If you have a team of employees or business partners, you can mutually support each other. You can also assemble a team of advisors from outside your company to meet with you periodically – perhaps a trusted friend or family member, CPA, or other business advisors. You can join a peer group that will help hold you accountable to your goals, or you can work with a business coach. There are many opportunities for you to put the structure in place to achieve your goals.

Here's to your success!

It all STARTED WHEN...

IT ALL STARTED WHEN...

NAME: **John Busick**

COMPANY NAME: **Bob Kunst Painting, Inc.**

LOCATION: **San Rafael, CA**

YEARS IN BUSINESS: **54 Years (since 1959)**

Bob Kunst Painting, Inc. – The Kunst name is synonymous with painting in the San Francisco Bay Area. Bob's grandfather, Henry Kunst, first came to the U.S. as an apprentice painter from Germany in the 1880's, where he painted rail-cars for the Railroad Company. In the early 1900's, His father and uncle founded several paint stores in San Francisco and eventually opened a paint manufacturing company. In the late 1940's, the factory burned down, Bob's father died, and Bob was drafted into the war. When he returned, the Paint Company and stores no longer existed. In 1959, Bob started his own paint contracting company, Bob Kunst Painting, Inc., and today his son, Tom Kunst, son-in-law, Mike Busick and grandson, John Busick (5th generation), carry on the family tradition of careful craftsmanship and reliable service.

SAVE THE DATE!

AST 14 August 16-17, 2013 Baltimore, MD

Planning is well under way for another inspirational and educational peer driven conference and this is one you won't want to miss. We'll be on the waterfront at the Admirals Fell Inn, just a short water taxi ride away from the famous Inner Harbor. Come for the education and networking, and stay an extra day to enjoy the sites and famous fare.





Painters **WANTED**

By Nigel Costoloe, Nigel Costoloe

Wanted – painters. \$12- \$15 per hour. Call 617.734.1696

Does this look familiar? Have you, hard working business owner, been guilty of posting such a lackluster ad on Craigslist or in the newspaper, hoping to find the world's best painter? Can I be so bold as to suggest that this ad will overwhelm your voicemail box with calls from mouthbreathers, knuckledraggers and other types who bear a closer resemblance to Neanderthal man than Homo Sapiens?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I'm always astonished by the poor presentation of so many painting companies – no uniform or at least a partial uniform, jeans instead of whites, cut-offs instead of painters shorts, random Megadeath t-shirts instead of the company color and logo. And don't get me started on bed head, greasy hair and a 3 day growth of beard.

I know, I'm a control freak by nature, but let me counter with the following;

Our customers invite us into their homes and onto their property for extended periods; we work around the children, their possessions, we use their bathroom and often are invited to help ourselves to their fridge. What an amazing gift of trust!

How does our industry repay this trust? See my First Impressions paragraph above...

How should we repay them?

How about with painters who are courteous, polite and well mannered? Who present well and are wearing clean and tidy company uniforms, without exception?

How do we find such painters? Not by using an ad as uncreative as the one that opened this article.

I believe we need to sell our company to the ideal candidate as much as they need to then sell themselves to us.

Here's what our ad looks like;

A professional painter is a master of more skill than simply laying down a fine finish. Understanding the root causes of paint failure, issues with poor construction techniques that lead to premature failure, proper methods of preparation, the influence of temperature and humidity on drying and curing, the skill of delivering excellent customer service and communication - a true professional brings all of these attributes to their craft. If this describes you, then we might be the company you've been looking for. If you have at least 2 years experience and are ambitious, inquisitive, personable, and disciplined, please contact us. We will provide full-time residential painting work, compensable at \$15 - \$22 per hour, depending on experience, and benefits (health insurance, retirement, vacation), a positive and supportive work environment, training & promotion opportunities.

The ideal candidate will have demonstrable, proven experience. Women are encouraged to apply.

You must be willing and able to travel within the greater Boston area.

You must be a legal resident or US citizen. Physical, drug testing, and criminal background checks are required to be considered for employment.

We gave up on the newspaper over 10 years ago when we were told we couldn't use the word 'intelligent' because it was discriminatory...so we use Craigslist exclusively, and very successfully. We hire early, before we need people and we keep our ad refreshed each week for months, to ensure we catch the best candidates.

Does this ad eliminate the calls from the mouthbreathers? It does actually, because it makes our company sound like a bunch of dilettantes. That's OK with me – we aspire to a higher level of professionalism.

That's my number in the ad at the top of the page by the way – feel free to call me if you're looking for a job. Or just want to chat.

**PAINTERS
Wanted!**





PDCA Expo - 2013 Schedule

Below is a preliminary schedule of events for the 2013 Painting and Decorating Expo.

Sunday, March 3

- BOD Meeting (8 a.m.-5 p.m.)
- Accelerated Accreditation (8 a.m.-5 p.m.) Includes lunch
- Leadership Reception (6-8 p.m.) *Invite Only*

Monday, March 4

- Breakfast of National Champions (7-8 a.m.)
- Education Classes (8-10:45 a.m.)
- Guest Tour: Gateway to St. Louis Tour (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.)
- Union Contractors Program (9:15-11:30 a.m.)
- Opening Session Lunch (11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.)
- Education Classes (2-4:45 p.m.)
- Emerging Leaders Program (2-4 p.m.)
- Benjamin Moore Evening Reception (6:30-9 p.m.)

Tuesday, March 5

- KILZ® PDCA Awards & Breakfast (7-9 a.m.)
- Education Classes (9-10:15 a.m.)
- Tradeshow Opens (10:30 a.m.-6 p.m.)
- Sherwin-Williams Evening Reception (6:30-9 pm)

Wednesday, March 6

- Summary Session Breakfast (7-8:30 a.m.)
- Education Classes (9-10:15 a.m.)
- Annual Members Meeting & Lunch (10:30am-1pm) (Lunch included for AMM attendees only)
- Leadership Training (1-3 p.m.)

Residential Forum - EDUCATION SESSIONS

Monday, March 4 – 8 a.m.

Turning First Time Home Buyers Into Customers For Life Presented by Debbie Zimmer, Paint Quality Institute

With the real estate market potentially turning around, the Paint Quality Institute investigated “First Time Homebuyers” and their attitudes around interior and exterior paints and painting. Where do they shop and what influences them to paint? When do they hire a professional painter? What is their motivation to begin a paint project, either as a do-it-yourselfer or when bringing in a pro? Learn about this important demographic, and take away tips to increase your business by gaining new clients.

Monday, March 4 – 9:30 a.m.

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

Presented by John Neubert, Nuebert Painting, Inc.

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.

Monday, March 4 – 3:30 p.m.

Residential Forum Panel Discussion

Facilitated by Scott Lollar, Precision Painting and Decorating, Inc.

This is an active and enlightening open discussion led by a panel of experienced residential painting contractors. Topics to include the overall sales process (from the initial phone call to the close of the completed project) with a focus on overcoming price objections. “Hot Topic” questions will also be taken from the floor and discussed as a group.

Tuesday, March 5 – 9 a.m.

Is The Customer Always Right?

Presented by Randy Fornoff, MTS Painting

How do you handle disgruntled customers? In this workshop will we discuss how to develop company policies that ease the burden when dealing with unhappy customers. I will share successes and failures from my own experience, including issues that lead all the way to the courthouse. We will also discuss how the use of clear contract terms along with the PDCA’s standards and manufacturer’s instructions will aid you in boosting customer confidence and win you more jobs.





2012-2013

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