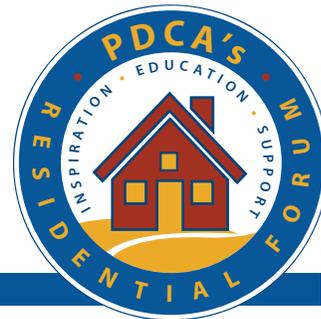


# The Painter's RAG



PDCARESIDENTIALFORUM.ORG

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## From the President



**New Year!  
New Opportunity!**

I **love** December 31st and I hate January 1st! Well not really. What I love about December 31st is you get to see how your plan worked. 364 days culminating into this - a big fat revenue number. And more importantly a big fat profit. And one day later, a goose egg. A big fat 0. And worse yet, as things post, you most likely lost money at the end of the first day of the year! It's like climbing the same mountain every year and then jumping off and re-climbing again only a bit higher each time.

Our company has grown 165% in the last two years right to the threshold of \$ 3,000,000 dollars. We have been stretched in ways our arrogant egocentric minds never dreamed of. Yes the success is euphoric. The opportunity to build something great is something that wakes me up early every day. But I am mindful that the skills needed to run a \$ 3,000,000 company are vastly different than running an \$ 800,000 company. That's why I need all of

## January 2014

you. My peers. My friends. Because we are in the same industry, running the same race. And it is so much easier to get your feedback before going to Google!

One such example is the feedback I received from Steve Burnett of Burnett Painting in Southwest Florida. At AST in Baltimore, Steve had briefly shown me his scheduling approach using Basecamp. Scheduling is something that we need some growth around at Precision Painting, so last month, I called Steve and he gave me the short version of what he uses and how he uses it. I am not done with him yet, but have purchased Basecamp and will be leaning on Steve to bring me up to speed on what has worked for him. All it required was for us both to be engaged in the PDCA Residential Forum and show up to AST. The value will always show itself when we are all together.

So here's to all of you my PDCA family. To a new year. To new opportunities. And the anticipation of what will come of that goose egg as it grows!

**Scott Lollar**

Precision Painting and Decorating Corp.





## Editor's NOTE:

By Mike Kelly, mike@crestwoodpainting.com

On December 1, I was nervous about having enough work to get through the winter. On January 1 that changed to panic that Spring was only **10 weeks away** – systems to refine, people to hire, a shop to tidy up, paperwork to shuffle. And decisions to make – ‘nother vehicle? Change how we schedule jobs or limp along with what we’ve got? Actually finish this year’s business plan? (Ha! That was a joke.)

The sales pipeline filled, then over-filled, just like it always seems to. Our web site is to blame; I’m grateful to Al Gore and his Internet for that. But **spring** is still coming – if I’m putting out fires in **winter** I’ll be putting out fires in **summer**. So Doug Imhoff’s “Working On Your Business” is perfect reinforcement. And Jeremy Brooks’ article is the ultimate working on your business (a planning retreat? For a small company? That’s vision!).

From Dan Brady’s Facebook video how-to, to Suhaiba Neill’s timely admin hiring tips, I hope this issue of The Painters Rag is as helpful for you as it was for me. The next issue will be out in March, I encourage you to share part of your story and your business with your Forum.

*I hope to see you at Expo in Reno this March!*

**A Note  
From the  
Editor**

## How Will Your Team Plan For 2014?

### Jeremy Brooks

jeremy@brookspainting.com

Our year is quickly coming to an end here in Northern California. While we have had a little rain, and below freezing nights this last week, we are hoping the weather is dry for the next 3 weeks to finish up our year. We have seen a nice healthy growth this year of just over 20%, and doubled our net profit from last year. So as far as numbers go the year was a success. We have added quite a few new faces in the field this year, and will do so again next year. Because of this, one of our mantras for 2014 will be procedures for everything. To have procedures for everything we do, we have to make a plan.

I have been in the painting world for 21 years now, 17 of those as the owner of Brooks Painting. I have been fortunate to have some excellent coaching during most of those 17 years. We started doing planning retreats in 2005 with our management team. This team was comprised of myself, my office manager, my sales staff, and a field manager. I decided it was beneficial to leave our normal routine behind, so that

we could focus on planning. So we would rent a cabin in Lake Tahoe, and spend 2 days focused on planning. We took a few years off during the down economy, as we were focused on surviving rather than planning. Last year we went away again, and we are now planning for our next retreat. It was very refreshing to focus on the future and planning, instead of the present and surviving.

We will go away the first weekend in January for this year’s retreat. We will take our business manager, our 2 sales people, our front office person, and myself. The five of us will spend 2 full days working on the business. We do a SWAT analysis, review how we did on the previous year’s goals, look at financials, dream a little, look at marketing, and plan for the coming year. There is really no aspect of the business that we don’t touch during the retreat. I spend quite a few hours preparing for this retreat so that we have everything in order and it runs smoothly. The result of every retreat has been focus for the following year, and growth. When you have a plan, work the plan, and have the right people on the bus, it is hard not to succeed. It is a lot of work, but we have found our planning retreats to be so valuable.





# Hiring Help for Your Office

by **Suhaiba Neill**,  
sneill@johnneillpainting.com

By now we should all be pretty good at spotting a great painter from a mile away, but when was the last time you hired someone to help out around the office? For those of us who are drowning in paperwork and just need some temporary help, to those who have never hired an office assistant before and our venturing down this path for the first time, here are a few tips to putting together a comprehensive hiring strategy. Unfortunately, I've had to do this more often than I would have liked over the past few years (for various reasons), but it's also given me an opportunity to fine tune our system so I could share it with you.

The best place to start is with a list of the duties and tasks that you'd like the new person to take off of your plate. It is also good to determine working hours (to suit your needs – not theirs, which can be tricky when hiring part time help)

and a pay range. Over the years I have found it best to give a starting hourly rate with the opportunity for review and adjustments after 90 days, assuming everything is working out well. If you happened to hire a superstar, this gives you the chance to give them a raise without breaking your original budget, and if you hired a dud, you can keep them at the base rate and evaluate again at a later date. It's much easier to give a raise to a well-performing employee than to take money away from and under-performing one.

Once you have your to do list on paper, you'll want to write a brief, but accurate job ad for posting online or in a local paper. Remember, this is your opportunity to attract your ideal candidate, so be specific in what you're looking for and what you're offering in return. If you are looking for a full time Office Admin you may also want to post a full job description to make sure potential candidates know what the job truly entails. Below is the ad we posted for the recent hiring of our current Office Temp.

**Administrative Office Temp Needed**

High-End Residential Painting Company looking for a local office temp to work part-time through November 2013 (possibly through the end of the year).

**Main responsibilities will include:** answering phones, scheduling appointments, data entry, and filing.

Candidate must have previous office experience, excellent phone skills, and be proficient in Microsoft Office. Prior database experience is a plus.

**Work Hours:** 8 am – 12 pm or 9 am – 1 pm (some flexibility)

**Pay Rate:** \$12-\$14/hour

**Location:** Narberth, Pa.

Please submit resumes to [sneill@johnneillpainting.com](mailto:sneill@johnneillpainting.com). No phone inquiries.





I'm happy to report that this ad did result in a substantial number of applicants. As is often the case, there were a good number that were not potential candidates, which is why we listed "no phone inquires" in the job posting. Once the pile was sorted, I reached out to schedule interviews with those who did possess the qualifications we were looking for. This leads us to the interview process. A few years back I wrote an article for the Painter's Rag about the power of a handshake, and I still find this to be a key indicator when meeting people for the first time. Handshakes, eye contact, and overall body language can tell you a great deal about a person. Once you're past the introductions, you'll want to be sure to have solid interview questions as well to further gauge their ability and compatibility with your company.

Ultimately, even the best qualified candidate may not be a "good fit" for your company, and being able to determine that in the interview process will save you a great deal of time and energy later. Here are the interview questions we asked when hiring our current Office Temp.

### Office Assistant Interview Questions

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What interested you about our job posting?                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Tell me about a time when you had more work to do than time to do it. How did you handle the situation? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What do you enjoy the most about your current job? (or last job if not working) | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there anything in particular that tests your patience?   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What do you least enjoy about your current job?                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> What are your long-term goals?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Describe your ideal work environment.  | <input type="checkbox"/> How would you handle an unhappy customer on the phone?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is your desk at home neat or messy?  | <input type="checkbox"/> If I asked 3 people to describe you, what would they say?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What do you consider your greatest strengths?  | <input type="checkbox"/> What do you like to do in your spare time?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What would you say is your greatest weakness?<br>What are you doing to overcome it?        |  |

The final portion of our interview process also included an assessment test. Our primary need when we hired our temp was getting caught up on entering all of the material receipts into the database so we could complete our job costing while a full time employee was out on maternity leave. Because we have a custom database and have learned from past experiences that not everyone is comfortable with (or capable of using it correctly), it was critical that the person we hired was able to enter the receipts accurately and within a reasonable amount of time. I did provide an accurate step-by-step procedure and also demonstrated the process with two candidates. At the end of the second interview, it was clear who was a "good fit" and who was not.

Once you have completed your own list of duties and responsibilities for your new office person, go back and determine which activities are the most critical and set up a way to assess your potential candidates during their initial interview. An added bonus in planning for your assessment is the opportunity and motivation to put together formal procedures for basic office tasks. I know many of us (myself included) have put this task off for years, but I promise you it is not as daunting as you may think, and you will be glad you did it once your office procedures manual is complete. Remember, the goal in adding someone to your office is to lessen your workload. If they have to ask for instructions on every little thing instead of being able to refer to a simple written procedure, you're not really freeing up your time to do more important things.





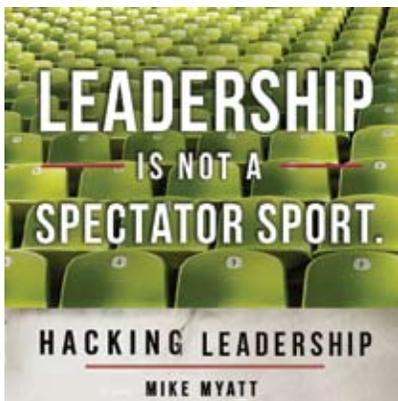
The final step in the hiring process (once you have found a suitable person and offered them the job) is integration. Although many of the tasks you may be delegating to your new office person may seem pretty basic and straight forward, plan on spending the first few days walking them through things. All companies operate a little bit differently, and ultimately you want everyone in your office using the same systems. It may be something as simple as how you fold your letters before stuffing them in the envelope or if you file receipts from oldest to newest or newest to oldest. Whatever it



may be, plan on being available for questions as your new employee learns the ropes and make their integration a smooth one. And if you work in a building like ours that's divided into suites with restrooms at the end of the hall, don't forget to show them where the bathroom is.

*Here's to finding the help you need to take your business to the next level in 2014.*

## Book Review



### **Hacking Leadership**

by: Mike Myatt

**Kevin Eickenberry**  
kevineickenberry.com

Over the years I have had the privilege to get to know some of the smartest leadership minds on the planet. And occasionally, because of these relationships, I get to read their newest work before it gets published. Such is the case with Mike Myatt and his new book (released this week) **Hacking Leadership**. I read an advanced uncorrected proof of this book, and for at least three reasons, I am glad I did.

1. I'm honored Mike gave me that chance.
2. I have had the chance to apply the lessons earlier than others.
3. (and most importantly), because of that fact, I get to share this recommendation with you on the day the book comes out.

Hacking Leadership has a clever and contemporary title – and the subtitle offers a big promise. While the promise of the subtitle is delivered by the book, the book is far from a light, clever read.

This is a book that will challenge you to consider your current practices. It will push you to think differently and it will make you a bit uncomfortable with your answers to some of the questions posed. I believe that was Mike's intent – to help us truly become more effective leaders.

The book is wrapped around this idea of getting better, or closing gaps in eleven specific areas, defined by Mike as:

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>The Leadership Gap</b>  | <b>The Purpose Gap</b>    |
| <b>The Future Gap</b>      | <b>The Mediocrity Gap</b> |
| <b>The Culture Gap</b>     | <b>The Talent Gap</b>     |
| <b>The Knowledge Gap</b>   | <b>The Innovation Gap</b> |
| <b>The Expectation Gap</b> | <b>The Complexity Gap</b> |
| <b>The Failure Gap</b>     |                           |

Chances are you are already intrigued by one or more of these, and if so, reading that chapter alone would be worth the investment in the book. In fact, while I know you will gain value from the full book, I would encourage you to start with two chapters – the ones you are most drawn to – and the ones you think you need the least. Read and begin to apply those two chapters and then move on from there.

While the book isn't long, I didn't find it a fast read – rather it is an opportunity to seriously consider your current skills as a leader and build a plan for improving in each of areas discussed.

This is an important book on leadership and one that you can be among the first to read, if you buy your copy today.





## Using Video to Bring Life to Your Social Media Marketing

### How Adding Video to Facebook has Increased the Online Visibility of My Business

Dan Brady, dan@danbradypainting.com



325 people like this

**Recently** I've begun using video on my Facebook page to help get the message out about Dan Brady Painting and Wood Restoration and Dan Brady Painting Tricks of the Trade. I've also used it to promote a dance contest I'm participating in for charity (more about that in another column). What it's done to my online results is amazing – more likes on my business pages and lots more visibility for my daily posts adding up to thousands of impressions a week!

If you haven't considered including video in your social media marketing, I encourage you to give it a try. Videos don't have to be long – they can be as short as 15 to 20 seconds. And, not only can your video clips be short snippets, they don't have to be formal productions. It can be as simple as shooting a video on your smartphone and then uploading it directly to Facebook.

Now I bet you're thinking *"But what can I do that hasn't been done?"* What you're doing on video might be something new and different – like a new painting technique you've developed – but it doesn't have to be. Great tips about what you do – how-to tips that are part of your everyday arsenal of painting tricks – are very popular. Humor also resonates well and gets a lot of attention. While not all of us are naturally funny, if you are, you'll find that can help you attract a bigger audience for your business.

#### Where do I START?

Start with something simple – like a **how-to tip**. Think about the jobs you have right now. Is there anything unique about them? Or are you using any new products that you could demonstrate? That's a great place to start in filming some short video clips for the how-to audience.

Now I know what you're thinking – *why should I give away the secrets of the trade, the reasons that people hire me?* Because sharing your expertise helps reinforce your reputation as the expert in your field. It can actually help you get hired, especially if after watching your "how-to" tip the viewer decides the job is too complicated for a do-it-yourselfer.

#### Get Out to the Site and Shoot



Start your day making a quick video or two of a how-to tip. **Think visually.** People don't want to see someone staring into the camera and just talking – they want to see action.

**Shoot** – or have a member of your crew shoot – a couple short snippets.

Next, there are two ways to upload videos. One is to upload the video to a **YouTube** channel and then link to it from your Facebook business page. The other – and best – way to do it for maximum impact is to load it directly on to **Facebook**.

**Why?** Well one reason is that loading your video directly to Facebook means that your video will be shown to a larger proportion of those who have liked your page.

When you upload your video and create your posts, use Facebook's scheduling feature to make sure the posts are separated to appear on different days. Then monitor your site to see what your audience responds to. That's key. After a few posts of video clips you'll be able to see what your page's followers are interested in and what gets the greatest reaction from them – often referred to as engagement.

#### Building Your Audience

Once you're comfortable with using video on your site then it's time to spread the word and build those all-important "likes" that can help you maximize the impact to your business online.  Like

You can invite more friends – and have friends ask friends – to like your page, but that's a slow way to build audience. Instead, what I've done is to use Facebook's feature that lets you boost the visibility of your posts. This is extremely cost effective. You can start boosting posts for as little as **\$5** – yes, I said \$5, not \$500 or \$5,000. It's one of the most cost effective methods of advertising I've found in promoting





my business and it's helped increase the number of "likes" on my Dan Brady Painting Tricks of the Trade page.

The great thing about using this boost post feature is that the promotion appears in the main column of the Facebook news feed. It's not in the right hand column with the ads so it's directly in front of your fans – the people who have "liked" your page – and in the central column on the news feed for their friends as well.

**Why is that important?** Because when people see your page promoted and the promo post tells them that a friend of theirs has already liked your page it gives you instant credibility. People are much more open to liking pages that friends have liked. It's like an endorsement from a trusted friend.

### Planning Your Content Saves Time and Makes the Process Easier

There are a couple of other things to consider when planning your Facebook strategy. If you think strategically you'll discover that it's a lot easier to do your Facebook posts and that they'll work harder for you. Ideally you'd create what's called an *editorial calendar* for your posts. Because ours is a seasonal business it's easier for us than for some businesses: outdoor painting and deck refinishing in the **spring, summer** and early **fall**, interior painting for the **winter** with a focus on holiday spruce ups for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

While you're planning your posts, remember that experts in social media advise that only about **20%** of your posts should be active promotion of your business, about **30%** should reflect the personality of your business – you and your crew and your areas of expertise. The remaining **50%** is about the painting business in general including ideas for redecorating, tips on color selection, reviews of new products – just about any and all topics that customers ask you about.

### What If There's Just Not Enough Time in the Day?

You've got all you can handle running your business, right? There's no time to add in social media to your busy schedule. Then that's the time to turn to the professionals. If you're the typical entrepreneur, that's hard to do. However, I've

learned that I'm more successful when I focus on what I know best and hire others to do what they are skilled at doing. Before I start trying to do something on my own, I ask myself *"Do I have the right skills and resources to do this?"*

That's why I've formed a strong alliance with a local PR and Social Media Marketing firm. We work together to make sure my goals for the business are communicated and communicated effectively. Chances are there's a firm in your community that can work with you.

**Too expensive?** How much does it cost you to not do those **two** – or **five** – or **ten** more quotes that you could do in the same amount of time as it takes you to handle your own communications? And how much might those quotes bring into your firm?

An effective online presence for your business isn't a luxury today – it's a necessity.



**SHERWIN  
WILLIAMS**

### Adds Luster to Product Line With New Pearl Finish for Cashmere® Paint

Sherwin-Williams Cashmere Interior Latex Paint takes on added luster with the introduction of a pearl finish designed to add a luxurious pearlescent sheen to walls. Available exclusively as a finish for Cashmere Paint,

the new pearl finish is available in Sherwin-Williams stores along with an expanded color selection in the Cashmere line, including deep colors and accents.

*"Cashmere Paint already stands out for its buttery smooth application and silky appearance. The new Cashmere pearl finish allows professionals to take luxurious interiors to the next level,"* said **Steve Revnew**, vice president of product innovation, Sherwin-Williams.

The Pearl sheen adds a subtle shimmer to Cashmere paint that is not as shiny as semi-gloss — it is midway between flat and egg-shell — for a lustrous finishing touch. It is especially suitable for higher-end residential projects and for customers who may be looking to create more elaborate spaces, such as formal dining or living rooms. And paint contractors appreciate how easy the product applies and glides on.





## Sell is not a 4 letter | | | | | | |---|---|---|---|---| | w | o | r | d | ! | |---|---|---|---|---|

Well actually, it is. But I am afraid some people put the word **SELL** in the same group with the other 4 letter words. You know the ones I am talking about. If you have ever read Michael Gerber's ground breaking book *The E-Myth*, you will know that many, if not most small businesses are started by technicians not salesmen. And what keeps most companies from achieving the dream the founder envisioned is not the lack of skillful technique, but the inability to build a revenue stream that will support their vision.

It seems that many people look at salesman as slimmy (like slick used car salesman that can't be trusted) or as someone trying to sell you something that you don't need. If that's the way you feel about selling, I can guarantee you will struggle to convert leads into projects. I could point you to many theories and laws. Read Brian Tracy's 100 *Absolutely Unbreakable Laws of Business Success* for starters. If you don't believe the prospect should hand over a huge check for your services, I promise you that the prospect will agree.

*Here are a couple of real world examples from our business:*

We decided to roll out a cell phone benefit to support a requirement to have a smart phone and also to consolidate the multiple carriers we were paying for different phones and tablets. Our owner had been satisfied with his current carrier so we entered into a negotiation and agreement that covered 24 devices. After the ink dried, we never saw the salesman again. Every phone came via UPS. Our Admin had to set up every device. **Port numbers. Problem solve. Trouble shoot.** This all happened with the help of our trusting sales rep right? Wrong. He could not be found.



Then the bills started coming in without the promised consolidation. A nightmare. Add a few defective devices and spotty coverage and we had buyers remorse. 1 year 11 months to go. Awesome.

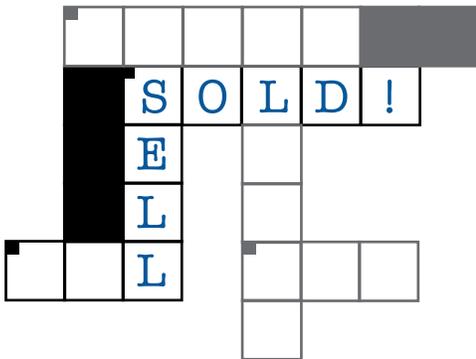
Right after we signed the contract we were approached by Sprint. We blew them off. What could they do for us? We just signed on for miserable service and support for the next 2 years. They wouldn't stop calling, and one afternoon they accidentally got through the gate keeper. We explained the reality was that we had just signed a contract and that was that, but not to them. Could we commit to a 30 minute meeting to see if they could overcome the early termination fee that we would occur by switching? **We agreed.** The conclusion was that we did switch and the \$ 7,350 early termination fee was paid in full by the new company through a combination of credits for porting numbers as well promotions and rebates. By the time we were finished, we had grown the account to 30 phones and eight I-Pads. They walked away with a bigger account than we started with. Yes. *They upsold us and we loved it.* They asked for a short meeting with an agenda to see if they could improve our situation. They determined they could, they added value, over came objections,





and they left us all warm and fuzzy for more money per month than what we were already spending. We were grateful for the attentiveness the team showed us. We were glad that they could **SELL!!**

The second example involved our CRM. We looked at a wide variety of products and discovered that none of them could be used successfully “out of the box”. We needed a contractor to help us. We also wanted one here in Chicago so we could go break their knees when we didn’t get what they promised. I searched the



companies listed on the CRM’s website and found two suitable matches and reached out to both. What I found was both were marketing companies that used the CRM set up as a loss leader. The first proposal said very little about the CRM but had multiple pages on the SEO and AD Word work they would do for \$ 24,000 per year.

They did not listen to our need (pain). They were working *their agenda, not ours*. The second company was a little better but not by much.

Their proposal was also \$ 24,000 but broken down into 3 parts. What he did do, however, was follow up with us, and ask if we had any questions. He agreed to a face to face so we could fully understand which piece was essential to solve our problem. He talked through our need and addressed it, and then moved on to his passion, which was online marketing. He walked out with a \$ 2,000 check toward the first \$8,000 piece of business. We will probably spend \$ 24,000 with him this year. The same amount as the first proposal, but that company never followed up with us. I was a buyer with money to spend. What I was buying was big and unknown and scary. I needed someone to help me buy. What I needed was to be **SOLD!!!!** I’m glad he could **SELL!!!!**

Because you are reading this, I know you are a painting contractor. But are you a Salesman? I *encourage you*...no I *beg you* to engage with a sales method. You can read or better yet download a book to your tablet or phone. Turn off your car radio. In fact rip it out throw it away. Commit yourself to listening to positive affirming books that will get rid of what Zig Ziglar calls **“Stinckin’ Thinkin’”** and replace it with a belief system that will support your dreams. For a few starters try:

Napoleon Hill: **Think and Grow Rich**

Napoleon Hill: **Selling You**

Dale Carnegie: **How to Win Friends and Influence People**

Brian Tracy: **100 Absolutely Unbreakable Laws of Business Success**

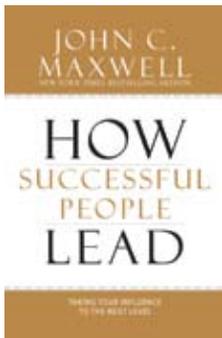
Please e-mail me at [Scott@ppdpainting.com](mailto:Scott@ppdpainting.com) with your stories of success. And **SELL SELL SELL**. We already know you’re a great painter!

**Scott Lollar**, [scott@ppdpainting.com](mailto:scott@ppdpainting.com)





# Book Review



## **How Successful People Lead**

by: John C. Maxwell

**Mike Kelly**

mike@crestwoodpainting.com

John C. Maxwell has written over 60 books, generally focused on leadership and self improvement. **How Successful People Lead** is a pocket-sized 150 pages that distills much of his writing on leadership into 5 levels:

**Level 1: Position** - People follow you because they have to

**Level 2: Permission** - People follow you because they want to

**Level 3: Production** - People follow you because of what you have done for the organization

**Level 4: People Development** - People follow you because of what you have done for them

**Level 5: Pinnacle** - People follow you because of who you are and what you represent

There are leadership books ad nauseum: business moguls, military geniuses and quarterbacks. Ask ten leadership gurus and you'll get twelve opinions – they're just like painters.

This book paints a clear picture of each level – you'll see where you are and get a brief overview of the behaviors that will lead you to the next level. Everyone starts at Level 1 by default; moving up takes time and a good bit of effort. Like it or not, every company owner is a leader. Some of us are leaders because we sign the paychecks, others because of the meaning and vision we give to the work we do. How Successful People Lead makes clear the incremental improvements to be made.

## Working “On” Your Business

**Doug Imhoff,**

imhoffpainting@msn.com

Among the useful things I've found along the way is the adage that one is wise who “*works on, more than in his business*”, and I always thought I knew what that meant, that it was pretty easy to sort the various activities of ownership easily into one bin or the other. Lately, I've not been so certain of this.

A couple weeks ago it occurred to me, after a white-knuckle morning rush-hour gauntlet run of frustration with commuters who are much better at the game of dodge-n-dart, I found myself lamenting the early morning appointment I had made to “*just walk an ongoing project*”. That's definitely an **IN**.

activity. While there looking over the progress, the owner and designer showed up and it turned into a PR call, another **IN** task. In fact, while thinking about writing this it became obvious that nearly everything I do is **IN** my business, and that I don't actually spend much time working **ON** my business.

That promised land of time well spent that seems always to be just out of reach for me, working **ON** not **IN** is even - at times - a little cudgel with which I beat myself when the mood is right. Some necessary task such as running a machine to a jobsite so production can continue, or hand-holding sessions with an owner, designer, or contractor; or interviewing a potential employee, invoicing, estimating, thank you cards, courting a designer or remodeler; **IN...IN...IN**, it's always **IN!**





The rare times that I do work **ON** – strategic planning, improving information flow, removing myself from the hourglass crimp, streamlining procurement, billing, job costing accuracy, marketing activity and all of the other **ON** stuff that I imagine to be the missing pieces that'll allow all of the other pieces to fall neatly into place and that clunking sound (the sound of my business running) will just vanish – I feel vaguely like there's something better I could be doing...it's almost as though I take some time that isn't hard-scheduled for something important, or filled up with some emergency, and use that gray time to lamely poke at some undone thing in the office and tell myself that I'm actually, finally, working **ON** my business.

My point is not academic – I think - it's a real caution to owners to avoid rigidity in role-service. Years ago I was nursing disdain for **IN** activities and didn't know it. This led to another of my spectacular failures during my company's infancy: dedicating too much time to working **ON** my business led to a deficit of time spent working **IN** my business. Consequently I began to lose touch with some things and was completely unaware of the development of others. Broadly speaking the culture of the company on-site was changing. Events conspired to put me in the right place at the right time and I was enlightened, and took steps to get back **IN** but it took time and resources to correct.

As an owner, we do whatever needs to be done to move our enterprise forward, sometimes prevent its

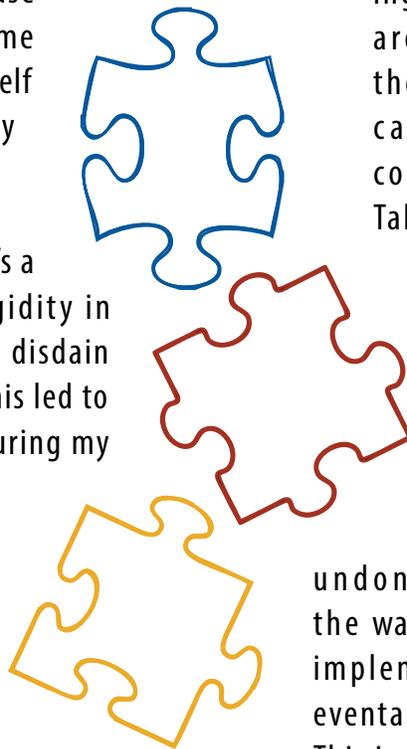
moving backward, and occasionally regroup to prevent the repeat of a costly mistake. Whatever it is, instinctively we know there are things that need doing, often we need coaching or the trusted voice of an experienced colleague to orchestrate for optimal impact.

I have been keeping Chuck Blakeman's book in mind, *Making Money is Killing Your Business*, his concept of "*Dual Tracking*" is worth another look. In a very real way, owners are seldom really work-

ing **ON** their businesses, and likewise are seldom exclusively working **IN** their business. The lone exception I can easily conjure is the remote conference such as Advanced Shop Talk, or Advisors On Target intensives.

Short of these forums, we're usually comfortably working both **ON** and **IN** at the same time.

Constantly busy working **AT** business, we occasionally tackle an undone task which somewhere along the way we recognize needs to be improved, implemented, clarified or whatever – it eventually gets our attention and gets done. This is working **AT** business, I think of it as a comfortable blend of **ON** and **IN**. And, in so doing I am disabusing myself the dual allegiances of soft bigotry against working **IN**, and self flagellation that results from ineffective use of scheduled **ON** time. I am cultivating an appreciation of the balance necessary to grow an enterprise, and of the priceless quality of the knowledge and experience found in the PDCA, and the organizations that support us.





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