

# the Paint contractor

August 2011

Supplement to *The Paint Dealer*

## Chuck Carmen

### *On the Right Track*



**ALSO INSIDE: INTERIOR PRIMER, NEW PRODUCTS**



PHOTO BY BRETT STEEN

By Jerry Rabushka,  
Associate Publisher

“Have you ever  
been hired simply  
by saying nasty  
things about your  
competition?  
It might mean  
you’re skilled in  
the art of being  
rude, but not in  
painting a house  
or running a  
country.”

## I’m condensing 300 pages into one

This is my fourth try at this column. I started one but my information was mistaken, so the whole column would have been bogus. Then I wrote about “what happens when you’re depressed and you don’t feel like working but you have to do it anyway,” but I wasn’t in the mood. Then I turned to “if someone solves problems differently than you do, does that make it wrong?”

Those aren’t really columns, those are books.

I’ve been besieged with—well okay, I got a few—letters from readers, some of whom buy into that new belief that their skill in being rude or sarcastic makes them automatically “right” about the issue in question. I get it—everyone won’t agree with us all the time. The letters that kept me up at night, however, were from a couple painters who said we at this magazine had changed their lives.

Sleepless in St. Louis? I sit here in a 160-year-old building where the exposed brick in my office rains mortar on the carpet. I put out articles every month, but I don’t often hear from the vast majority of readers if they make any difference or not. So to suddenly get a letter or two that say “your magazine has made a big difference in my life” is pretty uplifting for one, and knowing we’ve got that power, it saddles me with a heck of a lot of responsibility for two.

A brief aside—*have I not been screaming at the top of my lungs that as a painter or business owner you have that same power? You do, and you can change a life every time someone walks into a room you painted.*

Politicians are great for perpetuating the belief that rude wins points—and thanks to us, they often get elected simply because they say the mean things about their opponents, rather than having anything constructive to say about public policy. Have you ever been hired simply by saying nasty things about your competition? It might mean you’re skilled in the art of being rude, but not in painting a house or running a country.

Most of us have great plans when we’re younger, and most of us wonder years later just how we got where we are. How many of you wanted to paint houses when you were 10 years old? I always wanted to be a writer, and I wanted to change the world by writing plays and novels about the human condition.

I still try to do that, but to pay the bills I write about paint and sundries. So I decided 19 years ago when I took this job in August 1992 that as long as I had to make a living writing about paint, I was going to do the best job at it I possibly could and challenge myself to keep it fresh. We know every article isn’t a life-changer, but here and there, it’s good to hit the jackpot.

I’m basically here to pass on information that will make it easier for you to do your job, make more money, paint a little faster, maybe find just that right primer to fit that spot-that-refuses-to-hide. I’m kind of the way station: I’m supposed to help you make more money by showing you how to use the right products correctly, and help our advertisers make more money by making sure you buy their products when you need them.

It’s time for the moral of our story, which is “find honor in your profession.” Find grace in times of frustration. Find understanding where you think none is deserved. Treat people how you want them to treat you. When you least expect it, you’ll find that you made a difference in someone’s life—sometimes that difference can be brushed, rolled, or sprayed. [TPC](#)



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# Exceeding E

Contractor Chuck Carmen makes his business card a reality.

**BY JERRY RABUSHKA, EDITOR**

Chuck Carmen has his mom to thank for his career—back when he was 17, she volunteered him to do some painting for an elderly woman down the street. He remembers that first customer—she smoked a lot. But he also remembers that she recommended him to half of her bridge club. “I had more work than I knew what to with,” he recalls. “I had two guys working with me by the end of the summer.”

Chuck has been no stranger to the brush ever since. From paint, he evolved into rehab—gutting, rebuilding, remodeling... “Business was thriving until the economy took a crash, and then people were not in the market for purchasing homes and rehabbing them because it got too risky,” he said. “I think now it’s shifting to where people purchase homes and hire someone like me to rehab the property to their own specifications.”

He still is involved a good bit in paint, even though he’s more often than not handing his tools to his employees so he can focus on the business angle.

Chuck Carmen of Painting and Contracting Solutions out at the Kirkwood, MO train depot.

# xpectations

Part of his practice is giving people more than they ask for. “My business card says ‘Exceeding expectations, not just meeting them,’ and I mean that,” he says. He’s spent a lot of time interviewing potential and previous customers to find out what their expectations are, since if you’re going to exceed something, you need to have a realistic platform to jump off of.

The answers weren’t all that surprising. “One thing they wanted was that when we leave every day, whether we’re done with the job or not, the place should be clean. Also, be on time. If we say we’re going to be there at 8:00 a.m. we’re there fifteen minutes early. If we say we’re going to be done at a certain time, we’re done at that time if not sooner.” No one wants to move a painter over to cook dinner or use the bathroom.

Oh, then there’s the money. “If we establish a budget and there are no surprises, then we stick to the budget. If we make a mistake we pay for it—no questions asked.”

Chuck has landed some of his jobs simply by showing up. He prints a testimonial in his press packet that mentions a customer saying, “I called ten guys and three showed up—one showed up on time [that would be Chuck] and I had to call the other two to see if they were going to come.”

## Veteran Painters

Part of doing a good job is having a good crew. As a military veteran, Carmen notes that 80% of his staff is veterans as well. “I think that breeds a different caliber person in regards to the quality of work that is performed,” he says. “I’m not saying you can’t find quality people who aren’t veterans, but I have been very successful in that realm. I think a lot of it is the discipline.”

He expects discipline on the job site—and sobriety. “There’s no drinking—no going out and having a few beers at lunch.” While no one likes to see it in print, Carmen says some painters just drink too much, and it affects their work ethic. “They show up and do a few hours of work and leave, and that’s not cool.”

## Strategies and Solutions

So, what’s his business called? Glad you asked, since we’re pretty far into the story already! Painting and Contracting Solutions ([pcs-stl.com](http://pcs-stl.com)), based in St. Louis, MO, came into being last October even though he’d been doing it unofficially for about three years. He likes the word “solutions,” since he considers himself a problem-solver on the job. “I think there is a solution to every problem,” he says. “I do more project management and relationship development than I paint these days. I work within budgets, which means I have to develop strategies that will carry us out over the course of a year.”

Bidding can be tricky, so he makes sure to have clauses in his contract for surprises. If you start doing one thing and suddenly four new problems crop up behind a piece of drywall, it’s time to renegotiate. Painting has surprises of its own, but the rehab before the paint job can really throw you a curve.

On the other hand, his work doesn’t have an expiration date. “I tell my customers I don’t care if it’s six months from now, if they see something I missed I will come

take care of it. That just recently happened,” he says. “Someone found a small mistake, but there were so many things that took place in that kitchen in the interim that I wound up repainting the entire kitchen because the paint was flashing so badly.”

Flashing is the term for when the coating deteriorates to an uneven gloss, and usually the solution is to repaint the whole area. So that’s what he did. “I assumed the cost of repainting the kitchen—and since then, I’ve had referrals from that customer.”

While he wants his painters to get done in a timely manner—time being money and money being time—sometimes a little extra time will turn a good job into a great one. (Impress the boss with speed *and* accuracy!) “I have one painter who is very good, and he’s very fast,” says Carmen. “But in speed comes mistakes. So I explained to him that I would rather he take another hour and nitpick his own work, then we

“You can tell a lot about painters by how they take care of their brushes, tools and equipment. It will tell you how they take care of a piece of property.”



PCS adds a touch of blue to pop out the detail on this tall house in St. Louis' Soulard neighborhood. Photos on this page courtesy of Jamie Sheehan Design.



work, so when he ran out of projects he was back out knocking on doors trying to make ends meet. With

would have better results and continuously get referrals.

"I'm on Angie's list with an A+ certification," he adds. Angie's (angieslist.com) is an online service that rates contractors all across the US, mainly powered by consumer reviews. "I was awarded its Super Service Award last year, and the reason is that before I left a job, I analyzed our performance and my standards and made sure that it would always exceed the customer's expectations."



PCS, he realized it would all be more successful if he hired painters to do the painting while he handled the business. It works out better for everyone—more people get more work and can stay employed, since now there's always something to do.

"Someone asked me why I chose painting and I said well... I'm really good at it for one, and for two it's about the cheapest business you can get involved in rather quickly, although if you're not open to doing the job right every time, you don't survive. When they see my slogan—exceeding expectations, not just meeting them—they find out it's not just a slogan. It's something that I live by." **TPC**

### Hi I'm Chuck, Now Get To Work

If you're going to interview for PCS, dress out, bring your tools and get ready to work. Carmen has two goals when he's hiring—he's got to convince a painter that his is a good company to work for, then the painter's got to convince him it's a good match. Usually he'll interview a painter at a job site. "I tell them to bring their tools and be ready to work. Sometimes I put people to work right there on the spot." It gives him a chance to watch the painter in his natural habitat. "You can tell a lot about painters by how they take care of their brushes, tools and equipment. It will tell you how they take care of a piece of property."

By not painting himself, Carmen is freed up to get to the business of running the business. When he was booking the work and performing it, business was a roller coaster—he'd run low on funds while looking for work, then to make up for that, he would book more work than he could handle. During that time, he couldn't look for more



Chuck Carment and crew spruce up the front and back porches of an old St. Louis home. While mainly brick, a touch of color adds a lot to the house's character.



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# TO Heck AND Back

How to prime after fire and water damage, plus some other important distinctions



Rust-Oleum photo.

**P**ainters and manufacturers differ on whether to use primer in some instances, particularly in regards to a relatively sound interior surface. “If the walls and ceiling look OK, some painters figure they’ll get enough time out of the coating before the homeowners want to change color and repaint,”

**BY JERRY RABUSHKA, EDITOR**

says Angela Cunningham, senior brand manager at Rust-Oleum Corporation (Zinsser Primers). It’s certainly a way to control job costs, she says, but you risk callbacks—and your reputation—by skipping this important step. “How much money have you really saved if you need to come back to correct a paint job?” she queries.

Dick Hardy, president of specialty primer manufacturer XIM Products, believes experience is a great teacher in deciding if you need to prime a happily stable interior wall. If experience hasn’t taught you yet, though, ask the boss—or just prime it!

However, what about when it’s not “just an interior wall?” Then your decisions can have more lasting consequences.

## Smoking at the job site

Not you, but sometimes walls catch fire. Or they catch water. Or they smell like 40 or more years of Uncle Louie’s Winstons. If there is a lot of fire or water damage in a home, check with your local authorities before painting. Mold and other toxins might mandate the walls be removed—then you can paint over fresh drywall, which is a lot easier anyway.

“In some cases the contractor is mandated to not just ‘paint over’ a problem,” says Hardy at XIM, which is known for products such as Peel Bond and UMA. “For example, due to the damage from the flooding after Hurricane Katrina in

the New Orleans area, inspectors ruled that some residential structures were chemically contaminated and could not be simply repainted.” Toxic mold, for example, kept painters away until that problem could be taken care of.

If there’s been a fire, Hardy suggests, let the insurance company take a look first. The inspector may restrict repainting—or the decision may be left up to you. “In some cases where there has been fire and smoke damage the insurance companies and agents leave the decision up to the painter because of the painter’s experience in making these types of judgment calls,” says Hardy.

“In the vast majority of cases it is the painter that is rendering his or her expert opinion on whether to simply repaint—and which primer and paint to use—or to replace, prime and paint.”

In order to make the decision, consider the following:

- Structural stability.
- Extent of damage.
- Type of damage.
- Type of surface.
- Can the people be moved out or must the repairs and painting be done with minimum relocation of people?
- Time of the year—how will the weather affect the project?
- What are the expectations of the property owner or manager?

On special, high profile or important jobs, consider calling in a consultant. “These consultants include personnel from paint stores, paint or primer manufacturers, or contractor associations,” he recommends.

Also, don’t be afraid to ask other experienced contractors or to consult designers, specifiers and architects.

## Sound advice

Before you start to prime in one of these situations, determine whether your surface is sound enough to survive and accept paint, says Cunningham at Rust-Oleum.



“Water damage can weaken existing paint on walls and ceilings, so it’s important to determine if the paint is sound before applying another coating. Make an “X” into the paint film with a razor blade. Firmly press duct tape into the mark and yank it away quickly. If the paint comes off with the tape it must be removed,” she instructs.



If there is moisture, find out if it’s still a problem and where it’s coming from and get it taken care of, or you risk another round of water damage after you’ve painted. Ugh.

“If the surface is sound,” she continues, “clean it thoroughly to remove dirt, grime and unsightly deposits. Use a solution of one cup of bleach and one gallon of water to remove surface mold & mildew. To prevent high moisture conditions beneath the surface, avoid ‘flooding’ the area with water, bleach or cleaning solutions if possible.

“After that, dry the surface thoroughly. Use a hair dryer to dry small areas. Larger areas may require the use of a dehumidifier, heater or fan to ensure the surface is completely dry. Insulation and framing must also be dry to avoid structural damage. If in doubt, confirm the moisture content of the wall or ceiling with

a moisture meter. If you are concerned about mold on other surfaces or unseen places, contact a mold removal specialist,” Cunningham recommends.

“We would recommend using a shellac-based primer such as B-I-N Primer Ultimate Stain Blocker [from Rust-Oleum], a high hiding, stain blocker primer-sealer that dries quickly and completely covers and seals even the worst water stains to prevent them from bleeding through new paint. When dry, the shellac resin in B-I-N also seals odors permanently and completely to eliminate the musty odors associated with water damage. We would also recommend using a mold resistant topcoat such as Perma-White Mold & Mildew-Proof interior paint.”

### You can’t pass a test you don’t take

If you’re not sure what to do, you can always test it out before you apply. Don’t waste a whole bucket on something you’ll be sweeping up off the floor a month from now.

“If you have done this type of work before and know the surface you are painting, there may not be a need to test, but if not, then always test. It is very much worth testing a paint and primer system if you are not completely sure about it.”



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says Dick Hardy. “XIM recommends on our labels to always test for adhesion and topcoat compatibility before starting the job. We call it the ‘Standard Test Area’ or STA. Whenever we give an extended warranty, the STA is a must.” Here’s how to test correctly.

- Use the proposed surface prep.
- Use the proposed primer and topcoat.
- Use the recommended drying schedules recommended by the primer and paint manufacturer.
- Allow the paint and primer system to



Can you spot the primer? It's in this paint from Ace!

fully cure and to be subjected to the environment that is expected. (Some time this can be done and some times the painting contractors are pushed by the property owner or manager not to wait for the results of this testing.)

- Involve the property owner or manager to get their input as to acceptability.

## Premium, for a high octane project

Why invest in a more expensive primer if a cheaper one will do? Your mission is to find out what works best for your job. “All good primers perform the basic functions of sealing, hiding and gripping the surface to provide a firm foundation for topcoats,” says Cunningham.

These situations, however, may demand a premium product.

- Covering tough stains.
- Blocking lingering odors.
- Covering rough tape joints.
- Adhesion problems over slick hard to paint surfaces.
- Inconsistent enamel sheen uniformity and/or the need for low odor and a quick dry time to turn around a project in an occupied area.

“In these cases, using the right premium primer can influence job efficiency by reducing surface preparation expense, improving paint coverage and reducing callbacks, all of which can lead to significant savings in time and money.”

Getting call backs is great—if it’s to do a new job and not fix an old one. Using the right primer under the right circumstance can make you a premium painter, so you can return to the job site for the right reason—new business!

## Paint and Primer in the Same Can

Folks have a lot of strong opinions about the two-in-one thing. Stain and topcoat in one, paint and primer in one, brush and roller in... oops haven’t seen that yet! Ace Paint’s new brand Clark+Kensington has introduced a paint and primer combo product, so we asked them to skinny us up on how well it really works, “Be honest,” we said, “is this as good as using these products separately?”

Standard duct tape



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<sup>†</sup>Graco Patents 6,619,569; D625,775S; D630,708S and other patents pending.

Should a painter use it, or is it just for a lazy DIYer?"

We got in touch with Mary Rice, president/general manager of Ace Paint. She was ACE-Hardware-helpful and provided us with comments below.

**Q. Should contractors use this product, or is it just for DIYers?**

**A.** Like consumers, contractors can be just as time-pressed and, therefore, the convenience of a paint and primer in one is equally applicable. In new construction jobs, professional painters are spraying bare drywall and then usually applying a white topcoat. In this case, they can do both with one product.

This does not imply one coat coverage but it simply means that there's one product to purchase and apply, and one set of applicators to use which makes the whole process much easier. Again, there's a convenience factor dealing with only one product for sealing and topcoating the substrate. One product bypasses the need for climbing up and down scaffolding to change products and applicators. Clark+Kensington products dry in half the time as conventional paints, so by the time you're finished applying the first primer coat, you can go back and begin applying the second.



Clark+Kensington paint & primer in one serves up some colorful results.

**Q. When you mix everything together, are you giving up any individual characteristics of primer or topcoat?**

**A.** This product, and most other paint and primer products, were developed for the express purpose of convenience. I think a lot of us, early on, underestimated how time-starved people really are today. The idea of using one product that behaves like a primer but also provides a beautiful topcoat for only a few dollars more has proven to be extremely appealing.

I don't think any manufacturer is suggesting that this product does the job of all specialty primers because, quite simply, it doesn't. You still need a primer over drastic color changes or heavily stained areas resulting from water, smoke or fire damage but, for the most part, those are specialty cases and don't represent the average painting experience.

Additionally, Clark+Kensington products have been formulated with the latest state-of-the-art emulsion technology which have come a long way even within the past five years. This means that certain latexes, formulated properly, are performing better than ever. There's no reason not to use it as a superb, high-quality topcoat. **TPC**

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# Social Media Step by Step

**D**oes social media sound like a lot of work? It's not really that hard! In this article, I will discuss how you can put Google to work for you! Not all of its features are right for everyone, but think about what part of your life could be improved with a little organization. Where could you improve productivity? What could you learn by sharing with others in your field?

This can be a confusing maze for many of us who are not digital natives. It is perfectly fine to continue using

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**BY CHRIS HAUGHT, CONTRIBUTING WRITER**

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a pad and paper to run your business if that fits your style, but I would still encourage you to set up a Google Profile and Places page. Think of it as a Yellow Pages ad—but it's free!

If you decide to embrace Google, be sure to be consistent with the information you post, such as your company name and address and the comments you make online. Think of your online identity as a "digital résumé." Painting contractors who have built a solid online reputation often dominate local searches with the variety of content they post. All this is designed to lead customers to your company website, which should be well designed and optimized already.

Gmail, Places, Profiles and Google+ are the tools to carry in your online bucket!

## Here's what you can do with a Gmail account:

- Manage multiple email accounts in one login and reply from different email addresses.
- Keep your emails organized in folders, for example a folder for customers, social media, vendors, etc.
- Create and share documents, spreadsheets and more from any browser or Smartphone.
- Keep your schedule on the calendar and add events and notes right from your Gmail!
- Manage your photos in Picasa and always have access
  - Follow favorite blogs easily with Google Reader
  - Easily access Google for searches
  - Use this email address for all the rest of your social media and directory listings.

- Make sure you use the same address and phone number everywhere you enter it online.
- Create custom signatures with your website and contact info.

Convinced yet? Go to [mail.google.com](http://mail.google.com) and sign up! Spend some time looking through the features—the help center has a lot of great tips.

## Google Places—your place on the map.

Once you have your Gmail account, claim your Google Places page ([www.google.com/places](http://www.google.com/places)). These rank very well in search results.

- Fill it out completely and add content such as pictures and videos.
- Share the link with your customers so they can

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easily leave you online reviews.

- Google will find and compare the info and soon raise your ranking as it verifies your business.

### Google Profiles can serve as your digital business card.

This is what people will find when they do a search for your name.

- Complete your profile as much as possible.
- Add links to your websites, blogs, photo albums, etc.
- This is for your personal information, however business profiles are coming soon.

### Google+ is your network to share information.

Some say this is Google's answer to Facebook, or social media for professionals. It will allow you to:

- Create Circles for friends, business, social media, special interests.
- Easily chat with your connections.
- Start a Hangout—for example, imagine one page with a group of friends watching the same video!
- Post photos, videos and links.

- Network and search conversations for common interests.

### Picasa can serve as your online photo album.

With this, you can:

- Easily add photos to albums.
- Edit, sort and share photos.
- Create collages, cards, movies and more.

### Web Reader will serve as your personal newsfeed and allow you to:

- Keep track of your RSS Feed.
- All your favorite blogs in one place.

As we continue with our series on social media, we will help you build on this so you can establish yourself as an expert in your field. Along with Google, you can expand on your digital résumé using other social media platforms. [TPC](#)

*Chris Haught owns RC Painting in Southern Utah and is the editor of The Blogging Painters (bloggingpainters.com), a collection of the industry's best blogs.*

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**FibaTape®'s new Extra Strength Fiberglass Mesh Tape** is a patent-pending multidirectional tape for reinforcing joints. Designed to increase structural integrity and joint strength, the new tape is ideal for demanding applications. It is 60% stronger than standard mesh tape, and ideal for applications that require additional strength. Open mesh design eliminates blisters and bubbles. [saint-gobain.com](http://saint-gobain.com)

**3M™ is now offering Lead-Check™ Swabs**—a simple solution for certified contractors to check for lead while complying with the EPA's RRP Rule. These lead tests can determine if lead-based paint is present on wood or metal surfaces, and yield results within 30 seconds. At less than \$5 per swab, they offer renovators a highly cost-effective solution to testing for lead. [3m.com](http://3m.com)



## Premium Pro Paint Mitt

### THE PROPAIN MITT™

is designed to get professional paint results in the toughest of spots. Its unique design allows a wrap-around application of paint to railings, columns, fences and other odd shaped surfaces, saving



you time and frustration. Also great for faux-finishing and creating textures and artistic effects. Thick and super absorbent premium fabric makes shedding a thing of the past and can be used with all types of paint and stain.

[trimaco.com](http://trimaco.com)



**BONDZ™, from Rust-Oleum (Zinsser brand)** is formulated to bond any topcoat to difficult-to-paint surfaces. The fast drying urethane-modified acrylic formula provides tenacious adhesion to hard, dense interior/exterior surfaces such as fiberglass, tile, glazed brick, and more. It creates a permanent bond with any topcoat—including 2-part epoxies and solvent based paints—for maximum adhesion while sealing the surface for a beautiful, uniform finish. [rustoleum.com](http://rustoleum.com)

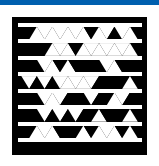
**RockSolid Floors® from Diamond Coat™** is the workhorse of its series of one-part polyurea floor coatings. Its chemical and abrasion resistance, along with its strength (20 times that of epoxy), make it an ideal sealer or top coat in any concrete flooring project. Add RockSolid Colour Shots to create a solid color floor—or use two Colour Shots and a special two-headed roller for an elegant, stone-simulating finish. [rocksolidfloors.com](http://rocksolidfloors.com)



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By Terry Begue,  
Begue Painting, Inc.

“People hire  
me because  
they like  
and trust me.  
That's it.”

Terry Begue owns Begue Painting Inc., and is author of the popular e-book, *The Wealthy House Painter's Guide to Having it All.* He's been a successful house painter and enjoys helping others start their own successful house painting businesses, too. Discover more at: <http://www.yourhousepaintingbusiness.com>

## Customers Buy You!

Have you ever asked yourself...

“Why do people hire me?”

“What qualities are they looking for in a painter?”

“Why should they choose me instead of a competitor?”

We all want to be in demand. But how can you be in demand if you're not sure what “in demand” really means? Persuading your prospects to say “yes” to do business with you is the single most overlooked part of contracting. It's also the most important if you want to be successful.

You can have a solid business plan, a healthy marketing budget, even exceptional technical skills, but they won't do you much good if you don't know how to land the job. I realized from the beginning my level of success ultimately depended upon how good I could become at getting hired.

I became obsessed with studying my prospective customers. Carefully watching for buying signals, I learned to recognize their purchasing “hot buttons.” For me it's been a process of endless field testing plus grilling customers over the years for valuable information about why they hired me. After all that, I can say with absolute certainty I know what specific qualities people look for when choosing a painting contractor.

People hire me because they like and trust me. That's it!

How do you become liked and trusted in the short time it takes to make a sales call? A lifetime of research has helped me zero in on three key practices that provide extraordinary results.

Find common ground. The first thing I do on sales calls is quickly look around their home and yard for what I call “conversation starters.” Golf clubs, pets, toys, even a swing set in the backyard all provide excellent opportunities to share common interests. If they have kids or pets I tell them about mine. If they apologize for a messy house I reply, “You should see mine.” My wife would kill me if she knew I said that (she's a very neat housekeeper). Building a bond by sharing common interests with your prospects helps them realize you're just a regular guy or gal providing a needed service. You're not some con artist trying to bilk them out of their kids' college fund.

It's all about them. Listen carefully and pay close attention when your potential customer explains the scope of the work. It's important you don't talk about yourself or your company before your prospect has had all the time they need to tell you exactly what they want. If you talk about yourself or your company too soon, people get the sense you have your own best interests at heart and don't care—even if it's not true. Then unpleasant sales resistance will rear its ugly head. Keeping the focus on their needs is the best way to avoid it in the first place.

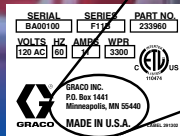
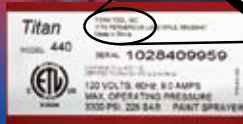
Explain clearly. After I'm sure my customer has finished talking and I understand their vision, I clearly convey exactly what I'll do for them both verbally and in writing. Be sure they understand the benefits that you provide. After all, people don't buy just your services; they buy solutions to their problems. Become a problem solver. Customers want you to tell them what you're going to do and what it will cost if they hire you. Clarity implies expertise.

These three simple but critical practices are your building blocks to selling success. They've enabled me to consistently close eight out of every ten jobs I bid. They will set you apart in a good way. They'll also give prospective customers much stronger reasons to do business with you instead of the other painting contractor who showed up and didn't know that customers actually buy *you*. Remember, people don't always buy how good you are at what you do; they buy how good you are at who you are. **TPC**



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