Fall in New England always provokes in me a wistful and reflective mood. Shorter days, soft sunlight and frosty mornings foretell the coming cold and darkness (we won’t even talk about the expense of heating a 170 year old house). Business is slowing and the unpleasant possibility of downsizing becomes reality. Compound this already melancholy perspective with the global economic slowdown, a domestic financial and housing crisis and throw in a predicted ‘colder than normal’ winter and I start my Chicken Little routine, which goes like this: “We’re all gonna die!”

But I digress. The theme of this issue is gratitude.

I’ll begin with an affirmation of Julie’s line, “I’m alive….” which as of this writing is true. But I’m also owner of a business that employs some truly motivated, dedicated and professional employees and I am privileged to work alongside them. My wife and children are wonderful and despite my many flaws, love me without question. I recently became a citizen of the US at a ceremony held in Fenway Park, surrounded by 3000 people of every race, religion and nationality - we all shared the same vision; to become a part of the most remarkable country in the world. That’s a lot to be thankful for.

And speaking of remarkable, I am truly thankful for the friendships I have developed through this Forum. It was great to experience another successful AST, to participate in 2 days of honesty, transparency and generosity. In October I hiked up Mt. Whitney, with 3 other Forum members; we talked about business, among other things, and it is these friendships and conversations that inspire and motivate me. My cup runneth over….

I hope you all reach out to your peers in the Forum over the coming months, to both offer and receive support and encouragement.

Best wishes,
Nigel Costoloe
Using Waterborne Wood Stains and Finishes – Are You There Yet?

by Joel Hamberg, President, Joel Hamberg Painting, joelhambergpainting@juno.com

With all the talk of 'Going Green', have you switched over to waterborne stains and finishes for wood? The days of strong odors and solvent disposal can be a thing of the past. For the past few decades the only way to finish new or existing wood was to use strong solvent based products. Dangerous conditions for both the applicator and the customer have resulted. Just this past year a kitchen went up in flames when a painter was spraying out lacquer on cabinets. With environmental and product changes the new system of finishing will soon become the standard accepted method. Already within the furniture industry a big push is going in this direction. Can a residential painter in his shop or on the jobsite use some of these new products successfully? Is it worth the effort to switch finishing systems? Will the finished product look as good?

The easiest way to get started using the system is to experiment in the shop or on a small job. Using waterborne stains that penetrate evenly and even dye stains that can tone finishes are becoming more readily available. Getting a hold of them can be as easy as talking to your paint rep or doing a bit of research. Minwax, Old Masters and Sherwin Williams (in the Sherwood line) make several standard colors. Lesser-known products from General Finishes, Chemcraft and Saman (made in Canada) have many ready-mixed colors and dye stains. The advantages of these stains are – they require no pre-stain or conditioner, super concentrated (some manufacturers), no raising of grain, no overlapping marks since re-wetting is simple, quick drying properties, and no lingering odors. Application methods include brush, pad applicator or even foam brush, which surprisingly can be very efficient. Rag disposal is easy since the stain is non-combustible. It is important to ventilate the area to allow moisture to properly air out of the work area, thus speeding up the drying process. If the stain is drying too quickly, use of a retarding additive or even water will help. Application of waterborne sanding sealer or topcoats can be done within minutes of the stain application. The sanding sealer dries to a nice matte finish, which is easy to sand, and even powders up like a solvent based product. The finish coats can be toned with some of the stain and a beautiful patina is the end result.

Spray stain application of waterborne products can be done with the Sherwin Williams Sherwood line and Chemcraft brand products. Using an air assisted airless system with a small tip fan will produce an even finish. Wiping is kept to a minimum once the system is perfected. Recoating and repair of waterborne stains and finishes are very simple and invisible in most cases. Refinishing over old varnish, lacquer, conversion varnish and even shellac can be done with waterborne poly-acrylic finishes and urethanes. Just a good cleaning and slight sanding are needed. Scratch marks can be touched up with stain, dings and nail holes filled with a water-base filler or putty. Several coats can be applied within a short period of time. No lingering odors and resulting headaches will follow.

Having achieved success in this system your company can do amazing things. Imagine refinishing doors, woodwork, built-ins, cabinets, counters and even furniture using these methods. Become an expert now and stand apart from the crowd who still do finishing the old stinky way.

Our company has been using waterborne wood finishing methods and refinishing for years now. Many successful jobs have earned us a niche market in our area. Featured jobs have been award winners, even earning a Top Job in 2006. Several projects we have undertaken will be highlighted at PACE 2009 in New Orleans. The presentation entitled “Marketing Green” on Monday 2/16/2009 at 11:00am will show details on how to market this within your service area.
“You are what you eat.” It’s really very simple. In his 2004 documentary, ‘Super Size Me,’ Morgan Spurlock eats nothing but McDonald’s for thirty straight days. At the end of the month his weight increased 25 pounds, his blood work looks bad and he feels run down and lacks energy and passion. The Lesson: consistently put junk into your body and eventually you will become an unhealthy, out of shape individual.

Just as it is with our eating, so it goes with what we put into our minds. Consistently feed your mind ‘junk’ and eventually you will have an unhealthy and out of shape mindset. A major challenge for many is to not fall prey to negative thoughts and to keep a strong positive outlook on things.

What separates the best business leaders from the mediocre ones? Is it talent? Education? Capital? How about experience? NONE of the above! Above all things, what we think will determine our level of success. We become what we think. Again, it’s very simple. Studies have shown that our sub-conscious mind will believe whatever we tell it, whether positive or negative. If you repeatedly tell yourself something your mind will eventually come to view that as reality.

Here are a few practical tips on feeding your mind the right stuff and in turn developing the habits that will enable you to become mentally healthy.

**WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS AND READ THEM OUT LOUD EACH DAY**

Write them as though you have already accomplished them. For example, write “I have a closing rate of 50%,” instead of “I want to have a closing rate of 50%.” Before sales calls, production meetings and at other various times throughout the day read your list out loud. Again, you are feeding your mind the messages you want it to hear.

**SPEND TIME WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE**

Make it a point to be with those who are an encouragement to you. Both positive and negative attitudes are contagious. Which would you rather ‘catch’?

**TURN ON THE MUSIC**

Get your ipod charged up and turn on the music that makes you happy and alive. Turn off the news for a while. Take a break from the ‘junk’ on TV and on the radio and fill your mind with the tunes that inspire you.

**MAKE A LIST OF THE GOOD THINGS**

What have you accomplished in your business this year? Did you hire some great people? Did your gross profit go up? Did you minimize call backs? It’s usually easier to see the mistakes, so take some time to look for the good things and put them on paper where you can see them often.

**HELP SOMEONE ELSE**

Do you know someone who can use encouragement? The word ‘encourage’ means “to inspire with hope, courage or confidence.” There are plenty of people around us who could use some of this! By giving to others you will be refreshed.

**TALK TO YOURSELF**

Talking to yourself may feel strange, but you can control the type of ‘food’ you feed your mind. Tell yourself that you are smart. Tell yourself that you are a winner. Remind yourself of the victories you have had in the past. Consistently tell yourself that you have what it takes. When negativity begins to rear its ugly head immediately find a positive message to combat it with. For example, on a sales call you may begin to think “Our price is going to be way out of their budget.” Fight that with “We have a
good rapport, they like me. We can come to a solution that will fit their budget because we have a good relationship."

LOOK FOR THE LESSONS
When things don’t go as planned, seek to learn from it. Do not beat yourself up. You don’t deserve it. Football teams spend hours looking at films after a game in order to find ways to be better. Players and coaches study every play and correct the mistakes. Championship teams look at the mistakes, learn from them and then make adjustments. They get better each week. They are always growing. Live, learn, grow and get better.

“Through the lessons I learn today I will apply tomorrow, and I will be better.” Tiger Woods

TAKE ACTION
Instead of complaining and grumbling about the economy, your employees, your current closing percentage or the competition, take action. Ask “What can I do now to turn it around?” “What is the best response to the current situation?”

WORK OUT
By taking care of yourself you will feel better physically. When you feel better physically you will feel better emotionally and mentally. You will have more energy and you will be happier. Happiness will produce more positive thoughts than negative ones.

We all control the type of ‘mental food’ we eat. Those who excel the most in life are the ones who have consistently paid attention to what is going into their minds. Make a commitment today to pay close attention to what you allow in and watch your life and your business be transformed!

For further study on positive thinking check out books by some of these authors: Viktor Frankl, Brian Tracy, Tony Robbins, Napoleon Hill and Martin Seligman.

PDCA ACCREDITATION
through CONTRACTOR COLLEGE
NOW IS THE TIME TO SIGN UP OR FINISH UP YOUR CREDITS

www.pdca.org
I have to admit, when I first got involved with the whole “green” movement, I was a very pale shade of green. I had a recycling bin and I thought I did a pretty good job of putting garbage and recyclables in their appropriate places. Of course, I was hearing frequent news reports about global warming, off gassing, and other ecological issues which I felt were, at times, more politically than environmentally inspired. I guess I associated the green movement with radical tree huggers, who wore hemp pants and Birkenstocks, and pretty much protested for a living.

As a business owner, I saw an opportunity with the green building movement. It had become a very strong sector in the industry. I decided to contact a local organization at the forefront of green building; Build It Green. They offered information and training on green building practices. I decided to go all out and registered for their Green Certification Program. The morning of the first day of class, I was really nervous. Kind of like when I have to order my wife a frappuccino from the local barista. I did not know what to wear. My hair was processed and held with gels, which I am sure were toxic. My clothes were not made of hemp or burlap and my shoes were leather. Leather couldn’t be good. I knew I was going to stand out, and didn’t know what the other people were going to think of me.

When I arrived at the training facility I felt a little more at ease. There were actually some full sized work trucks in the parking lot. People had cell phones and looked pretty “normal!”. As I began talking with them, I realized that this was going to be okay. The people there were, like me, just looking to learn more about green building practices. And they weren’t deep, dark, “broccoli” green either!

I learned a lot during the certification process and passed the exam with a very high score. I had long discussions with other business owners who felt as I did and who were keen to expand their business through more environmentally friendly processes. There were many shades of green amongst the people there, and each person was working towards the same goal of improving their businesses while helping to lessen the impact on our environment. I find that in many situations, if the motives are sincere, this can be a very positive thing!

I guess the moral here is to not be intimidated by going “green,” it isn’t the daunting task that it might seem at first glance. You don’t have to change your entire lifestyle, it doesn’t have to be all or nothing, and you don’t need hemp pants. The changes you make can be as simple as buying a few grocery items each week in glass jars rather than in plastic tubs, keep reusable grocery bags in your car, or using your own recyclable container for your water and coffee. It is acknowledging the benefits to us and our world and trying to make good choices at home and at work. By no means am I a deep Kelly green but I think I’ve moved slowly but surely from a “celery” to more of a “sage” green!
Imagine a large room full of smart, motivated and highly successful painting contractors, all engaged in insightful round table discussions and freely sharing the secrets of their business success. This is a rare opportunity for contractors to learn from each other and acquire fresh ideas and leading-edge knowledge to take their painting business to the next level. I look forward to next year’s session.

—Joe Kujawski, Sherwin Williams

After being involved with the PDCA for over 30 years, this was the highlight of my affiliation. I learned more about the needs and goals of painting contractors in the 2 days of roundtable discussions than ever before.

—Bruce Schneider, Purdy

AST is, in my opinion, the ultimate PDCA program. The format is awesome.

—John Fattor, Wooster Brush

To have so many owners in the same room sharing problems, solutions, cost management, growth and countless other business tips was phenomenal.

—Gene Helm, Porter Paints
Now is the time for all good Forum members to come to the aid of their association to.....

Enter the National PDCA Picture It Painted Profession Awards and the PDCA Safety Awards!

Be recognized for your achievements and professionalism with a PIPP Award, presented at PACE 2009.

Go to www.pdca.org/awards_contests.htm
What we are doing here at Integrity Finishes of Tampa Bay in order to keep things going is to increase marketing. We are blessed with the ability to continue exterior projects all through the year so we never stop promoting that. We do our proximity mailing with Holiday themes such as Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Maybe suggesting that you have a room painted as a gift for the Holidays.

We increase internet exposure and leave coupons with customers after a project is completed so they can share them with relatives or co-workers. We have also taken our employees on seminars for Increte Systems and texture deck coatings to improve our knowledge of coatings and enhance our portfolio of what we have to offer our customers.

It also can’t hurt to review your marketing expenditures that are not producing; don’t be afraid to try something new. Some of our suppliers have increased our pricing. At a time when raising our rates probably wouldn’t be a decision that would increase sales we have had to shop for better pricing on sundries and make choices for the products that are most cost effective.

I also can’t stress enough the importance of our local Suncoast PDCA Chapter. It allows us networking capabilities and sharing of projects that you wouldn’t get anywhere else.
two rooms in two different homes for the episodes shot in Carter and Dan’s hometown of Traverse City. Check out “Carter Can” on Saturdays at 11:30 a.m. We will keep you posted with the exact air date so you can check out their craftsmanship.

Dan Brady, owner of Dan Brady Painting and Wood Restoration, is now a board member for Habitat for Humanity. Dan also belongs to Business Networking International, Home Builder’s Association, Painters, Decorators, and Contractors of America. Dan is grateful to be part of the board and hopes to help develop better systems so that Habitat for Humanity can help all qualified families to receive a habitat home. Dan is proud to be part of such a needed and important cause.

Falling Prices
10-15% Off This Fall
Prices are dropping this fall!
Save 10-15% off for scheduled jobs during November & December!
Free Estimates on Tuesday afternoons, Wednesdays, and Thursdays!
Exterior season is ending soon, now is the time to get started on all those interior projects.

Transformed
The Ugly Kitchen house was revealed with a totally transformed new look. Dan Brady Painting not only volunteered their time to paint the interior of the kitchen, but also painted the entire exterior. Shane Inman of the Inman Company, creative design and all the hard work of all the sponsors made this project a huge success. If you would like some design advice for any of your projects, check out Shane on Mary in the Morning – 106.7 WSRT, every Friday in October at 7:25 a.m.

Coming Soon “Tricks of the Trade”
Steadily Dan and support staff has been working on the “Tricks of the Trade” video for public distribution. It contains everything you need to know on “How to paint a room.” This video is to aid anyone from start to finish on how to paint any room in your home. This video is great for any do-it-yourselfers or anyone looking to brush up their skills.
Inside – Out

by Paul Licari, Syracuse, NY, licaripainting@aol.com

I n the daily struggle of managing our businesses, our employees and our families it is easy to begin to sink. The accumulated battle scars begin to show, on the outside.

We all know by now, how important maintaining a positive attitude is to our success, but simply trying to put on a happy face when you’re really feeling emotionally spent is not enough. The only way to truly remain a great leader is to be right on the inside.

Each time we endure another employee problem, business slow down, or a family challenge, it tears at our psyche. The constant barrage of complaints and demands breaks us down. It’s as if there is a bridge between our internal selves and our external selves. The internal side of us is our essence, it’s what we’re made of, and the external side of us is that point where we communicate and influence people. Every time we’re hit, it’s like your opponent breaks off a piece of that bridge slowing down or even stopping the flow of information we are trying to use to run our lives. The more blows you sustain, as business speeds up, schedules bog down, or cash flow tightens the more imperative it becomes to hold true to your essential self.

To begin to question yourself or to lose your confidence, will send you in a downward spiral ultimately disabling you from decision making thusly removing your influence from those around you. One of the most crippling things that can happen is to lose your influence over the people in your life. Influence is power, once you have lost that, you have given up all control. In the end, no matter what person or event caused your disillusion it affects all the other people in your life, your loved ones, your employees, even your customers. As your attitude deteriorates it spreads and grows, feeding on itself. Through your negative behavior, that problem with your spouse or child carries over to your business or, vise versa, that disagreement with your employee is brought home with you. In either scenario, with your will stretched to its end, the stage is poorly set for your next encounter.

Eventually, though, something will change. It is the nature of all things. If there is one thing that I have learned is that everything is moving and changing constantly. Nothing stays as it is, even relationships. Every relationship you have, whether it is with an employee, a contractor, a store owner, your spouse or your child, it is constantly active. Everything you say and do has some affect on the direction of that relationship and your position in it. Every time that you reach a point of negotiation, subordination, discipline or praise you have a chance to reposition yourself in that relationship. Each encounter is like a dance (or a boxing match) with your opponent taking a step towards you.

You have the choice, each time, to hold your ground, step back, or push back towards them. Each move affecting the next encounter. Some you may lose, some you may win, but to maintain your position in the hierarchy you must have more wins than loses.

I have one employee; in particular, that is constantly questioning my direction. He is a college graduate and an intelligent guy. Much of what he adds to our company is invaluable. However, sometimes, we are deadlocked. Recently I took on a large job that was slightly different than our normal work but it was to be a highly profitable job. I brought him there prior to the start of the job and he promptly began to express his disapproval. I listened to him for a few minutes but as he talked a feeling came over me as if I were being run over. I stopped him and said, “This is not any different than anything else we do. There is wood siding and we are putting paint on it! Get on board!” Conversation over.

Anyone who has risen to the point of a business owner possesses certain qualities that have brought you here. I’m referring to your core values, your strengths, and your beliefs. Now that you have achieved this position it is your duty and your privilege to guard it. You are smarter, stronger and braver than those who have not taken on these responsibilities, therefore, you have the right to hold to your principles and not back off.

So, remember, as your opponents pressure you, reach down inside yourself, reflect on those core values, stand strong, and be right on the inside.
**PDCA RESIDENTIAL FORUM**

Painting & Decorating Contractors of America

*What do I get if I join the PDCA Residential Forum?*
For your Annual dues of $95.00 you will receive a one year subscription to “The Painter’s Rag” newsletter, back issues of the newsletter, the current edition plus all previous editions of the Business Systems Workbook for Residential Contractors. You will also receive additional mailings on events planned by the PDCA Residential Forum and the availability of support from fellow residential contractors around the country.

*What are the requirements for Membership in the PDCA Residential Forum?*
You must be a PDCA member – Nationally, Council or Chapter. The Residential Forum is designed to be an additional level of membership information and benefits specifically for the residential contractor.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**
Please send this form, along with your check made payable to “PDCA Residential Forum” to:
PDCA Residential Forum, 8560 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221

**COMPANY NAME**

**CONTACT PERSON**

**STREET ADDRESS**

**CITY, STATE, ZIP**

**TELEPHONE & FAX**

**EMAIL**

**WEBSITE**

**Payment:** Send check payable to PDCA with your Visa or Master Card #

______________________________ Exp ________________

**SIGNATURE**

**Mail To:** PDCA Residential Forum, 8560 Main St, Williamsville, NY 14221

---

**PDCA Residential Application**

To help us provide services for our members, please tell us:

- How long have you been in business? _______________
- How long have you been in the PDCA? _______________
- Do you attend the National PDCA Convention? _______
- How many employees do you have working for you (on average)? ______
- What type of residential work do you do?
  - _____ % Residential new
  - _____ % Residential repaint
  - _____ % Residential custom
- Do you provide specialty finishes? Please list

Please check PDCA Membership information:

- _____ Current National Individual Member
- _____ Council/Chapter Member

Council/Chapter Name:
Editor’s Note

How often do you connect with your purpose? I would venture to guess that when times get tough with the economy, business, or family life, we tend to distance ourselves from our purpose as we get tangled up in trying to survive the immediate. This means that a little re-connection is in order and you will find plenty of inspiration from the authors who have written for this issue of the Painter’s Rag.

In other news, the Residential Forum board of directors began a new term in August and while Nigel Costolloe remains board president, he leaves the post of Rag editor. Never has there been and nay likely will there ever be such rousing and motivating calls for articles. Let us thank Nigel for the many volunteer hours he put toward the Rag and his influence in bringing it to the professional looking newsletter it has become.

Director Tom Reber and I have volunteered to be co-editors of the Rag for the next year. We look forward to serving you.

Please send your articles (or as Nigel used to say (tongue in cheek), your poetry and personal journal entries) to julie@signetpainting.com.

Keep smiling and writing,
Julie Gehrke, Signet Painting