Rarely are two days alike during the four distinct seasons we have here in Minnesota. Everyone speaks fluent weather. We must know our cardinal directions to distinguish the wall cloud in the West from the harmless cumulonimbus in the East. Knowing the temperature in January doesn't help us dress appropriately unless we also know the wind chill factor. Going green does not mean eating a healthy diet, recycling beer cans, or using VOC free paint. It also does not mean "we're in the money!" It means the sky says you'd better hit the basement before that wall cloud crushes the beer cans.

All of this potential for severe weather and abrupt change means that our kids start crying when they see raindrops. Hail is a scary thing to grow up with. The first time a child sees it bouncing off the sidewalk while peering out the window and hears it “tinking” off the roof like marbles, they think the house is crumbling, or worse, that the sky is falling.

It’s an unpredictable place to call home, and because many of us do not like sudden changes, it can be very uncomfortable at times. With storm sirens wailing in the background, it just doesn't feel safe. The business climate for many painting contractors has seen a similar type of unpredictable volatility over the past several years. We rarely see two days alike. We’ve developed new vocabulary unheard of before the storms. Terms like "price sensitivity", "cash discount" and "the scope is creeping on them (the owners); what can (we) do about that?"

We’ve all faced some trying times and, like it or not, many of us have made big changes in our businesses. Let’s get together and talk about them in Chicago this fall. By moving Advanced Shop Talk out of the summer months we hope to give more of you an opportunity to come in and chat, or in Minnesotan - “hit the basement, have a beer, and put our heads together while we wait for the storm to blow over.” Together, we can emerge stronger and better prepared to deal with what is yet to come.

May the Forum Be With You,

Julie Gehrke
The Pedestrian’s View: Changing Gears

by Doug Imhoff, imhoffpainting@msn.com

2007: That pitched whirring sound was the sound of your business revving at 6000 rpm in 3rd gear. Why were you in 3rd gear? Because 4th is a long gear and it starts at 50mph, you were hesitating to shift up because of some uncertainty you feared around the bend...what if you couldn’t downshift or brake in time...what if there was a recession?

Fast forward to 2011; that low rumble and jerky ride is the feel of your business running at 3000 rpm in 4th gear. Why 4th? Because you finally shifted up from 3rd at the end of 2007 and you don’t feel like going back. You’ve grown, you’ve matured, and you’re a smarter and more competent businessperson than you were back then. Besides, nobody slows down, do they? Yes, they do. Particularly the ones who plan on surviving; key word, that one: plan – its meaning is unlike hope or wish or might. Plan to survive. For many of us that means downsizing, or “right-sizing” as the corporate world prefers. I like plain language so I’m going to stick with downsizing.

Look at your numbers, they’ll tell you what you need to do. Mine indicate it’s time to get busy planning on getting lean. But how? A good friend relayed a story: a peer of his lamented about the fact that his business was hemorrhaging cash and he wasn’t sure what to do. If things kept up at this pace he’d be down to half of his peak volume in a matter of months—which is in the millions for this entrepreneur, so we’re in the fast-lane here. This friend asked a very insightful question of the owner: were you ever at that level before? Yes, he replied. Second question: were you hemorrhaging cash then? No, we were growing then and awash in cash, he replied. So, what’s the difference? Is it easier going up than down?

Only conceptually. Let’s look at all of the components to consider:

1. Planning – This is the first step, make a plan, and not just in your head, sketch it out. Make a new budget spreadsheet, plug in new sales numbers, new wage numbers, new overhead numbers. Play with it, save a few different versions and work through them. Share them with a trusted colleague and get honest feedback, answer the tough questions, and don’t be prejudiced against information as it reveals itself to you. Numbers don’t lie.

“...nobody slows down, do they? Yes, they do.”

Editor’s Note: Don’t Forget to Take a Break

by Suhaiba Neill, sneill@johnneillpainting.com

While most painters dread the winter months and can’t wait for the “busy season” to begin, it may be to your advantage to plan on one or two small weekend getaways around mid-summer. Knowing that you have a “scheduled break” to look forward to can often help keep the day-to-day stress during the peak season at bay. And, yes, your business will survive without you for a few days, especially if it means you can rest and recoup and come back ready for the second half of the season. This may take a bit of pre-planning, which may also turn out to be a good thing for your business as well. If you’re lucky enough to live within driving distance of the water, find a nice inexpensive hotel, pack a good book and just relax for a few days. And if you’re able to plan ahead and take a whole week off and spend it somewhere fun with family and friends, more power to you. Wishing everyone a fun-filled and profitable summer.

Continued on page 3...
2. Resetting - Who will make up your new customer base? What rate can you charge them? Under what conditions? How will you weed out the customers you no longer want to work for?

3. Laying off rather than adding on – this means identifying who you have, where (and if) they fit in the future, and planning to take the necessary action. Or, like me, maybe you simply don’t replace those who by hook or crook add their names to your alumni club roster.

4. Working the plan and monitoring the results - You’ll hate this part, but the truth is, if your business could speak, it’d be telling you that this is absolutely necessary.

Counter-intuitive, isn’t it? I think so. Normally, in June you’re stoking the fires and adding timber. But consider holding off and choosing projects more carefully. Another factor you’ll want to keep in mind; the State Unemployment funds are gone with IOUs now in their place. This means that if you add a bunch of painters in June and lay them off in October, the likelihood of their unemployment claim being ruled in their favor and against you is very high. I know, it’s supposed to be objective, but it isn’t. They’re running on fumes and promises, and you’ll be contributing at a higher rate for the next 2 years because you added guys this spring, laid them off this fall and in between sold jobs at a reduced rate because higher prices kept the recovery at bay and you had to drop trouser to keep the new-hires busy, right?

“What if” questions come to mind now. I like “what if” questions, they comfort me and sometimes lead to other good questions. They allow me to entertain all manners of premonition or paranoia: astonishing success and basking in the warm rays of a plan well executed; a smaller more profitable company that’s easier to manage. Or perhaps it’s a complete disaster, a long tail of flame tracing your vector as you burn in to terra firma, a luminescent beacon announcing your spectacular failure to all within sight! Invigorating…isn’t it?

I think so too.

Letter to the Editors

Once again the Painters Rag is full of useful and inspiring articles. I am continually impressed with each issue; never would have imagined a painting industry newsletter to mean so much to me personally. I usually learn from and want to respond to at least one article; in the spring issue, every article is food for thought, comment, or conversation. Thank you!

Mike Kelly’s recommendations were great. He asked for other useful apps – can’t live without Springpad and Dropbox – check them out.

Sincerely,

Gina Comer, Office Manager
CDH Painting, Inc.

Springpad – a free application that allows you to save anything you want to remember on your phone or computer. You save it and springboard organizes it for you.

Dropbox – an application that allows you to access the files on your computer/phone from any other computer, phone or ipad. You can also share information with family and friends using a personal folder on the dropbox website.

Thanks Gina for the feedback and tips.
Take A Closer Look – Using Bing Maps Before You Estimate

by Mike Kelly, mike@crestwoodpainting.com

While Google Maps makes it easy to see just where that potential estimate is (an attractive part of town or a likely time-waster), the problem is not all streets are included in Street View.

Microsoft’s Bing (bing.com) has a nifty alternative. Enter a street, city, state and zip and you’re brought to the map view. To the right you can choose between Road, Automatic and BirdsEye. With BirdsEye and a close zoom you’ll get a 3D view of the house from the air.

Using the onscreen left or right arrows to turn 90 degrees you can clearly see every face of the house.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, these pictures surely are worth hours saved (or invested). BirdsEye can help determine if a potential estimate is a good use of time and certainly makes it easier to visualize what a homeowner is describing without actually being there. As with all powerful tools, be careful about how much information you share with your customers – some people may get the major creeps knowing their painter has an eye in the sky.

Have a great tool or tip in your bag of tricks? Please forward it along for inclusion in the next issue.
Pressure Washing Precautions

by Kathy Day, kathy@sunshinepainting.net

As a Nurse, and Painting Contractors wife, I thought this might be of interest:

Two weeks ago we had an employee become quite ill shortly after pressure washing a stucco house with a tile roof. It was on a Friday afternoon, and within a 1/2 hour of finishing the job, he complained of “feeling bad”. By Sunday, this usually active healthy 32-year old male was sick enough (with flu like symptoms), that he went to an ER. Having no insurance, but feeling very ill, they diagnosed him with “the flu”, no tests were done, and he was given IV fluids and sent home. No one asked what he did for employment.

He missed the next five days of work and by the following weekend was experiencing shortness of breath along with a fever and fatigue. He went to his primary doctor’s after-hours clinic, where a very good diagnostic physician determined that he had bronchial pneumonia. The doctor then asked what he was doing prior to becoming ill. Thinking back on that day of pressure washing, he remembered spraying off lots of bird droppings from the house and saw signs of nesting and a dead bird in the gutter. Without doing extensive testing, the physician diagnosed probable psittacosis with complications of bronchial pneumonia. His O2 Saturation was only 80% (normal range is between 92-100%), which could have let to hospitalization. Because of his lack of insurance, the physician gave him a breathing treatment in the office, and started him on a short course of steroids and 10 days of antibiotics.

He was out sick the whole next week, but each day he improved and was back at work in the middle of the following week. I did file a worker’s comp claim and we are awaiting review for reimbursement of lost wages (2 weeks). So, although this is a rare event, all workers should be made aware of the hazards animal feces. Anytime you see evidence of animals droppings, mouse, bird, cat, whatever, consider wearing your mask.

WHAT 3M HAD TO SAY

by Julie Gehrke, Julie@signetpainting.com

Patrick at the 3M helpline said the answer is not which cartridge should be worn to avoid an illness; the answer is to know what levels of C. psittaci exist before starting. Aside from calling in an environmental tester, one precaution that 3M suggests is wetting down bird debris areas with a solution of 50 parts water to 1 part bleach, then coming back later to power wash.

Another line of defense would be to use a 60923 cartridge filter on a respirator. This will provide up to 10 X the PEL (permissible exposure limit) and is an organic vapor cartridge. The problem is that blasting bird do-do into oblivion may break down the particles so fine that they exceed the PEL limits of the cartridge. This would mean that only a supplied air respirator would work, as clean air is available through an air hose.

Patrick mentioned that a person previously exposed to C. psittaci is likely to be more sensitized to becoming ill as happened to the painter in the story above.

Obviously 3M does not want to create a liability by claiming to have the perfect cartridge for the situation because no one can really be sure of what created the conditions for the illness to be contracted. The most valuable take-away is for painting contractors and their estimators to now be aware of this potential hazard and to look for animal and bird droppings, and to plan in advance. The same goes for bee nests and other potential hazards to our workers. A pre-job assessment checklist is an excellent tool for noting these kinds of hazards and sending the right pre-cautions to the jobsite.

Thank you Kathy for sharing this information with the forum. It is very much appreciated and we hope it helps other contractors avoid similar issues with their employees.
Newest Membership Benefit

We are always striving to add the most value possible to your PDCA Residential Forum membership and hope you have found our new addition of the monthly e-newsletters both useful and informative. With eight e-newsletters per year, (off-setting the months that The Painter’s Rag is produced) our goal is to stay connected, helping and supporting one and other year-round. And in case you missed it amid your hundreds of other emails, here’s a link to last month’s e-newsletter.


If you’ve always wanted to get more involved, but are unable to commit to a role on the board, please consider signing on to help with our monthly e-newsletters. We look forward to the opportunity to welcome you to the group in our continuing effort to make the forum the best it can possibly be. Please contact Scott Lollar at scott@bestpaintjob.com for more details.

Thank You,

Your PDCA Residential Forum Board

Join Us On Facebook

Check out the PDCA Residential Forum page on facebook which includes a discussion board.

Visit: http://tinyurl.com/of53cd
PDCA Presents Two Great Conferences

2011 Craftsmanship Forum
&
2011 Residential Forum
Chicago, IL

10th Annual Craftsmanship Conference
Sept. 29 - 30, 2011

Advanced Shop Talk 12
Sept. 30 - Oct. 1, 2011

Attend both conferences at a discounted rate.

Early bird discount for the 3-day conference is $399.
Registration must be received by August 15, 2011.

Join the Craftsmanship & Residential Forums as we discuss building a sustainable high performance company.
## Conference Schedule

### Thursday – September 29, 2011

**Craftsmanship Forum—All seminars at the Katherine Legge Memorial Lodge**

8:00 – 8:30 am........Welcome & Introductions

8:30 – 10:00 am........Craftsmanship For Dummies, Presented by Rodney Paglialong

10:00 – 10:30 am......Refreshment Break

10:30 – 12:00 pm.....The Past and Future of the Chemistry of Paint, Presented by Debbie Zimmer

12:00 – 1:00 pm........Lunch

1:00 – 3:00 pm........Bringing Old Windows Back to Life, Presented by Bryon Wallace

3:00 – 3:30 pm........Refreshment Break

3:30 – 5:00 pm........Wood Finishing Alternatives Using Green Technology, Presented by Tom & Sheryl Monahan

**3:00 – 5:00 pm........Registration Open for Residential Forum’s AST 12 at the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel**

6:00 – 9:00 pm........Welcome Party for all conference attendees at the Katherine Legge Memorial Lodge

7:00 – 7:30 pm.........(optional session) The History of Paint in America, Presented by Mario Guertin

8:00 – 8:30 pm.........(optional session) Behind the Scenes Look at an Award-Winning Craftsmanship Company, Presented by Koch Brothers

### Friday – September 30, 2011

**Craftsmanship Forum & Residential Forum Blended Programming—All seminars take place at the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel**

7:00 – 8:00 am.........Continental Breakfast and Registration for AST 12

8:00 – 9:00 am.........What does a Successful Painting Contractor Look Like?

9:00 – 10:15 am........Welcome to Foreman School – Part I, Presented by Tony Severino

10:15 – 10:30 am........Refreshment break

10:30 – 12:00 pm.......Welcome to Forman School – Part II, Presented by Tony Severino

12:00 – 1:00 pm.........Lunch

1:00 – 2:30 pm.........Do You Know Your Competitive Disadvantage? Presented by Nigel Costolloe

2:30 – 2:45 pm.........Refreshment break

2:45 – 4:00 pm.........Leadership is Not a Destination, Presented by Brandt Domas

4:00 – 4:30 pm.........Wrap Up

4:45 – 5:30 pm.........(optional session) Succession and Transition Planning for Family Run Businesses, Roundtable led by Nigel Costolloe and Suhaiba Neill

6:00 pm....................Dinner on your own

### Saturday – October 1, 2011

**Residential Forum: AST 12—All seminars take place at the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel**

7:00 – 8:00 am.........Continental Breakfast and Election of Officers for the Residential Forum

8:00 – 9:30 am.........The Profit Plan – What is Your Fiscal IQ? Presented by Linnea Blair

9:30 – 9:45 am.........Refreshment break

9:45 – 12:00 pm.......The Marketing Plan – Marketing Strategies: Old and New, Presented by Suhaiba Neill and David Chism

12:00 – 1:00 pm.........Lunch

1:00 – 2:30 pm.........The Business Plan – A Living Road Map for Your Business, Presented by Richard Bright & Ron McKenzie

2:30 – 2:45 pm.........Refreshment break

2:45 – 4:00 pm.........The CEO Plan – 6 Roles of the CEO, Which ones are you missing? Presented by Nigel Costolloe

4:00 – 4:30 pm.........Conference Wrap Up
Craftsmanship Forum & PDCA Residential Forum

Registration Form

1. PDCA Forum Company Name
   
   First Person Attending
   
   Additional Person Attending
   
   Additional Person Attending
   
   Street Address
   
   City, State, Zip
   
   Telephone & Fax
   
   Email

Craftsmanship Forum

When: Sept. 29 - 30, 2011

Where:
The Katherine Legge Memorial Lodge
5901 South County Line Road, Hinsdale, IL 60521

Residential Forum – AST 12

When: Sept. 30 - Oct. 1, 2011

Where:
Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel
1401 West 22nd St., Oak Brook, IL 60523

Hotel Reservations:
Call the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel directly at (630) 573-8555 and ask for the special PDCA Residential Forum Group rate of $109 or reserve online.

Hotel reservations must be received on or before 5:00 pm, Monday, September 5, 2011 (the “cut off” date).

Getting to the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel from the Airport

The Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel is served by both the Chicago/O’Hare Airport and the Chicago/Midway Airport. Please note the hotel does not provide shuttle service. To reach the hotel from either airport it is recommended you take the windy City Limousine service, approximately $26 one way. We have been advised not to use the Airport Taxi service.

For additional information on the Chicago Marriott Oak Brook Hotel and the surrounding:

2. REGISTRATION COSTS

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Please check if you plan to attend the following:

___ YES, I will attend the Thursday evening Welcome Party (6 pm – 9 pm)

3. PAYMENT OPTIONS

To register online and pay with a credit card through PayPal go to:
http://pdcaresidentialforum.org/ast

To pay with check make check payable to PDCA Residential Forum and mail payment & registration form to: PDCA Residential Forum, 63 Marne Road, Buffalo, NY 14215

Please call the Residential Forum office at (800) 697-7322 Office hours 8:30 am – 4:30 pm EST or email tony@pdcaresidentialforum.org

Confirmation and further details will be emailed to all registrants.

Register Online Now!
These last 3 years have taught us all a lot about supply and demand! As the adage goes, a rising tide floats all boats – during the bubble years of the 90s and 2000s we all thought we were business and marketing whiz kids – profitable, enjoying double digit growth, masters of our industry. Most of us are now adjusting to the new normal – pricing sensitivity, greater competition, slimmer margins and fewer customers.

In light of this, how do we now define success?

Join us in Chicago this October to discuss the new definition of success, and find out how you measure up against your peers…..

Come prepared to talk honestly and openly about your business and yourself. Come prepared to teach others and to learn from your peers.

Come prepared to do some hard work, but be ready to leave inspired!

What challenges do you now face as a leader?
What adjustments have you made to your own definition of success?
How are you preparing your company, and yourself, to compete and succeed in this new economy?

ATTENDEES SAY
“Every year AST is a highlight for me.”
Eric Hernanz, Hernanz Painting

“I appreciate everyone taking the time from work to attend this year’s AST.”
Tom Reber, Jalapeno Paint Werx

“AST is about sharing. When we share it uplifts the spirit.” John Peek, Peek Brothers

“The group this year was very focused. I can’t think of time or money better spent.”
Doug Imhoff, Imhoff Painting
Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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1. **It is Spring time now and I was wondering how long I should wait before beginning the exterior painting.** Exterior painting timing depends on the weather conditions and the water content in the surfaces to be painted. Obviously, you can wash an exterior as soon as the water will not freeze, but before priming and painting you should use a moisture meter to be sure the moisture contained in the wood is within acceptable limits. Ref. COP RE-PT-1

2. **I am working on a stucco house. Some stucco patching has been done. How should I determine if it is too early to paint over the new patches.** You need to check the pH or alkalinity level with a pH pencil to be sure that it is within acceptable limits. Ref. COP RE-PT-3

3. **How do I determine where the best place is to set up a shop at an exterior painting site?** The site should be safe and located in a convenient place. You must ask the homeowner for permission and suggestions. Some concerns are care of landscaping and grass, proximity to the work area and protection from the elements. For a more complete list see the COP for Exterior Job Site Setup. Ref. COP RE-GL-2

4. **There must be 30 shutters on this house. Do you have any suggestions for marking where they go that will not be gone when I paint all surfaces?** You can mark the bottom of each shutter but it has to be done by indenting the wood with numbers or letters. First check to see if there is a number or letter already on the shutters. If there is, make a map on a piece of paper showing where each numbered shutter goes. Ref. COP RE-PR-11

5. **The new siding on the house I am going to paint has shiny areas on it. Should I be concerned with this?** The shiny areas are probably mill glaze. Sand it with medium grit sandpaper in order to allow for proper adhesion. Ref. COP RE-PR-12

6. **Some new wood has to be replaced on the outside of the house I am working on. How soon should I prime the new wood?** Prime the wood as soon as it is put in. In fact you may want to prime it all before you put it in. Any delay can cause some early failure. Ref. COP REI-GL-1

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