From the President:

REACTIVE or PROACTIVE?
Which one are you?

By all accounts, every painting contractor I know across the United States and Canada is slammed! Furthermore, there seems to be full employment for painters...or at least painters that you would be interested in hiring. As contractors, we have a limit on our resources too, so what can you do about it?

One option is to be reactive. To cannibalize your crews, and make the currently screaming customer happy. Or to simply overbook yourself and kill all the good press, ratings, and good will you've worked your whole career to build.

Or you can be proactive and make some strategic changes based on real data. Do you job cost all of your different project types? Like Interior Commercial, Interior Residential, Exterior Commercial, Exterior Residential, Restoration, Carpentry, Wallpaper, or whatever the categories are for your business. Find out which projects are most profitable and focus on those clients and eliminate the other ones. Why wouldn't you? Because sticking with jobs that are not profitable is like going back to a contaminated well expecting it to one day provide you purified water. Find out the job type, location, or kind of customer that kills your profit and work towards eliminating them.

How do you do this? One way is a carefully worded script. For example, we have reduced our residential service area to 15 zip codes. Unless you are a past customer or a referral, we are going to refer you to another company. Why? Because we know the farther we get from our core area, the more costs are associated with delivery and pick up of equipment and it is virtually impossible to manage them. It also means more drive time and wear and tear on our employees. We have a mileage re-imbursement program as well so it costs us more there too. So, for us, the best thing to do is serve the 15 zip codes in our core. That could change in the future. Just not today.

Another strategy is to inform the prospect that you are booked for the summer or for the next 4 months. This is not unheard of. It also is a little easier to swallow than “we don’t work in your area.” Make sure the lead is not a referral first or this might be the last referral from that source.

A third option is to stay away from things you suck at! We don’t do decks, fences, garage floors, houses that have more carpentry than painting, and many small jobs that come our way. Why? Because those projects are not in our sweet spot. We spend tons of energy getting them done or fixed when we should be blasting through a bunch of work we are good at.

And lastly, you can raise your prices a bit. This will give you some flexibility, weed out the shoppers, and provide additional income to pay overtime. Do more with less, unless you are a non-profit. In that case, keep giving it away. Your customers will be with you for life. Or until you get booked out for 4 months!

Ultimately, the choice is yours, but I encourage you to be proactive, look at your numbers and then choose wisely. I look forward to seeing you all in Providence next month (another wise choice to keep your business healthy).

Sincerely,

Scott Lollar
Precision Painting and Decorating
Having just returned from PDCA’s Expo in Charleston there seemed to be more emphasis on culture than previous years. Good timing, I guess, as this is the year we’re focusing on building the culture in our business. They say that if you’re not setting the culture of your company then your employees are - and they’re using their last employer as the role model.

**Vision**

Mission Statements and Vision Statements and Core Values are often framed and displayed as you enter big corporate offices. Just corporate BlahBlah that’s generally ignored and certainly has no place in a local painting company, right? But early this year we openly referenced our Core Values and Vision as part of our recruiting and hiring processes. People responded – positively. “Wow, I’ve never heard that kind of stuff anywhere else.” Candidates liked hearing the “C” word (Career) and, so far, it looks like we’re attracting better quality candidates.

We’ve got 5 Core Values and my favorite I stole from Steve Talkington at Lancaster Painting:

**Do the Right Thing, Not the Easy Thing**

(Best to note right now that stealing is not one of our core values.)

We talk about cracking a second floor window – easy to ignore and say nothing, but the right thing is to own up, measure and replace. Because that’s our culture, and that’s who we hire, and that’s what we do.

**Build It & They Will Come**

At one of the Expo presentations focused on culture the presenter suggested using brainstorming exercises to build culture. Questions like:

- Why do our customers hire us?
- If we’re looking to attract more great employees, what words or phrases would you suggest we put in an employment ad?
- What do our customers mention most about their experience with us?

Employees call out key words and the CEO scribe jets them down. Brainstorming exercises like these get everybody involved and help reinforce your culture at the same time that you create it. The last question helps everybody see that customer reviews focus on the “soft” side (on-time, friendly, neat) rather than the trade-specific side (even coverage, no roller stipple).

**Culture**

starts with recruiting and that often starts with a Craigslist ad. Instead of advertising a position (which is what everybody else is doing) how about advertising your career/safety/friendly/neat/advancement culture?

I learned about the Values Matrix from my coaching group. (No coach? S’maddah wid you!) Just like marriage to a car thief is unlikely to work out, so is hiring someone that doesn’t share your company’s values. If you value Safety but you’ve hired a cowboy that leaps from ladder to ladder you will, sooner or later, have to confront that Values gap.

We talk early and often about Values - in ads, in interviews and especially before a job is offered. We hire those that look like a good values fit, promote and train those that really are, and encourage those that aren’t to find work with our most respected competitor.

So frame those Visions and Values and hang’em high. I’ll be at the Residential Forum in Providence (July 17 & 18) and look forward to hearing lots of for-profit culture stories.
Servant Leadership - Diane Walsh

Servant Leadership starts at the top, but when embraced, will permeate throughout your organization. Understand how servant leadership can positively affect your bottom line by creating an ownership mentality that leads to improved productivity, stronger teamwork, better customer service, higher morale and reduced turnover.

Diane has 30 years of business and consumer marketing experience including advertising, media buying, product/brand management, public relations and market research. She is a 24-year veteran of Shurtech Brands, having served in a variety of roles including an International assignment in Germany. In her current role as Director of Market Development at ShurTech, she leads her team to reach end-users through product education, training and research. Her responsibilities also include developing international markets for the company’s key brands.

Schedule Estimates in 40% Less Time - Mike Kelly

A nuts-and-bolts overview of how to automatically schedule estimates. This system creates an image-building first impression for your company and completely eliminates no-shows. Enter contacts into your CRM and appointments into your calendar, all with zero keystrokes, no phone time and no stress.

Mike stumbled into the painting business in 2007 equipped with nothing but naive optimism. Despite a Great Recession and the usual small business challenges, the business continues to grow. This year Mike was demoted; his wife Jacque is now President & CEO. Active in the PDCA at several levels since starting the business, Mike especially looks forward to the Residential Forum each year.

The Pitfalls of Estimating - Randy Fornoff

Bring your estimating take off sheets with you for a hands-on workshop where we will work through the many pitfalls of exterior and interior estimating. Then, walk away with a more thorough process for ensuring that you’re making a profit on every job.

Randy has been in paint contracting for over 30 years and is President of MTS Painting, a family business operating in the Phoenix, Arizona metro area. He has been actively involved in the PDCA for many years and is the President of the local PDCA Chapter, a PDCA Contractor College Instructor, and an EPA Accredited Teacher and Training Manager for the EPA Lead RRP rule.

Is Your Business Fiscally Fit? - Linnea Blair

How do you know if your business is financially healthy? Do you know the Key Performance Indicators (Key Metrics) that you need to monitor each week and month to stay fiscally healthy and on target to reach your annual goals? Beyond that, are you certain your financial reporting gives you accurate and easy to access data to know the answer?

In this 30 minute session we’ll identify a few critical key metrics you need to watch weekly and monthly - and how to make sure your reporting gives you quick access to those numbers so that you can feel confident that your business is on target to achieve your goals.

Project Mobilization - Panel Discussion

You’ve sold the job (yay you!), and now it’s time to deliver. In this session we will discuss best practices and strategies for executing a job from start to finish, covering all of the “to do’s” in between. Come prepared to learn a few things and share your own tips and success stories.

The Science Behind Effective Leadership - Art Snarzyk

Do you want people to truly listen to what you’re telling them? Does your message ever seem to get “lost in translation”? Learn the behavioral science behind what makes people follow your leadership. Expect to walk away with tips and tricks on:

- What makes people tick and how to get them excited and eager to listen and follow through.
- Which buttons to push to motivate different employees (and prospects, and your spouse!)
- The kinds of people you should have in your company so leadership is easier.
- The assets and liabilities of your personal leadership style. How to leverage your natural style and how it can get in your way.

In management and hiring since 1996 and owner of a successful painting company for 9 years, Art knows first-hand the hassle, expense, and headache of trying to hire and develop quality employees. Art is now known as “The Turnover Terminator” for his unique way of helping business owners and managers hire and manage only ideal, top-performing staff.

His consulting company, InnerView Advisors helps service-based businesses across North America. Clients hire him to use his scientifically tested and proven methods to attract, hire and retain the best employees that fit their unique companies. They no longer need to rely on intuition, skewed references, and subjective work history to make hiring decisions.

10 Year Projection - Really? - Linnea Blair

Sometimes it seems difficult to predict where your business will be in even 2 to 3 years, let alone 10 years, but without long term strategic planning, you almost certainly won’t achieve your long term vision for your business and your life. It’s too easy to just make an annual plan without looking out to where it might be taking you, or not taking you in the future. By taking a longer term view, you will know where you need to be 3.5 and 10 years down the line in terms of field staff, overhead personnel and revenue to achieve your goals for owner’s compensation and lifestyle choices.

The president of Advisors On Target, Linnea provides business coaching and consulting services to small business owners who are ready to take action to become effective leaders and run a more profitable and professional business.

Committed to helping PDCA members to grow their business, Advisors On Target has been a PDCA Residential Forum member since 2003 and Linnea has never missed an AST since she first attended in 2002 in Keystone, Wyoming.

Leading the Contracting Experience - Tom Reber

As the leader of your business you should many responsibilities. This session will:

- Show you the 3 Experience Drivers necessary to earn the respect of your clients.
- Help you to differentiate your company from the others and make price less relevant.
- Show you practical ways to create a better client experience immediately.

Tom is a painting contractor turned coach. As co-founder of Jalapeno Paint Werx in Naperville, IL he built one of the Chicago areas most respected residential painting companies. In 2011 he created his personal development and coaching company, MOTOR, where he helps small business owners all throughout the United States and the U.K.

MOTOR is his personal mantra and the mindset he brings to all of his speaking, coaching and writing. It’s a mindset that keeps him fighting and finds a way. It’s a willingness to do the work others are unwilling to do and to always keep faith in your vision. Tom’s mission is simply to help others build stronger lives and businesses.

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Has your advertising and marketing plan grown stagnant? Learn about the latest trends in the digital world as well as some tried and true practices that still produce results, and walk away with a gameplan to get your marketing efforts back to peak performance.

Suhaiba is the Business Manager of John Neill Painting & Decorating, a family-owned business based in the suburbs of Philadelphia celebrating its 40th year in business. Her responsibilities include advertising & marketing, financials, human resources, payroll, and business planning. She is also the immediate President of the PDCA Residential Forum.

Action Planning
“The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action.” – Herbert Spencer

We will dedicate the end of each day to action planning. Putting together a workable action plan while your ideas are still fresh will lead to greater success with implementation upon returning to your business.

Save The Date
PDCA Expo 2016
March 9-12 – New Orleans, LA

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PDCA RESIDENTIAL FORUM PRESENTS
AST 16
ADVANCED SHOP TALK
“LEADERSHIP - SETTING SAIL TO SUCCESS”
Join us for 2 full days to network with your peers as you work both IN and ON your business.

When: July 17-18, 2015
Where: Renaissance Providence Downtown Hotel
5 Avenue of the Arts
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Conference Schedule

Thursday – July 16, 2015
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm Registration Open
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm Welcome Reception sponsored by Benjamin Moore

Friday – July 17, 2015
7:00 am – 8:00 am Continental Breakfast and Registration for AST 16
8:00 am – 8:15 am Welcome and Opening
8:15 am – 9:45 am Servant Leadership
Diane Walsh, presenter
9:45 am – 10:15 am Refreshment Break
10:15 am – 10:45 am “Short” - Scheduling Estimates
Mike Kelly, presenter
10:45 am – 12:15 pm The Pitfalls of Estimating
Linnea Blair, presenter
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm Lunch
1:15 pm – 1:45 pm “Short” - Fiscal Fit Test
Linnea Blair, presenter
1:45 pm - 2:45 pm Panel Discussion - Project Mobilization
Scott Lollar, moderator
2:45 pm – 3:15 pm Refreshment Break
3:15 pm - 4:45 pm The Science Behind Effective Leadership
Art Snarzyk, presenter
4:45 pm – 5:00 pm Action Planning & Wrap Up
5:00 pm - 5:30 pm Board Meeting with Sponsors
6:00 pm - 8:30 pm Networking Reception sponsored by Sherwin Williams

Saturday – July 18, 2015
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm Action Planning & Wrap Up
5:00 pm - 5:30 pm Board Meeting with Sponsors
6:00 pm - 8:30 pm Networking Reception sponsored by Sherwin Williams

When:
July 17-18, 2015

Where:
Renaissance Providence Downtown Hotel
5 Avenue of the Arts
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
REGISTRATION COSTS
(includes all materials, breakfast, lunch and snacks)
Member Pricing
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PDCA Residential Forum
Membership - Join Today! | $95 | | |

TOTAL DUE

PAYMENT OPTIONS
To register online and pay with a credit card go to:
www.pdcareasidentialforum.org

To pay by credit card, fax completed form to Tony Kozak at:
(716) 844-8174

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

#2 Ask Questions

Good listeners also know when to speak up and ask questions. If you need more detail, or want some clarity on something you heard in a conference, company meeting, at an estimate or even on the jobsite, don’t be shy about asking. My motto is: it’s better to ask and be right than to not ask and be wrong.

#3 Don’t Be Afraid To Speak Up When You Feel Ready

For those of you who have known me for the past decade, you know that I can come across as a very quiet and reserved person. In my early days, I was often reluctant to speak up, even if I had information that was relevant and potentially helpful. Don’t be shy like I was. If you’re in a meeting and you have an idea, share it. Great leaders know that the key to success is collaboration. Your ideas may not always be implemented, but they may lead to finding a solution that may not have otherwise been arrived upon.

#1 Listen

I know I’ve told this story before, so this time I’ll keep it short and sweet. At my very first AST in Annapolis, Maryland, I did very little talking and focused primarily on listening. Your industry peers have so much knowledge, and even better are willing to share, so be sure to keep your ears in action.

LESSONS FROM A LEADER
(Still in Training)

By: Suhaiba Neil, John Neil Painting

BY MY OWN DEFINITION, I’ve never really considered myself a “leader.” To me, a leader was someone who enjoyed standing front and center, wasn’t afraid to give orders/directions and actually liked having the final say in big decisions.

Then at AST 14 in Baltimore a few years ago, I was introduced to a new definition of a leader—someone who helps someone else through something.

A light bulb went off for me as those words sank in. If there’s one thing I love to do, it’s to help others (I often have trouble saying no, but that’s another article for another day.) With my new definition in hand, I embraced the leadership role I had been given with my arms open a little bit wider. As of this month, I now have ten years in the painting industry under my belt, and while I still don’t quite consider myself a full blown leader, I’m getting there and thought I would share a few of the lessons I’ve learned along the way.

So here goes...

Getting to the Renaissance Downtown Hotel from the Airport:

Call the Renaissance Providence Downtown Hotel directly at 1-866-630-0704 and ask for the special PDCA Residential Forum AST 16 Group rate of $159 for a standard room or $179 for a deluxe room. Or make your hotel reservations on line. Simply click on the following link to book your hotel room. Or make your hotel reservations on line. Simply click on the following link to book your hotel room.

Hotel reservations must be received on or before 5 pm (Eastern Standard Time), Monday, June 22, 2015.

Getting to the Renaissance Downtown Hotel from the Airport:

* The Renaissance Downtown Hotel does not provide a shuttle service

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Questions? Please call the Residential Forum office at (716) 844-8174 Office hours 8:30 am – 4:30 pm EST or email tonykozak@pdcaresidentialforum.org
#4  **FIND A MENTOR**

If you don’t already have one in your current work situation, find a mentor in the industry that possesses the qualities as a leader that you wish to emulate. No two leaders are alike, and finding someone who matches your desired leadership style and staying in touch on a regular basis will help you grow leaps and bounds in a much shorter time frame. If you’re already a “seasoned” leader, consider taking an up-and-coming team member or non-competing peer under your wing.

#5 & #6  **STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE & STEP UP SOONER RATHER THAN LATER**

I may have confessed this already, but I would have never volunteered to be the vice president and then president of the Residential Forum at the ripe old age of 34. One of my mentors saw potential in me that I hadn’t myself recognize yet. And while I was nervous about leading a group of peers at such a young age (and with many less years of experience than many of them already had under their belts), I stepped up to be the vice president and then president of the Residential Forum at 34.

#7  **FIND AN ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR YOU**

I have attended numerous organizational seminars and presentations over the years and my biggest take away is that there is no one “right way” to organize your office, etc. Being able to find things when you need them, however, is extremely important and will save you time (and your sanity) over the long haul. Find a system that works for you and then stick with it. If you’re absolutely terrible at this, ask someone else you know that is highly organized to give you suggestions. If you’re visual and need to keep things out so you can see them daily, find a set up that allows for this, but without clutter or piles building up on your desk. If you require a clear desk at all times to function, find a separate space to house files, etc. and just bring things into your space as needed.

#8  **GET OVER YOUR FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING ASAP**

As a leader, it is inevitable that you will have to speak in front of a group of people, and most likely on somewhat of a recurring basis. I, like most, was shaking in my boots the first time I had to present at AST, but here’s the funny thing that most people who have overcome their fear of public speaking fail to mention. Once you get over that fear and get through that first presentation, most people actually look forward to the opportunity to speak again. I’d even go so far as to say that they’d willing volunteer the next time the opportunity presents itself. It happened to me and I’ve seen it happen to others. There’s a rush that comes with being in front of a room and sharing your knowledge, and the more you do it, the more you crave it. So start with something small – a short presentation in front of a small group of peers – and before you know it you’ll be ready to address any size crowd on a topic you are passionate about without batting an eyelash (you may still get butterflies though).

#9  **STAY HUMBLE**

This can be a tough one depending on your personality type and DISC profile, but I promise you it is well worth the extra effort. If there’s one thing I can’t stand, it’s someone who thinks they know it all, and isn’t shy about letting you know it too. Even after ten years in the industry full time (twice the recognized standard for mastering a chosen profession), I still don’t consider myself a true expert with regards to anything. I am constantly learning, and sometimes unlearning and relearning, to be the best I can be.

#10  **LEARN HOW TO PROPERLY ACCEPT A COMPLIMENT**

While humility is an important quality all great leaders possess (or should), there is nothing wrong with accepting praise when praise is due. Believe it or not, this is actually a lesson I learned from my younger brother not that long ago. Usually, when someone pays me a compliment, I deflect it with a comment like “well, so and so helped me…“ or “oh, it was no big deal…“ And while I don’t remember what prompted his lesson, I do remember the lesson well. We were standing in my parent’s living room and after my usual deflection technique, he said to me, “Do you know that the proper way to accept acompliment is to simply say thank you and smile?” No need to tell the back story, no need to make
“The only person you should try to be better than is the person you were yesterday.” – and stay on top of maintaining balance in your life now. And in the words of the amazing late Maya Angelou – “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Great leaders strive to leave everyone they encounter feeling good at the end of their interaction. Here’s to continuing to grow and becoming the kind of leader that leaves everyone they meet with a smile on their face.

Join Us

We need your help to keep the Forum fresh and new. Whether it’s contributing to the e-news, joining the AST planning committee, or taking an official seat on the board, the door is always open for members to get involved. Please consider making a small contribution of your time to lend a hand and propel the Residential Forum into the future.

Do you love seeing a new issue of the Painter’s Rag in your inbox?

Do you look forward to making the trip to AST every year?

Do you find the articles and tips in the monthly e-news helpful and relevant?

Have you ever considered joining the Residential Forum Board?

Contact Executive Director Tony Kozak at: 716-844-8174 or email Tonykozak@roadrunner.com

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