From the President

How is your customer service?

We're all in the customer service business! We just happen to deliver painting as a service along the way as well. Because of this, I find myself being incredibly focused on the service I get as a consumer. And the reality is, a lot of it is terrible. For instance, the day last week when I had the oil changed in my car. Being new to the current town I live in, I pulled into a local no brand oil change business. For liability reasons, a service tech has to pull your car into the building. Mine was friendly but I watched in horror as he sat in my car and pulled it in with no seat or floor protection. Now, his presumably oily pants, shirt and shoes had contaminated my car. Some are good at voicing their concerns. I am not. First of all, the damage was done before I could even open my mouth. Secondly, I usually complain with my money. I don't go back. No Yelp or Google reviews. No hate mail. It's just a one and done deal.

The other thing that happens at these "in and out" shops is that they come out and show you 10 additional things that your car needs. The inexpensive oil change is really just a way to get you through the door so they can try to up-sell you. Well my car needed a cabin air filter and an engine air filter. Total cost was $60. Now I usually accept these items because one, I am pretty lazy and don't want to do this myself (although I could), but more importantly, I know the value of my time. So to go to an auto parts store and buy these items at 40% less than they are offering and then install them myself is not my preferred option. What do you think I said however, when they offered me the additional items? No Thank You. And no to my e-mail. Phone number. Frequent fliers club. No to everything. You will never see me again because you did not treat my vehicle with respect!

The owner of this place is clearly in the oil change business, not the customer service business. He went to all the trouble of securing a building. Installing all sorts of expensive equipment in it. Marketing his business. Hiring employees. Surely incurred all sorts of overhead, but forgot that all of that would be a waste of money if he did not think through all of the things that might be important to customers besides an efficient and complete oil change!

I wonder how many of us do the same thing? How do you answer the phone? How do your team members look? Even if your van is 12 years old, is it clean or does it still have winter salt on it in July? Do you ask permission before you invade peoples spaces? Use their toilet? Or their microwave to heat your lunch!? (To my horror I see this all too often on a casual site visit!). Do you say you're welcome? Do you ask if the project is coming along to their satisfaction? Do you ask them is there anything that you could do better? Are there any concerns? (Yes. Put plastic on the seat of my car and the floor too). Most people are familiar with Chick Fil A and their over the top customer service. Their response to every inquiry is always "It will be my pleasure!" I ask for all sorts of extra items so I can hear it over and over again "It will be my pleasure." Because it suits my nature, I use "How can I serve You?" In person or on the phone, and I mean it.

This July at AST 19 in Minneapolis, Marc Poulos will be talking more about customer service. Marc began his career as a painter at the Ritz Carlton in Chicago. And I'd venture to guess that he learned a little about World Class service while there! Then he took those lessons into his own company when he decided to become a customer service expert. .........who happens to be a painting contractor. You won't want to miss his presentation and all the other amazing peer to peer presentations we have planned for you this year. It's always easy to find and "excuse" not to make the trip, but decide now that you won't fall into that trap. In fact, register now! You'll be glad you did.

Scott Lollar
The 2018 PDCA EXPO was another great conference. Different feel than our Residential Forum AST (Advanced Shop Talk), but worthy in its own right. About 429 attendees (up a little from 2017), with 64 first-timers. We were exposed to excellent education and fantastic fellowship as usual.

Steve Skodak, Chris Shank, Marsha, and the whole PDCA national staff were in full force, and put on a great event. I also want to thank our national Board Members, past and present, for their dedication to thinking through and making the hard decisions to move us forward as a clan.

The new branding was widely on display, and explained as not a name change, but a new brand aimed at new member prospects, especially those coming to us through the web and it’s many facets.

I wish I could have met more attendees! The entrepreneurship intelligence in those hallways and at the gatherings was amazing. These connections and the great old and new PDCA educational presenters have been very valuable to my business over the many years. This year was no different.
**Tim Clegg**, the owner of *Hurt Donuts*, a fast growing, viral newsmaker, was the keynote speaker. The presentation was interesting and had a different format. He spoke from the podium with no visual media, then sat down with *Steve Skodak* for a question & answer session.

There was a great emphasis on the *painting labor market*, and many inferences to company culture. I gained may nuggets on how to find, attract, and keep good people including working closer with Gen-Xers & Millennials. *Building a great culture with working values of being others-centric* was a theme I noticed well. Nobody said it exactly in the seminars I attended, but emotional intelligence is one of the obvious keys to coaching and leadership.

*Educating a new labor market* was a minor theme within the presentations, and a major theme as a trade industry group. The *PDCA Certificate Program* in development is two-fold. The first is a standardized on-boarding *“best-practice”* program for readying painters. The second is a *charitable outreach* to provide the program and instruction to partner nonprofit organizations. The cost should be minimal and is designed to attract people to the industry. The desire is to have it be the agreed upon on-boarding system for the industry. I have a lot of hope in it, and I am involved with guiding its development. Interested in designing and giving feedback on the content? Contact *myself* or *Danny* at PDCA National.

Our own Residential Forum Board Member *Diane Walsh* received the *Associate of the Year*, and *yours truly* won the *Residential Exterior Award*. Thank you Diane, for all your hard work for the industry, and I thank my crews for a job well done on a difficult job, and with profit!

I hope you have the end of July set aside for *AST 19*, where residential contractors share best practices in an intimate setting. We’ll be in *Minneapolis* this summer, and I can’t wait for another round of great business takeaways, fun times, and hanging out with the best of the industry.

**Contract well!**
Big congrats to all of our Residential Forum Members who won Picture It Painted Professionally Awards this year at the PDCA Expo. And an extra round of applause for Diane Walsh, the much deserved winner of this year’s Associate Member of the Year.

Residential Exterior – MTS Painting
Residential Restoration Exterior – Nick Slavik Painting & Restoration
Commercial Exterior – Paris Painting
Commercial Restoration Exterior – Dan Brady Painting
2018 L.E. Travis Jr., Craftsman of the Year
Nick Slavik Painting & Restoration

“The Craftsman of the Year Award is presented for overall project excellence and superior craftsmanship. Congratulations on setting an example in our industry and for inspiring others by your dedication to your craft, and by your willingness to assist and mentor other business owners along the way.”
2018 Humanitarian Award – Dan Brady Painting

“The Humanitarian Award is presented in recognition of extraordinary compassionate contributions that may or may not be painting and decorating industry related. Dan Brady raised over $100,000 swimming for Habitat for Humanity, funding the 10th home for the Depot Neighborhood, providing safe and affordable housing.”

2018 Associate Member of the Year – Diane Walsh, ShurTech Brands

“To PDCA, Diane has been a great supporter at both the national and local levels, as well as the PDCA forums. Her dedication makes her a true PDCA champion. Congratulations to Diane Walsh, the 2018 PDCA Associate of the Year.”
AS a residential painting contractor, I must fulfill many different roles in the effective running of our business. Do you often feel pulled in so many directions that things just seem a bit out of control? Let's face it, as business owners, there will be times that things are going to hit the fan and be a bit hectic. But is being stressed all the time too much the norm for your life rather than the exception?

In M. Scott Peck's best seller, "The Road Less Traveled", his very first line in the book is: “Life is difficult”. My first thought at seeing that was: “WELL, DUH!” But in reality, I often go through my life thinking that things should always be great, smooth and easy going. Peck goes on further to say that, in facing up to reality, we are going to come against difficulties in any endeavor and that if we will face up to these difficulties, we will become more effective in all our pursuits.

I have spoken with many fellow contractors about the stress running a small business. Many of us, myself included, have dreams for our businesses yet often we do nothing practical, on a continuing basis, to methodically work towards making those dreams become a reality. There is an old saying: “The sign of true insanity is to continue doing the same thing over and over while expecting different results!”

Now let's get one thing straight and clear as a bell... You will hit what you're aiming for... and if you're not aiming for anything, it is guaranteed, you are going to hit it!

PDCA is all about helping you with your business. PDCA is about hope and a vision for those who are willing to implement the systems. PDCA is about advice and personal help that will come from relationships with fellow contractors willing to share their experiences with you. PDCA is also about you sharing your experiences and mentoring someone else.

The biggest hurdle in my business and your business and everyone's business is the #1 STUMBLING BLOCK for all of us and that is... The Failure to Implement or FTI. Do not succumb to FTI it will sap your energy and kill your momentum. Most stress in our lives is caused when reality does not meet our expectations. If you what to change your circumstances and your stress level then you must decide to put into practice what you learn.

Keep your ears and eyes peeled! There is no reason for you to re-invent the proverbial wheel with your business. Check the estimating guides, get residential or commercial certification, attend and, better yet, lead at your local chapter meetings, tap into a mentor, go to the council and national conventions, and attend AST in Minneapolis this July. Believe me, all you need is right in front of you in PDCA, ripe for the picking! Don't give in to FTI! Do your best to put into practice what you hear and see and your stress will go down. I enjoy my business now and you can too! Go for it!
19th Annual

Advanced Shop Talk
Where Contractors Share Best Practices

Minneapolis
July 27-28, 2018

SCHEDULE & REGISTRATION
# Conference Schedule

## Thursday – July 26, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm - 5:00 pm</td>
<td>Registration Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 pm - 9:30 pm</td>
<td>Welcome Reception Sponsored by Benjamin Moore</td>
</tr>
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## Friday – July 27, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 am – 8:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast and Registration for AST 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 am – 8:15 am</td>
<td>Welcome and Ice Breaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15 am – 9:45 am</td>
<td>Good Employees Are Hard To Find S. Holtz, presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 am - 10:15 am</td>
<td>Refreshment Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 am – 10:45 am</td>
<td>Contractor Spotlight Preparing For The Unexpected J. Hamberg, presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 am - 12:00 pm</td>
<td>Be The Hero M. Poulos, presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 pm – 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch - sponsored by Federated Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 pm – 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Spotlight Drive S.A.F.E. J. West, Federated Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 pm - 3:00 pm</td>
<td>Sponsor Speed Dating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm – 3:30 pm</td>
<td>Refreshment Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm - 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Technology in the Workplace Panel Discussion S. Lollar, moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 pm</td>
<td>Wrap Up/Workforce Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 pm - 5:00 pm</td>
<td>Board Meeting with Sponsors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 pm - 10:00 pm</td>
<td>Dinner Boat Cruise Sponsored by Sherwin Williams</td>
</tr>
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</table>

## Saturday – July 28, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 am – 8:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 am – 8:30 am</td>
<td>Awards and Election of Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am – 9:00 am</td>
<td>Contractor Spotlight How I Got From There To Here N. LoGrasso, presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am – 10:30 am</td>
<td>Modern Apprenticeship N. Slavik, presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am – 11:00 am</td>
<td>Refreshment Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 am – 11:30 am</td>
<td>Contractor Spotlight Failing Into The Future Of Painting J. Paris, presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 am – 12:15 pm</td>
<td>“Twins” - Big vs. Small Panel Discussion S. Lollar, moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 pm – 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 pm - 3:00 pm</td>
<td>Business Systems - Creating, Implementing &amp; Growing Your Business J. Sommers, presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm – 3:30 pm</td>
<td>Action Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm – 4:00 pm</td>
<td>Conference Wrap Up</td>
</tr>
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**Renaissance Minneapolis Hotel, the Depot - Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**“FOCUS YOUR VISION IN THE TWIN CITIES”**

July 27-28, 2018
**AST 19 Registration Form**

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**REGISTRATION COSTS**
(includes all materials, breakfast, lunch and snacks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Pricing</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AST 19 2-Day Conference - Early Bird*</td>
<td>$345</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AST 19 2-Day Conference - Full Price</td>
<td>$395</td>
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<td>$395</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Attendee(s) - same company</td>
<td>$295</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Non-Member Pricing</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AST 19 2-Day Conference - Early Bird*</td>
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<td>$295</td>
<td>___</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**PDCA Residential Forum Membership - Join Today!** | $100 | ___ | ___ |

**TOTAL DUE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAYMENT OPTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To register online and pay with a credit card go to: <strong>AST 19 Registration</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Marne Road
Buffalo, NY 14215

*Early Bird Pricing Through May 23rd*

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**Hotel Reservations:**

To make hotel reservations by phone please contact Renaissance Reservations at **(612) 375-1700** or **866-211-4611** and ask for the PDCA Residential Forum 19th Annual AST Conference Room Block to get the group rate of $159.00 for a Standard King or Queen/Queen Room.

Or make your hotel reservations online. Simply click on the following link to book your room. **Reservations**

---

**Hotel reservations must be received on or before 5 pm (Eastern Time), Thursday, July 5, 2018.**

*Renaissance Minneapolis Hotel, The Depot*

225 3rd Avenue South

Minneapolis MN 55401

*renaissance-minneapolis-hotel-depot*

**Questions?** Please call the Residential Forum office at **(716) 844-8174**

or email **tonykozak@pdcaresidentialforum.org**
Editor’s Note:
Suhaiba Neill
John Neill Painting

Some of you may remember the piece I wrote around this same time last year about how much I regretted not making the trip to San Diego for the PDCA EXPO in 2017. And for those who know me well, you know I’m not one to make the same mistake twice :) So, this year when registration opened, I signed myself up and booked my flight to Galveston, and I’m so glad I did.

Aside from catching up with some old friends, I made some new ones as well, and picked up some valuable business education over the course of the event. Some of it was new information – like the fact that by 2020, MILLENNIALS WILL MAKE UP 50% OF THE WORKFORCE, which will bring with it some changes in the way we Gen Xers and Baby Boomers hire, train and lead in the future (thanks for the tips Art Snarzyk). And some of it was a much needed refresher – like Rick Holtz’s straight forward and effective way to ATTRACT AND RETAIN GREAT EMPLOYEES (he’ll be speaking about this again at AST 19 if you missed it at Expo) and Bill Silverman’s reminder that not only is it ok to HIT RESET ON YOUR BUSINESS, sometimes it’s what’s necessary to get you to the next level. Think “reset, remodel, replace”. Reset the vision for your business, remodel as needed, and replace the brute force with systems and processes.

And finally, I used the time away to hit reset on myself. Armed with plenty of things to work on, two business books I’ve been wanting to read, and my kindle, a dear friend encouraged me to crack open my kindle and enjoy the downtime. As business owners with so much on our plates and to do lists, it’s easy to just keep going. Oftentimes however, switching gears and focusing on something other than our businesses is what leads to those unexpected “lightbulb” moments. So, in the late afternoons before the evening activities began, I sat on my balcony, put my feet up, read a book and let myself exhale. This allowed me to come home rejuvenated and armed with a to do list so I could get back down to working ON the business.

I know many of us like to attend EXPO and AST when they’re in “big” or “fun” cities, and may even have thought that Galveston was a bit of an odd choice (the view from my balcony should prove otherwise – it’s a lovely beach town, and being from the East Coast it was literally a breath of fresh air in the middle of winter). Some of you may feel the same way about Minneapolis, but I can tell you from experience that you’ll be pleasantly surprised. So come to AST this year for the friendships, the ah ha moments, the chance to relax, recharge and reset yourself as well as your business, and for the fun backdrop of Minneapolis in July (this is not somewhere you’d want to be in February). I truly hope to see you there. And if you need a good book recommendation, I’ve got plenty to share.

Yours truly,
Suhaiba Neill
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