

# professional painter

Spring 2002

PQI's magazine for quality-conscious contractors



**2**

**Knowledge of Color Can Be a Great Asset to the Professional Painter**

**6**

**Painting Metal So That It "Wears Like Iron"**

**10**

**Liquid & Additives: Paint's Carriers & Enhancers**

**14**

**Exterior Paint Jobs: Avoiding Premature Failures**



For more information on paints and coatings, visit the PQI Web site at [www.paintquality.com](http://www.paintquality.com)

# A GREAT FINISH



## *starts with a* **GREAT PRIMER**

A good quality primer makes a big difference on wood. And top quality latex primers provide outstanding long-term adhesion and protection.

☞ The panels (below left) are the proof. Panel A was primed, half with top quality acrylic primer and half with top quality alkyd primer. Panel B was also primed, half with ordinary acrylic primer and half with ordinary alkyd primer. Then, both panels were painted with a quality acrylic topcoat.

☞ See how the ordinary primers failed and caused their top coats to crack and peel? Even the quality alkyd primer is deteriorating. But the 100% acrylic primer (left, Panel A) is still protecting – still providing an excellent base coat for the acrylic topcoat to adhere to for years to come.

☞ What's the lesson? Don't leave quality to chance by priming or painting with anything less than a top quality acrylic latex, start to finish.

# Editor's Note

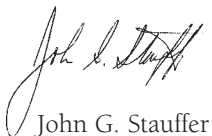
Most people are looking forward to a relaxing summer right about now. But if you're like most painting contractors, you're looking forward to a season with hardly a minute of downtime. We've included articles in this issue of *Professional Painter* that will help keep you busy during prime exterior painting season. Before we get to them, however, let me take a minute to acquaint you with the people behind the pages of this magazine.

"What experience does a chemical company like Rohm and Haas have with paint?" you might ask. Or, "How do we accumulate such specific information about paints and painting?" Rohm and Haas is a leading supplier of raw materials (such as the acrylics used in acrylic latex paints) to the paint and coatings industry. This is a major part of our business.

As part of our product development efforts, we have accumulated a great deal of information on everything from testing of interior and exterior paints for performance, to formulating all types of coatings, to understanding the markets for them. The articles you read here are based on that research, which has been gathered over the course of more than 50 years!

Speaking about those articles, you'll find the last in our series on the ingredients of paint in this issue – this time, we focus on liquid and additives. We've also included articles that will help you stay a step ahead of your competition: tips on how to present a professional image, and how to sell up. And, since it's exterior painting season, we've got features on several aspects of exterior jobs, including surface preparation, paint failures, painting metal, and color selection.

We hope you find the articles helpful as you prepare for the busy season ahead. And, if you need additional information, visit our website at: [www.paintquality.com](http://www.paintquality.com).



John G. Stauffer  
Editor



# Contents



**2 Knowledge of Color**  
Can Be an Asset to Your Business

**6 Painting Metal**  
Proper Surface Preparation Is Key to a Long-Lasting Job



**9 Exterior Surface Preparation**  
Why It's So Important

**10 What's in a Can of Quality Paint?**  
Liquid & Additives: The Carriers and Enhancers

**12 Selling Up**  
Why Top Quality Paint Is a Good Investment

**14 Exterior Painting**  
How to Avoid Early Failures

**17 Smart Marketing**  
Image is (Almost) Everything



# Knowledge of COLOR

can be a great asset to the Professional Painter

**The decision to do exterior painting often involves both practical and aesthetic considerations.**

Typically, it is a paint failure such as an area of faded, peeling or flaking paint that motivates a homeowner or building manager to seek bids from painting contractors.

But at that point, it is often the prospect of having a whole new color scheme that excites and inspires a customer – and sometimes determines which contractor will get the job.

With a good handle on even the basics of color and color schemes, you can better position yourself to win new business. Experience has shown that discussing color is a powerful way to sell!

## **Where It All Begins: The Color Wheel**

Unless you were born with the aesthetic instincts of a Michelangelo, your study of color should begin with the color wheel (see below), which shows how various colors relate to one another in visually pleasing combinations.

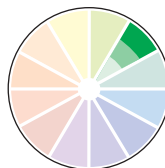
With a color wheel in hand, you can devise all sorts of attractive exterior paint schemes that will win raves from your customers.



### **NOTE:**

Black, white and gray do not appear on the color wheel because they are not technically colors, but rather, “neutrals,” which are important in creating contrast in virtually any color scheme. Brown also cannot be found on the color wheel: It is made by combining any two complementary colors, that is, colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel.

**MONOCHROMATIC**



**ANALOGOUS**



**COMPLEMENTARY**



**SPLIT-COMPLEMENTARY**



**DOUBLE-SPLIT COMPLEMENTARY**



**TRIADIC**



Most successful color schemes fall into one of the following general categories:

- Monochromatic
- Adjacent (or Analogous)
- Complementary
- Split-complementary
- Double-split complementary
- Triadic

A *monochromatic* color system uses only a single color or “hue” (for example, green or blue) – but in two or more “values” (value refers to the lightness or darkness of a color). A combination of light and dark blue would create a monochromatic color scheme.

An *adjacent* color scheme combines two or more colors that are next to each other on the color wheel. In this system, one color is usually dominant, either in the extent of its use or in its value. For example, green and yellow-green might be used together.

A *complementary* color scheme combines two colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel. Again, one is often dominant. Green with red highlights is a classic complementary combination.

In a *split-complementary* color system, instead of combining two colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel, three colors are employed.





Typically, the second and third colors are those that are adjacent to the color directly across the color wheel (see illustration, page 2). Blue with yellow-orange and red-orange would be such a combination.

A *double-split complementary* system uses colors that are adjacent to two colors that reside directly across from each other on the color wheel. Thus this combination involves four colors – such as the two colors on either side of blue and orange.

A *triadic* color scheme incorporates three colors that are equidistant on the color wheel. Here, again, one color is typically dominant. Blue, red and yellow would be a triadic color combination.

To become conversant with these terms, try driving around a neighborhood or looking at some of your own exterior paint jobs to see if you can identify the color schemes used. (One tip: narrow the possibilities by counting the number of different colors you see.) Soon, your color vocabulary will take on a whole new dimension. More important, you'll get a better "feel" for what works, what doesn't, and why.



### Offering Color Advice

When it comes time to actually advise a customer on exterior color choices, the first rule of thumb is to tread lightly. Color preference is a very personal matter, and your customer may already have a vague – or definite – color combination in mind.

Be sure to ask.

If, on the other hand, your customer is uncertain about color choice, asks for help in choosing

between two or more options, or is wide open to suggestions, put your knowledge of color to work.

A good starting point is to look for clues about your customer's color preferences. If you are inside your customer's home or building, the décor may telegraph his or her taste. Most of the time, you'll be safe if you stay in the same palette as the interior wall colors or furnishings when suggesting exterior paint colors.

Should the building be in a planned community, a newer subdivision, an office park or a historical district, be sure to inquire if there are any restrictions on exterior color choice. These are becoming increasingly common, as PQI discovered while crisscrossing North America during our latest "Prettiest Painted Places" competition.

### Consider the Architecture

After discerning your customer's color preferences and any restrictions that might apply, consider the style of home or building you are about to paint. Certain styles of architecture look best when painted a particular color or in a particular type of color scheme.

Dignified colonial or Greek Revival structures, for example, often look best in very simple paint schemes – such as bright white with contrasting black accents. Conversely, Victorian homes, with their elaborate gingerbread, spring to life with highly complex triadic or complementary color treatments.

If many of your customers are concentrated in historical districts or vintage neighborhoods, consider investing some time researching the exterior color schemes that were popular

there in years past. Your knowledge and counsel will be much appreciated by tradition-minded residents and business owners, giving you a strong leg up on your competition.

### Look at the Big Picture

Before finalizing your suggestions or recommendations, make sure that you envision the paint job in the context of its surroundings. Any exterior color scheme you recommend should be compatible with the “fixed” colors around the house or building – in other words, the colors of architectural or landscape features that either cannot, or will not, be painted.

Some of the things to take into account include the color of the roof, any wood that will be left natural, unpainted masonry such as brick or stonework, even the color of plantings, especially if they are evergreen. These fixed colors will function much like accents in your paint scheme, so they must be factored into your color equation.

It is also wise to take note of the color schemes of neighboring homes and buildings, especially those that are right next door. Your customer may not want an exterior color scheme that is identical to the neighbors’, but if the structures are in the same “visual field,” all the color schemes will look best if they are compatible.

### Continue Your Study of Color

In today’s highly competitive marketplace, the study of color is not simply an exercise. Instead, knowledge of color is an ideal way to differentiate yourself from your competitors.

Increasingly, customers want more than technical skill from a painting contractor – they also want sound advice on color that can help bring out the full beauty of their homes and buildings.

So study up on color theory and “paint your business green”! ■

# Learn More About COLOR



Because color is so important to the success of the professional painter, The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute has developed a unique card deck called “Decorating with Color” that serves double-duty as both a contractor teaching aid and a sales aid for use with customers.

The handy, pocket-sized card deck has more than 50 pages of tips on the use of color in exterior and interior painting. Included is a wealth of information on color schemes, color selection, color psychology, sheen levels, decorative painting techniques, and much more. Fully laminated, “Decorating with Color” is stain resistant and designed to last.

Copies of “Decorating with Color” are available for \$7.95. They can be ordered using the reply card at the back of this magazine, or by writing to The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute, 727 Norristown Rd, P.O. Box 904, Spring House, PA 19477-0904. A personal or company check should accompany your order. Allow four weeks for delivery.



# Painting

Proper surface preparation, plus the right choice of primer and paint, is key to a long-lasting paint job.

When it comes to painting the exterior of a residential, light commercial or commercial building, nearly every structure, regardless of whether it's constructed of wood, brick, stucco, vinyl or other material, is probably going to have some metal to paint, ranging from gutters and downspouts to railings and light posts.

To help ensure that these metal surfaces will “wear like iron,” The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute offers the following recommendations for painting two of the most common metal surfaces: ferrous and galvanized. For tips on painting aluminum, see the Spring 2001 issue of *Professional Painter*.

## Ferrous Metals

Ferrous metals are those that either contain or derive from iron. They are commonly used in the manufacture of castings, fabricated sheet steel, and wrought iron. With the exception of stainless steel, all of these metals will rust, which can eat away at the metal as well as spoil its appearance and undermine any applied coatings.

Rusting can start almost immediately when unprotected ferrous metal is exposed to rain, snow, dew or moisture in any form. Your objective, then, is to stop any rusting that has begun and to keep moisture and air from interfacing with the metal after painting.

Accordingly, ferrous metals call for very thorough and meticulous surface preparation. Anything less may seriously compromise the appearance and durability of the finished paint job, not to mention the integrity of the metal itself.



## Preparing the Surface

The first consideration when preparing a ferrous metal surface in a noncorrosive atmosphere for painting is to remove any loose rust that is present, as well as any peeling paint.

On smaller jobs, use a chisel-style scraper and a hand-held wire brush. Use the scraper to take off heavy rust and loose paint, then follow up by wire-brushing the surface to remove as much of the rust residue as possible. It is not necessary to remove every bit of rust and take the surface down to bare metal, but rather to remove as much rust as these methods will allow.

# Metal *so that it 'wears like iron'*

On larger jobs, power wire-brushing or disk sanding with aluminum oxide paper is effective. Whether you use hand tools or power equipment to remove rust, be sure to wear personal protective equipment, including eye protection and a good dust mask.

After wire-brushing, the surface will be covered with small particles of loose rust and dust, which should be removed before any coating is applied. Brush these particles off with a soft-bristle brush, then scrub the surface with a detergent-and-water solution, followed by a thorough rinsing with clean water.

Surface preparation should not be omitted just because an iron or steel surface is new. New ferrous metal often has mill oil on it or small amounts of rust that are not readily visible. Not removing these before applying a coating could result in premature failure of the paint job.



## Timing of Priming Is Critical

Once a ferrous metal surface is free from rust and other impurities, priming should be done as quickly as possible. This timing is vital because rust can begin to re-form on iron or steel if the surface is exposed for as little as a day or two. If that happens, you'll have to prepare the surface again.

When painting ferrous metal, it is important to apply a top quality metal primer because it must perform two vital functions: provide the bond between the topcoat and the metal, and inhibit corrosion. This is a point you should not compromise.

When priming ferrous metal:

**DO:** Use a quality exterior rust-inhibitive primer.

**DO:** Apply the primer at the recommended spread rate in order to achieve adequate film thickness, which directly impacts corrosion resistance.

**DO NOT:** Thin the primer before application, unless recommended by the manufacturer.

**DO:** Consider applying a second coat of primer for maximum corrosion resistance.

Top quality acrylic latex corrosion-inhibitive primers work well in applications where the metal is not exposed to heavily corrosive atmospheres, such as acidic or salt air. Unlike oil-based or solvent-based primers, they can be applied immediately after cleaning the surface, even if it is still slightly wet. Zinc-rich and zinc chromate epoxy and alkyd primers are more appropriate for more highly corrosive settings.

Selecting the right topcoat is also important when painting ferrous metals. A high quality acrylic latex paint is generally a good choice because it can



last as much as two to four times longer than conventional alkyd paints without serious cracking or fading, has a much quicker drying time, and is easier to handle and clean up.

## Galvanized Metal

Galvanized metal is iron or steel that has a thin coating of zinc on it to help prevent rusting, and it is commonly used for gutters, downspouts and flashing.

If the galvanized surface is new or unweathered, wash and thoroughly rinse it before painting. This step is necessary to clean off any zinc chromate or residual oil left from the galvanizing process, which otherwise can interfere with adhesion of the paint.



Apply a quality exterior acrylic latex corrosion-inhibitive primer for best performance. However, if there are no signs of rust, a top quality exterior 100% acrylic latex paint can be applied to new galvanized metal without a primer.

Oil, alkyd and vinyl latex paints, however, should **never** be applied directly to bare galvanized metal without first applying a corrosion-inhibitive primer. Without an appropriate primer, these coatings can lose their adhesion to this substrate, sometimes in less than a year.

If the galvanized surface is weathered and unpainted, clean and rinse off any dirt and remove any rust with a non-metallic scouring pad. Then apply a corrosion-inhibitive metal primer and top quality exterior 100% acrylic latex paint.



If it is previously painted, carefully remove any rust that is present and all loose and peeling paint with a wire brush. Avoid cutting through the layer of zinc galvanizing. Then wash the surface with a detergent-and-water solution, rinse it thoroughly, and apply a corrosion-inhibitive metal primer followed by a 100% exterior acrylic latex paint.

### How Many Coats?

When it comes to the number of coats of primer and paint to apply to metal, the cardinal rule is to follow the recommendations of the coating manufacturer. In general, however, one coat of primer is normally sufficient, although application of a second coat insures complete coverage and maximum protection in demanding situations.

Two coats of a topcoat are generally recommended rather than a single coat for two reasons: increased overall thickness of the coating for better durability, and elimination of the possibility of any pinholes extending through the coating.

In addition, always apply primer and paint to metal in thick coats for

optimum durability and rust resistance. That's because the thicker the coat, the less chance of moisture penetrating the paint and reaching the substrate. Brushing is fine for small applications, while rolling and airless spraying are better for covering large areas.

### Direct-To-Metal Coatings

Another option when painting metal is Direct-To-Metal (DTM) coatings. These coatings are designed for direct application to metals without the use of a primer. They function as both primer and topcoat in one product.

DTM coatings can be used for a variety of applications, are available in semigloss or gloss formulations, and are now offered in high performance latex products. To ensure proper protection of the metal, two thick coats are usually recommended.

Regardless of whether you use a DTM coating or a primer-topcoat system, it is not difficult to get years of reliable service from a metal paint job. The keys are taking the time to properly prepare the surface, promptly priming the surface, and applying thick coats of the right type of coating. ■

# Why It's Important to... **Prepare the Surface**

Good paint performance depends on good adhesion, and paint adheres best to surfaces that are clean and sound. That's why contractors make sure the surface is in this condition before they start.

Taking shortcuts on surface prep can cause even the highest quality paints to fail prematurely. In fact, according to experts at The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute, inadequate surface preparation is *the* single greatest cause of premature exterior paint failures.

Thus, just as a builder needs a solid foundation to construct a house that lasts, so too must a painting contractor start with a sound surface. It is the first step to a durable, long-lasting exterior paint job.



## Benefits of a Properly Prepared Surface

- **Better adhesion** — the paint is less likely to blister, flake or peel.
- **Better uniformity** — the paint has a more consistent color and sheen or gloss.
- **Better hiding** — no show-through from the surface that is being painted.
- **Increased mildew resistance** — the paint won't be marred by unsightly black or brown fungal growth.
- **Increased corrosion resistance, in the case of painting metal** — results in a longer-lasting paint job because of better protection against rusting.

Please cut out along dotted line and display.



[www.paintquality.com](http://www.paintquality.com)



# Liquid &

This last in a series of articles on paint ingredients examines the liquid and additive portions of paint.

In previous issues of *Professional Painter*, we took a look at pigments, the finely ground particles that provide paint with its color and hiding, and the binder, the “glue” that holds paint together and provides adhesion to the painted surface.

In this, the final installment of the series, we’ll look at the other ingredients in paint: the liquid that acts as the paint’s “carrier,” and the additives that provide or enhance certain paint properties.

The liquid portion of paint provides the means of “carrying” the pigment and binder in a consistency such that it can be conveniently stored and applied to the surface that is being painted.

The most common liquid used in oil-based and alkyd paints is paint thinner, a combustible solvent made primarily of mineral spirits. Water is the primary liquid in latex paints, although some solvents are usually added to the formulation to enhance properties. (See “Co-solvents” later in this article.)

## Ratio of Solids to Liquid Important

All paints consist of a solids portion, essentially comprised of the pigments and binder, and a liquid portion. After the liquid portion evaporates and a coating dries, it is the solids that remain on the surface.

The proportion of solids to liquid determines how thick the paint film will be after it dries. The greater the percentage of solids to liquid, the thicker the paint film will be at a given spread rate. This translates into better hiding, durability and protection of the painted surface.

(For more information on spread rate and its effect on paint properties, see the Spring 2001 issue of *Professional Painter*.)

Top quality paints usually have a higher percentage of solids – and a smaller percentage of liquid – than economy paints. For example, an economy latex paint may contain

about 25% solids by volume and 75% liquid, while a top quality latex paint might have 30 to 40% solids and only 60 to 70% liquid.

Because they contain a greater amount of solids, top quality paints generally cost more, but the result is a better quality coating with longer lasting performance. That’s because if a top quality latex paint and an ordinary latex paint are applied at equal wet thickness, the higher quality paint – because of its higher solids content – will dry to a thicker, more protective film. (See illustration, at right.)

## Additives Provide Desirable Properties

The remaining component of paint is additives, which are ingredients generally used at low levels in paint formulations to provide desirable properties that the paint might otherwise lack. They are added in the factory as part of the formulation, not by the painter in the field.

Listed below are additives commonly used in the manufacture of latex paints and a description of how they affect the properties of those paints.

**Thickeners and rheology modifiers** are used to improve application properties and appearance. Without thickeners, the prescribed amounts of pigment, binder and liquid would result in a mixture too thin to be practical for most applications. Thickeners provide the consistency and viscosity so that the paint may be applied properly. They also impact flow and leveling and enhance film build, which improves hiding and durability.

**Rheology modifiers** are modern thickeners that provide the benefits of traditional thickeners, plus better flow and leveling and better resistance to spattering, which means less cleanup. And because these additives are synthetic, paints made with rheology modifiers are more resistant to spoilage.

**Surfactants** stabilize the paint so that it will not separate, settle or become too thick to use. They also keep pigments dispersed for maximum gloss and hiding; and they help “wet” the surface being painted so the

# Additives

## PAINT'S CARRIERS & ENHANCERS



paint won't "crawl" when it is applied. Surfactants also provide compatibility between tinting colorants and bases so that the correct color will be obtained.

**Biocides** used in latex paints are usually of two types. The first is a *preservative* to help keep bacteria from growing in the liquid paint. This is especially important for paint stored in containers that are repeatedly opened and closed, because contamination can occur.

The second is a *mildewcide* to inhibit the growth of mildew on the surface of the paint after it has been applied. These are used mainly in exterior paints, although some interior paints designed for use in damp areas contain a mildewcide. High quality exterior paints usually contain higher levels of mildewcide than economy paints.

**Defoamers** break bubbles that are formed in paint during mixing in the factory, during shipping and handling, when it is put on the shaker or stirred, and/or is applied to the surface (especially important when rolling).

Some contractors like to add a "shot" of paint thinner to latex paints to minimize foaming. While this may immediately serve the purpose, be aware that this practice can have an adverse effect on color development and the storability of paint, and is not recommended.

**Co-solvents** are additional liquids, other than water, in latex paint. One common type is a coalescent. This additive temporarily softens latex binder particles so that they fuse readily, even if the paint is applied at its minimum recommended application temperature. It often is the coalescent that is the source of residual odor after painting a room. Another type of co-solvent provides a measure of freeze/thaw stability to help paint resist damage if frozen during storage.

Contractors sometimes like to supplement the paint they purchase by mixing additives in themselves. Remember, paint formulators work hard to attain a proper balance of properties. The addition of a new material to improve one property can throw this balance off and affect other properties.

So, if you must use an additive, make sure you never exceed the recommended level and be sure the paint manufacturer does not prohibit it. Otherwise, the paint's warranty may be voided.

### Convey the Quality Message

In this and previous articles, we have broken paint down to its basics and described the role each ingredient plays. By doing so, we hope you now find it easier to understand what sets quality paint apart from ordinary paint, and why paints differ in their properties. Share this knowledge with your customer, and it will help you become the "expert" your customer relies on when it comes to paint and painting. ■



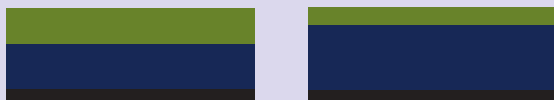
### TOP QUALITY LATEX PAINT



### ORDINARY LATEX PAINT



### Wet Paint Film



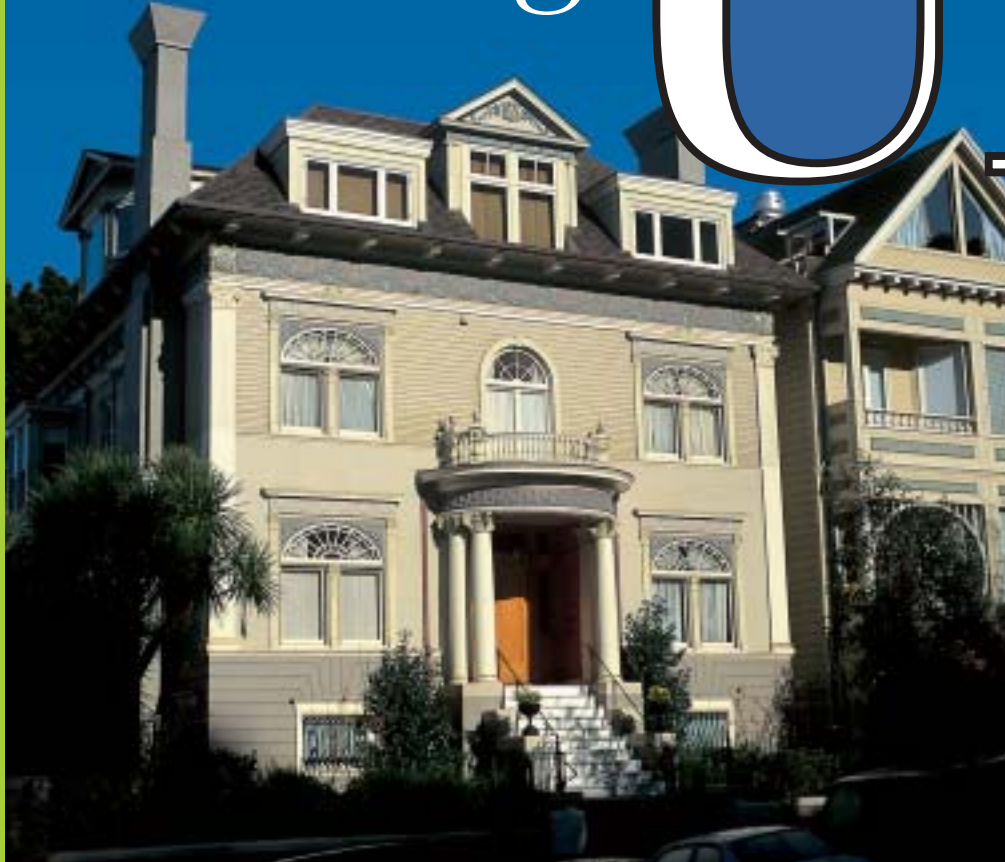
### Dry Paint Thickness



\* Percent Solids By Volume

# Are You Selling

# UP?



Top Quality  
Paint Is a  
Great  
Investment  
for Your  
Customers  
and for YOU

**E**very business owner knows that a certain amount of investment is necessary to run a profitable business. For some, the investment that may be required is in machinery or office equipment. But for the professional painter, the most important investment may well be in the quality of paint that he or she uses.

Granted, the customer has to be willing to pay a little more for a top quality paint. But research shows that today's homeowners and commercial customers are very quality-conscious. Once they understand the benefits of using a top quality paint, they are usually quick to choose the better quality product.

All of which invites the question, "Are you selling up when you call on customers?" If not, you may be leaving extra profit on the table – and missing an important opportunity to build your reputation as a top quality painting professional.

Every personal service business is built on reputation. For the professional painting contractor – who is often faced with stiff competition for the most desirable jobs – this is especially important. By establishing yourself as a contractor who uses only the best quality paints and products, you are saying that you care about your work – and about your customers. That can provide an important competitive edge.

**Why Quality?**

To get your customer interested in paying extra for top-line paint, you need to first sell the *benefits* of a top quality paint job. PQI interviewed managers of several painting firms that are expert in selling up their customers to quality paint. We asked what they find to be their most successful sales approach. The contractors agree that the single most effective tactic is explaining – in easily understood terms – the differences in performance between economy grade and top quality paints.

**Exterior Work**

There are a number of ways quality paint outperforms lower cost paint in exterior applications, from both decorative and protective standpoints. For purposes of explaining the benefits, the following table may be helpful:

Performance Aspects of Top Quality Exterior Latex Paints As Compared with Lower Quality “Economy” Paints		
PROPERTY	INGREDIENTS IMPACTING	PAINT JOB BENEFITS
<b>BETTER CHALK RESISTANCE</b>	1. Pigment Selection 2. In Flat Paints, Higher Binder:Pigment Ratio	1. Maximum Color Retention 2. Erosion Resistance: Lasts Longer 3. No Chalk Run-down
<b>BETTER ADHESION</b>	1. 100% Acrylic Binder 2. Minimized Thickener Level	1. Less Chance of Blistering 2. Minimized Flaking, Peeling
<b>GREATER DRY FILM THICKNESS</b>	1. High Solids Content 2. Thickener Type	1. Uniformity of Appearance 2. General Durability
<b>MILDEW RESISTANCE</b>	1. Mildewcide Type and Level 2. 100% Acrylic Binder	Good Long-Term Appearance
<b>LACK OF BRUSHMARKS</b>	1. Thickener Type 2. High Solids Content	1. Smooth Appearance 2. Minimized Dirt and Mildew Collection
<b>ALKALI AND EFFLORESCENCE RESISTANCE</b>	100% Acrylic Binder	On Masonry: 1. Good Long-Term Appearance 2. Resists Degradation from Alkalinity

In a word, quality 100% acrylic exterior paints are exceptionally durable and attractive, benefits you should stress to every prospect.

For interior work, you can offer premium performance in terms of both appearance (smooth and uniform, with minimum brush and roller marks) and resistance properties (resistance to cleaning and scrubbing, as well as a minimized tendency to pick up and hold dirt).

Some contractors who were surveyed find it helpful to refer to an objective source when talking about the benefits of using top quality paint. The PQI website contains a wealth of information that helps explain why top quality paint is worth the extra money. The website’s Paint Resource Library has a variety of articles on quality paint that can be printed out and given to prospects.

**PROFITABLE**  
**PAINTING CONTRACTORS CITE THESE**  
**KEYS TO SUCCESS:**

**EDUCATING** building managers and homeowners about the better durability and better appearance of top quality paints (for example, scrubbability, stain resistance and ease of stain removal for interior paints; better adhesion, improved chalk resistance and better color retention for longer-lasting exterior paint jobs).

**EMPHASIZING** the dollars-and-cents advantage of a top quality paint – namely, lower cost-per-year-of-service.

**ACTIVELY** participating in the paint selection process with building managers and homeowners.

**Taking the Initiative**

The contractors PQI interviewed told us they are indeed trying to sell-up their customers, and that their efforts are meeting with great success. All of those interviewed agreed that it was beneficial to have sales aids that illustrate the longevity, durability and value of quality paints.

To assist professional painters in their selling efforts, PQI has created “sell sheets” that summarize the benefits of using quality paints on certain surfaces (such as aluminum siding, vinyl siding and EIFS), and the benefits of using particular types of coatings (elastomerics and low odor paints, for example). These can be quickly downloaded from the Contractor/Selling Your Services section at

[www.paintquality.com](http://www.paintquality.com). In addition, the website contains a Contractor Calculator, which enables you to do a quick comparison of the costs of applying a top quality paint versus application of an ordinary grade of paint. It makes a compelling sales aid.

What was the “bottom line” experience of the contractors interviewed by PQI? They reported that being forthcoming with their clients about the benefits of quality paint helped build trust and respect, which in turn gained them new business from those clients... and glowing recommendations.

As you enter the spring painting season, remember to bring up the advantages of using a top quality paint to your clients. Selling up could result in more revenue, more work and a terrific reputation for you and your company. ■

**Not too long ago, someone asked The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute “What causes exterior paint to fail?”**

Actually, all exterior paint exposed to the weather will eventually fail at some point, no matter how well it has been applied, usually by cracking and/or loss of adhesion, or by erosion to the substrate.

How long a paint job will actually last depends on a number of factors, including the nature and condition of the substrate, the type of coating applied and the severity of the weather the paint has to stand up to.

So, a more helpful question to ask is, “What causes exterior paint to fail prematurely?” With that question in mind, here are seven factors we have observed as frequent causes of early paint failure:

**1 Failure to smooth rough edges**

Paint will not adhere well to an “unstable” surface such as old paint that exhibits marginal adhesion. Scraping is the usual method of removing this type of surface, but it can require special attention. That’s because the paint remaining after the worst has been scraped off will probably have rough edges. When new paint is applied, it can flow over these rough edges, resulting in inadequate thickness and creating areas of vulnerability where it can fail prematurely.

The preventive measure is to taper the edges of the old paint by “feather sanding” them, using medium grit (#120) garnet paper for general exterior use, and finishing with fine grit (#220) garnet paper where close-up appearance is important with semigloss and gloss paint.

However, don’t be too aggressive with your feather sanding. Painters report, for example, that power sanding may generate enough heat to degrade the adhesion of the old paint, resulting in failures. And, of course, do **not** sand if lead may be in the old paint.



# Premature Failures

## 2 Failure to prepare weathered wood

Controlled exposure tests conducted by The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute and others have clearly shown that, all else being equal, primer and paint will not adhere to wood that has been weathered as well as it will to the same wood that has not been weathered. Even exposure for just a few weeks before painting can make a

significant difference. The result could be cracking and peeling after just a year or two rather than good performance for far longer.

Prior to priming or staining, refresh the surface of weathered wood by thorough sanding. Remove any wood that is gray from weathering. Medium grit (#120) garnet paper works well. If you're going to ultimately apply a gloss or semigloss paint, re-sand with fine grit (#220) sand paper.

Power washing can also be effective, but be careful that the water jet does not cut into and damage the wood. For this reason, it is best not to use power washing on softer siding woods such as cedar and redwood, particularly if well weathered. If power washing, use plain water without a cleaning agent or bleach.



## 3 Failure to use a primer

The benefits of using an appropriate primer are consistent with those gained from good surface preparation. They include maximizing all of the following:

- Adhesion of the finish coat
- Uniformity of sheen or gloss
- Hiding and hiding uniformity
- Gloss development of the finish coat
- Mildew resistance
- Lack of discoloration from the substrate

In general, prime any surface that has not been previously painted. Also prime any surface areas exposed by loss of paint, such as those that have peeled after years of exposure or have been exposed as part of surface preparation. It's important to note that almost any paint job, even over existing surfaces that are sound and continuous, will benefit from the application of an appropriate primer.



## 4 Failure to correct a source of water behind the substrate

Even though a surface has been properly prepared and painted, the presence of moisture behind the paint can result in blistering and peeling.

On masonry surfaces, moisture from behind can also carry white, crystalline salts ("efflorescence") to the surface, which can lift the paint or accumulate on the paint and ruin its appearance.

Some common sources of water intrusion are:

- A crack or split in the exterior wall or siding that allows rain to enter
- A faulty seal or caulking at corner joints or where siding meets trim, particularly around windows and doors
- A cracked or open wall cap or chimney cap
- An open chimney top that allows rain to enter and run down the flue until it makes its way into the wall (A rain cap placed over brick and stucco chimneys can often avert this.)

If you can't eliminate the source of water intrusion yourself, be sure to make your customer aware of the situation so that he or she can take the necessary corrective action.



# 5

## Failure to apply paint at the correct spread rate

While a painter may feel good about getting extra coverage out of each gallon of primer or paint, many key properties may suffer. These include crack resistance, mildew resistance, durability and, in the case of primers,

stain blocking and corrosion resistance.

All of these properties are directly impacted by dry film thickness. In short, the thicker the film, the better the coating will perform

in each of these properties. So be sure to follow the manufacturer's recommended spread rate.

Thinning paint prior to application can also compromise these properties. Thinned paint applied at the recommended spread rate will dry to a thinner than intended film, because of the reduced solids concentration, and this can hurt performance. For this reason, do not thin paints unless necessary, such as for application by spraying, and then only according to the manufacturer's instructions.



# 6

## Failure to apply latex paint at the proper temperature

The microscopic particles of binder in latex paint are thermoplastic, meaning they harden as the temperature drops. In order for them to fuse or coalesce and bind the pigment into a tough, continuous paint film, they must not be applied at too low a temperature.

If the temperature is too low when latex paint is applied, the appearance may look fine, but the film integrity and adhesion are probably poor. And, what may have been a 10-year paint job may need repainting in a relatively short time.

Moreover, the time needed for adequate film formation extends beyond dry-to-touch. Because of this, try to avoid applying latex paint unless the temperature is predicted to stay above the minimum recommended application temperature for the next 36 hours.

The temperature of the surface being painted must also be taken into account. It, too, must be at or above the minimum application temperature at the time of painting.

Applying paint when the temperature is too high can also compromise film formation. That's because the process of binder coalescence takes a certain time to occur properly. If the paint dries too quickly, the binder particles lose mobility and don't have enough time to form an optimum, durable film.

As a result, avoid painting in any combination of the following conditions that can make latex paint dry too rapidly: Painting in temperatures over 90°F; painting in direct sunshine; painting in very dry and/or windy weather; and painting a dry, porous surface that will quickly absorb water from the wet paint.



# 7

## Failure to use correct type and quality of paint



And, of course, there is always the suitability – and quality – of the paint. A paint designed for the job is essential. For example, gloss paint designed for use on metal will probably crack if applied to wood. Similarly, paint designed for indoor use will perform unsatisfactorily if used outdoors.

The quality of the paint is just as important. The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute recommends using a top-of-the-line product for most exterior applications. Choosing an exterior paint based mainly on low initial price can compromise both protective and decorative properties.

Generally speaking, top-of-the-line 100% acrylic latex paints provide the best overall performance. Compared with oil-based paints, and assuming good surface preparation, these paints will provide considerably better long-term performance with respect to color and gloss retention, mildew resistance and crack resistance.

As you can see, many factors impact the performance of an exterior paint job, including the seven described here. Keep these in mind and they will help you achieve a quality, longer-lasting paint job. ■

# Projecting a Professional Image can enhance your business prospects

**“IMAGE IS EVERYTHING,” according to one frequently seen TV commercial. An exaggeration? Yes. But there is some truth to the message, especially in the business world.**

**More often than not, the firm that presents the best image or appearance inspires the most confidence. And engendering confidence is an important step in winning both new and repeat business.**

**What does image management mean for the professional painter? It means that you should make every effort to create a great first impression, and that appearances count even after you’ve won the job.**

## **Making a Good First Impression**

It’s natural for prospects to form quick, and sometimes lasting, impressions about a painting contractor. Fortunately, you can take steps to ensure that their first impressions of you are favorable.



If you are one of the many professional painters who both apply the paint and drum up new business, don’t make sales calls when your clothes are spattered with the remains of the day. Meet with prospects only once you have cleaned up and are neatly dressed.

Be punctual. If you have a fixed appointment, arrive on time. Be polite, businesslike and respectful during your sales presentation. Address your prospects as “Mr.” and “Mrs.,” unless they invite you to do otherwise.

Take a hard look at the appearance of your car, truck or pickup – it also plays a role in creating a first impression. Make sure that your vehicle is clean and orderly. That will send a subtle, but important, signal about your work habits. If there is signage on your vehicle, it should be professionally done.

Your business cards, literature, estimating forms, contracts and invoices also form part of your image. When done thoughtfully and professionally, they indicate that yours is a substantial, reliable business.



## **On the Job**

Image management shouldn’t stop after you’ve won the job. Make neatness a priority – whether it’s in the way you load your truck, lay your dropcloths, or clean up the site at day’s end. If you post signage at the job site, make sure it, too, has a professional appearance.

Keep in mind that your employees are your representatives. As such, it’s important that they not only look professional when they arrive at the job site, but that they also conduct themselves professionally while they are there.

Some contractors provide full uniforms for their crews, while others require employees to wear t-shirts with the company ID. Whether or not you go that far, be sure to discourage the use of loud radios, bad language and any other behavior that might be offensive to your clients.



**Remember, image may not be everything... but it is important. It may even be the key to a much more successful business. ■**



complementary color schemes



welcoming color schemes



architectural details

# Learn to color like the experts.

Now quickly improve your hand at color decorating with the new, easy-reference card deck from PQI. It puts all the fundamentals of color decorating right at your fingertips. The psychology of different colors. The keys to monochromatic, neutral and triadic color schemes. Sheen levels. How architecture affects color choices.



The techniques of sponging, ragging and faux finishes. And much more.

All designed to make you more valuable as an advisor to your customers. To order your handy "Decorating with Color" card deck, just fill out and send in the attached reply card.



*Order your new  
"Decorating with Color"  
Card Deck today!*

