

## SHADES of GREEN

These days there is a misperception that painters are either Green or they are not. In reality, paint contractors come in at least three shades of Green. The Conveniently Green (small percentage) are bandwagon jumpers who see it as a convenient time to take advantage of the marketing opportunity to be a Green paint company. The Fundamentally Green (very small percentage) were Green before there was such a label and don't understand what all the hoopla is about; it's just the way they operate. The majority of us are Accidentally Green, using some Green practices, whether we realize it or not.



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The smart paint dealer finds ways to suggest simple eco-friendly products and practices that would appeal to any of these three categories. By approaching Green sales this way, dealers can help contractors run more efficiently and eco-friendly.

As an industry, we need to understand that being more eco-friendly doesn't refer only to how low or no VOC our paints are. While it is nice to espouse to customers the virtues of no odor and less off-gassing, there

are many non-paint products that we all purchase and use daily that can have a significant impact on our Green shades and our bottom line.

**Accurate Product Estimating**—Paint contractors can be sloppy on material estimating. If they purchase more than they need, there's excessive waste either staying with the customer on the job—or worse, leaving with the painter for eternal storage on the island of misfit paint cans back at the shop. Best case scenario, and it's not that good, is the painter spends time and money returning it to the paint dealer, who in turn spends time and money processing the return and restocking it in inventory. Dealers can help contractors to better understand manufacturer specifications for spread rates. Many contractors use the eyeball method for material estimating, which is not nearly as accurate as measuring. Ideally, and this is an attainable goal, there should be enough product to do a proper job, with a small leftover quantity staying with the customer for future touch ups.

**Paint Thinner Conservation**—Painters can conserve thinner by straining and reusing it. This is a perfect opportunity for paint dealers to promote systems like brush keepers where oil brushes can hang suspended in an enclosed container soaking in thinner. The solids settle to the bottom, and the thinner can be strained and reused several times. With this system, brush combs and spinners

become more important tools. The days of wasteful use of inexpensive thinner are gone. Contractors should be looking to purchase less actual thinner and more sophisticated cleaning and containment practices.

**Washing and Reusing Rags**—Many contractors purchase large quantities of cotton or cotton/poly blend lint-free rags. It's always a good idea for a painter to have a rag in his or her pocket. Suggest to contractors that rags can often be washed and reused. This brings clean work habits into play. Painters need to learn how to spread caulking without half the tube ending up on the rag. This is more economical for the caulking and the rag budget. Pouring paint cleanly from its original can to the roller tray or cut pot makes a difference as well, resulting in less crusty, dried paint smudges ruining the rags and less wasted paint. Rags don't have to be treated as disposable sundries. A little effort can result in noticeable savings.

**Excessive Use Of Tape**—It's remarkable to observe the amount of wasted tape that some painters are capable of generating. The biggest offender is the painter who relies on tape for cutting straight lines. A good painter should be able to cut a straight line freehand. The only critical application for tape is for spatter protection on baseboard, floors and other low-lying horizontal surfaces that we roll above. Even this can be avoided by proper drop cloth placement and bringing into play the aforementioned rag in the back pocket. Painters can wipe the tops of baseboards with a damp rag and save the time and cost of taping everything off.

Why would you want to encourage your customers to use less of what you sell? Well, let's say that your average small contractor does 100 jobs per year and on each job there is \$100 worth of wasted paint thinner, blue tape and rags. That would be \$10,000 lost profits in one year. Based on the payment histories of the majority of your contractor accounts, do you think paint contractors can afford not to re-evaluate their products and processes?

You may sell a few less sundries, but you'll find yourself dealing with more efficient and profitable paint companies that will be coming through the door for many more years.

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By learning to cut in this painter saves on tape.