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# Wash Those Fears Away

How to make pressure washing a valuable added service that brings in the bucks.



By Scott Burt

Spring is coming. But right now most of us are likely navigating our way through winter and looking forward to spring and summer, when our project opportunities are more numerous and diverse. It's always exciting to look back on the previous season and identify ways to build on the successes and avoid the failures. Let's face it, part of the risk of being a contractor is experimenting with new products and processes. Last year, my company enjoyed our best exterior season ever, largely due to integrating a more professional pressure washing service into our exterior painting program.

Historically, pressure washing has been a necessary evil – something we usually had to do to decks in order to prepare them for restaining. Occasionally we would rinse a house to clean it prior to painting. A year ago, during some of my annual winter business reflection time, I crossed paths online with Ken Fenner from Pressure Pros, Inc., of Havertown, Pa. Due to this encounter, my perception and understanding of pressure washing services was dramatically changed. One of the greatest benefits of business ownership is the opportunity to network with other like-minded professionals who can share ideas that complement what we already do.

The first and most important thing I learned was that the 2.8 gpm machine

that my company had been using for years was dreadfully inadequate for a legitimate washing service. More important, I began to learn about proper chemical applications during the washing process that would yield profound wood restoration results. After some research and advice from the washing pros, I upgraded to a 4.0 gpm, 4,000 psi machine from Bob Williamson of [www.pressuretek.com](http://www.pressuretek.com). This would turn out to be our single most

enhance our washing efforts.

Pressure washing can be an intimidating undertaking for a paint company because we tend to run into tricky residential situations, with the potential to do costly damage to properties. In Vermont, there are many cedar shingle- and clapboard-sided houses with exotic wood (ipe, cambara, garrapa, mahogany) that are in need of wood restoration. Oftentimes, homes even have failing, film-forming coatings. In the past, I had declined many of these projects because I did not have the proper equipment or knowledge to do a professional job. It should (but probably doesn't) go without saying that the answer is not to blast the siding with the highest possible pressure until the coating blows off. This is the best way to damage the siding beyond repair. Our general research and referral network led us to a sodium hydroxide-based chemical line called PoweSolve, which is available through [www.theprosealerstore.com](http://www.theprosealerstore.com).

This product is extremely cost-effective, potent enough for downstream injection, and comes in both stripper and brightener formulations. We put this stuff to the test on several siding and deck applications last year and were amazed with the results.

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important purchase of '08. There are no words to describe the experience of having proper flow when washing decks and houses. The process is much more enjoyable, efficient and therefore profitable. Bob's service, even more after the sale than before, has proven to be an incredibly valuable resource to the continuing evolution of our pressure washing service. This winter I have continued to pick his brain on the phone and have begun to stock up on accessories that will further

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ed.” Clearly, the resources are out there.

With the housing market trend of people staying in their current houses for longer periods, these maintenance and improvement services will be in demand. Homeowners will be more interested in maintaining the value and condition of their properties, and the smart paint contractor will be integrating and marketing these services. **APC**

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tinued to build my company’s knowledge base about correct approaches to delicate washing situations. There is much to be learned about the finesse of pressure washing with proper chemical selection and low-pressure washing.

There is a wealth of information at your fingertips through [www.uamcc.org](http://www.uamcc.org). This organization has a free online forum where you can access information and advice from pros around the country. Carlos Gonzales, leader of the UAMCC team, notes that the organization “has a keen interest in showing paint contractors a wide variety of pressure washing techniques, so that the contractor can add pressure washing as a specialized and valuable service, as opposed to just a step in the process of painting a house.”

Gonzales believes that with the knowledge of pressure washing, the painting contractor is in a better position to offer the full package: “Not only is the paint contractor selling a paint job, but now he is also equipped to be able to clean the driveway, sidewalks, decks, porches, etc. – the contractor can now perform and be paid for these tasks during the time in which he is preparing the house to be paint-

