



## 2009 CONVENTION COMES TO NIAGARA FALLS

The NGPP National Paperhanger's Convention & Tradeshow is moving to Niagara Falls, NY in 2009. The change in venue is in response to the membership not wishing to hold a convention at sea as originally planned. Mark your calendars now for September 10 – 12 and plan on attending the convention to take part in the biggest hands-on event the Guild has ever put on! The convention lodging will be at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, a beautiful hotel which has recently been completely redecorated. The convention will be housed across the street from the hotel at the Conference Center of Niagara Falls, where we will have 30,000 square feet of space for demos and training, as well as our tradeshow.

Abundant space at the convention center allows us to offer new programs and training never before offered. Already planned is a professionally taught scissor and boom lift certification program. Members will be able to sign up to be trained in the safe use of lifts, actually operate them, and upon passing a test become certified in use of lifts on commercial sites. Any paperhanger that does commercial work will benefit from this training.

Our test walls will be bigger than ever before, and will include features replicating real world situations such as radius corners, arches, pedestal sinks, cabinets, etc. There will be a raised teaching area where instructors can work at the wall and be visible to the audience. The construction of the walls will be based on the fabulous walls designed by the Atlanta Chapter for the Asheville convention. Those walls were solid and built in such a way as to allow members to easily move about from area to area. This year we will have an even larger area to work in so we can expand upon this great foundation.

The Winning Walls With Wallcovering contest will return again,



sponsored by The Zinsser company. Phil Curtis, C.P., the Winning Walls chairman, promises another great contest this year. Be sure to enter your best work in the contest. Details on the contest will be available soon on the NGPP website, [www.ngpp.org](http://www.ngpp.org).

Always a favorite part of the convention, the table tops will also benefit from the extra room available to us. Dave DiBacco, C.P. is the chairman of the table tops and is already at work getting demos set, and presenters signed up.

Another innovation will be a session called "How Would You...?" Members will be asked to submit difficult situations they have encountered in their jobs and those situations will be replicated as closely as possible at the test walls. Then members will brainstorm in groups on the best way to handle those situations. We will have more details on how to submit your situations for this demo soon.

While the focus this year will be on substantially increasing the hands-on aspect of the convention, business sessions will still be an important part of the show. Topics will be fresh, and

presenters are being enlisted to provide you with real, useful knowledge to take home.

The Convention Committee is committed to our goal of putting on the best convention you've ever experienced. Keep your eyes on the *Installer* and check into the NGPP website often for news on what's coming. We promise to make this a great show!

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## NEW CONVENTION PLANS ANNOUNCED

By NGPP National President David A. DiBacco, C.P.,  
Artistic Designs by David A. DiBacco, Rochester, New York

I have spent several of these messages laying out the structure of the Executive Board, the Board of Directors, and Committees. I have mentioned the steps we have instituted to increase communication among ourselves. I have urged all members to feel confident to voice their desires, concerns and thoughts to their respective Re-



gional Directors (RDs). I have encouraged the RD's to include the Alternates in their plans for the region, and to mentor them in preparation for

taking on the job of RD at some point. And I have made it clear that I will listen to those ideas, concerns, etc. when they are brought to me by any of you.

Despite all this openness there are still times when plans go awry. For instance: the Convention-at-Sea. Following are the comments I posted on the Bulletin Board (December 11, the thread starting December 3), for a fuller understanding of how these things developed check the BB for the whole thread:

### *The cruise!*

*There has been quite a bit said on the cruise and the changes made concerning it in the last 24 hours. Much of it has been well thought out by people with only part of the information that the Board had. I am impressed with the responses made to some tough questions, and pleased with the general confidence shown for the Board.*

*True, the cruise as a convention was changed about 10 days ago and a land based convention was approved for Niagara Falls for September of 2009. This will be a spectacular convention because of the huge venue we have, the plans already taking shape for programming, the*

*natural beauty of the area, the proximity to Canada and Toronto, the nearness of a casino and the 26 million dollar renovations of the Crowne Plaza Hotel. This is a done deal and the focus for the Convention Committee will be having a great show despite the economic challenges we all are facing.*

*My first thought after determining that we needed to go to a land based convention (for a slew of reasons both economic and member driven) was to continue to promote a cruise to our members and even open it up to friends, relatives and anyone willing to join our group and enjoy the discount we had arranged through Cruises Inc. However, the dust had not even settled on that plan than the concern of competing functions so close together became an issue. I frankly think that there would be people wanting to go on a cruise who have never, and may never attend a convention. I didn't see that the proximity was going to be a problem. The NGPP still has time to cancel any unsold rooms reserved for our group until mid April. A tiny fee would hold the room and until the April deadline anyone could still opt out.*

*The last paragraph is the way I see it ... BUT. I don't know how we are going to do the proper promotion of the cruise, when the focus of the Convention Committee now is locked on Niagara. Also, the lukewarm response (and even hostility) faced by Cruises Inc. leads me to believe that they won't be doing the extra promotion for us. They have bent over backwards for at least six months putting together this package, making various presentations to the Board (and I might say they were enthusiastically received), unveiling it at the convention in Asheville, designing a web page to link to our home page to facilitate people signing up and being available to*

*answer questions from the board and the members, and more; all this on speculation and a rapidly dwindling interest from the Guild.*

*The Convention Committee has decided that the best interest of the NGPP will be served by suspending the current plans for an October 2009 cruise. I would have asked them to hold off for some time (April 1 was the date the Board had tentatively accepted) but in light of the fact that the perception among the membership seems to be that the cruise is a bad idea and to continue to promote it is a sign of stubbornness, I will reluctantly agree. I also will be putting my energy into the Niagara Falls convention as the table Top coordinator and I do agree that as long as the cruise is a point of contention I won't be able to do justice to that duty.*

*There is one question about the cruise that has been asked that I would like to address: Why did the NGPP hold off announcing it until the Asheville Convention? The answer is basic, we were concerned that it would compete with Asheville and might have effected the decision to attend Asheville. In hindsight it may be that we would have gotten a better read on the cruise had we polled the members prior to Asheville, but to tell the truth I don't think so. I base this on the overwhelming enthusiasm of the Board for six months prior to Asheville for a cruise. The tide of enthusiasm turned with the downturn in the economy. The Board takes these matters seriously but none of us has a crystal ball and had the economy not taken a turn for the worse, the cruise might have been seen as the acceptable change that we were looking for to attract members who had never attended a convention before.*

*As always I will be willing to discuss any of these matters with members wishing to express their concerns.*

*Dave*



# YOU CAN'T PUT YOUR HEAD IN THE SAND

By Nicholas R. Cichielo, NRC Advisors, St. Louis, MO

Economic conditions in our country and the world have occupied the news the last few months. You cannot ignore what has happened to our country because it will change the way we live and do business for a long time. If you put your head in the sand you will not survive.

What has happened? We are now told that a recession started last December. If you recall we told you that in March of 2008. This recession will be as bad as 1980-81 and possibly as bad as 1973-74. If you remember both of those recessions that is good news; you survived those difficult times. Many predicted the end of the world. We have all survived the near failure of Citicorp and probably the automakers. Yes, they will get bailed out.

November had the highest number of new layoffs since 1974. The unemployment rate is 6.7% and 10.3 million Americans are out of work. This is an increase of 3.1 billion out of work in the last year. Expect the unemployment rate to peak at 8 and 10% in the second quarter of 2009. This means another 3-4 million layoffs.

Now that we recognize there is a recession we will now focus on recovery. The world and the stock market are optimistic about our new President. People feel good and expect all the problems to be fixed. Mortgage rates are starting to come down. Gas prices will continue to drop which means more money in the pockets of 80% of Americans. The automakers will get their bridge loan. The question is, "How long can the government write checks before the world stops buying our debt?"

Business forecasts plan for 10-20% decrease in sales in 2009 compared to 2008. Most see a recovery starting in 2010. The housing market at best should start to rebound in late 2010.

I talk to many people in the

industry. I have heard that many Guild members are slow. However, a few are as busy as ever and reporting that 2008 was their best year ever. This is evidence that there are niche markets out there where people and companies are still spending money.

What should you do? Solidify your position with key customers. Be visible and stay in contact with them. Discuss long-term plans so you are a part of them. Cut expenses and if you rely on your bank stay in touch with them especially if you need credit. Let them know you are dealing in a positive way with this business downturn.

Remember that economic cycles do exist, but this time people will change the way they live and think. We are seeing the end of the debt age. Homes will not appreciate as much as they have in the past. This could benefit our industry since if people are not upgrading they will then fix up their existing homes.

My friends it will not be easy. We have no magic wands. It is going to take more work and some creative thinking. In talking to a few Guild members I am so impressed with how creative some have become. Some residential hangers have gone in a new direction by leaving the residential market and focusing on the high end and commercial arenas. I have witnessed one work with a local retailer putting on decorating clinics for consumers. This created business for that professional as well as a sincere appreciation from the retailer.

I personally think more workshops at your shows on subjects like creative thinking and what professionals are now doing differently to help survive this recession would be a benefit to all.

It is not going to be easy. However, we can succeed if we share ideas and work together. Please, please, please remember you cannot put your head in the sand. That never solves problems.

The cruise did have the potential to generate significant income for the Guild, with little risk. Dues and the convention fund the Guild.

Knowing that we are a cash-poor association is nothing new for the Board. We (the entire Board) make plans that will serve the members and we adjust them within the limitations of the actual monies we have to spend. The budget in the red keeps us painfully aware of these limitations, but making no plans at all is not an option.

The cruise is the victim of bad timing and too great an expectation that member habits could change. There is no way the Board could have anticipated the strength of this economic downturn. Also the reluctance of members to commit to a seven day convention cruise so far in advance with such economic uncertainty, became clear between the cruise announcement and the end of November. Plans were changed; this is what prudence dictated.

Niagara Falls should prove to be a great convention. The cruise will be suspended, perhaps to be resurrected when conditions change and under different circumstances. However if that should happen it is unlikely to be reconsidered for a convention.

Let's Hang Together.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David A. DiCocco".

# BATTERIES 4 DUMMIES

By Bill Archibald, Norfolk, Massachusetts

With our greater reliance on portable electronic devices, we have become more dependant on rechargeable batteries. With all the different types of rechargeables, you might ask, "Which type of battery is best"? Well, in the same vein that no one paste is best for all materials, no one type of battery is best for all applications. On the bright side, one does not need to learn everything about every type of rechargeable battery. One only needs to know some basic facts about four types of batteries. The batteries most commonly used in our laser levels, laptops, phones, tools, GPSs, PDAs, and other hand held electronics are: nickel cadmium (NiCad or NiCd), nickel metal hydride (NiMH), lithium ion (Li-ion), and lithium ion polymer (Li-poly, Li-Pol, LiPo, LIP, or LiP).

It is interesting to note that the first rechargeable battery was the lead-acid battery, invented in 1859. Even though we rely on one to start our vehicles, we'll let Joe down at the service station worry about how it is functioning.

The traditional definition of a battery is "a collection of similar items used together," like a battery of tests, or an array of artillery pieces. An electrical battery is two or more cells connected to produce a current. It is important to understand the difference between a single storage cell (a single AAA, AA, C, or D) and a battery pack. On a daily basis, we use the word battery to refer to a single cell with no ambiguity, but for the next 1400 words, please accept the difference as defined.

I am no electrical engineer nor do I fully understand all the technical jargon and formulas used by those who build circuits. Understanding some basics is useful when picking the best battery and keeping it alive without torturing it to death by over-feeding or starving it. One doesn't need to know the biology of a canary to keep it singing merrily in its cage for years. The only knowledge needed is what to feed it and to keep it away from the cat.

Cells and battery packs will usually list both their volts (v) and their capacity. Capacity is expressed in milliamps per hour (mAh) and is an indication of how long a cell will supply adequate voltage to operate a device. If you really want to understand the relationship between volts, amps, electrons,

coulombs, joules, and watts visit this website where these are explained at a level a novice can understand: <http://www.gcsescience.com/pe1.htm>. Generally, single cells all have the same voltage (1.2 volts for standard rechargeable cells and 1.5 volts for fresh alkaline cells) but capacity varies greatly between types, manufacturers, and cell sizes. The higher the capacity, the longer the battery or cell will work.



The first nickel-cadmium (NiCd) battery was created by Waldemar Jungner of Sweden in 1899. One attribute of NiCd's is their low "internal resistance" which enables them to give up their current quickly when needed. Some larger NiCd's (size C) powering electrical motors have been known to deliver a shocking 30 amps, but only for a short time. A battery with a rated capacity of 2000mAh would be depleted after four minutes and be VERY warm to the touch.

I like NiCd's for my drills, electric screw drivers, and radio controlled dune buggies. The low internal resistance allows them to deliver sheer power when needed, but also allows energy to deplete when just sitting at rest. This is called self-discharge. A NiCd will self-discharge at a rate of 20% per month at room temperature. They also do not have as high a capacity as other rechargeables of the same size, but they are perhaps the sturdiest of the small rechargeable cells. They can take the abuse of fast charging, rapid discharge, over charging, and complete discharge better than any of the other cells we use.

Consumer grade Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMH) cells appeared in 1989. Their advantage over NiCd's is that they have three times the capacity of an equivalent sized NiCd. When first

developed, they had a higher self-discharge rate, but that is no longer true. NiMH's do not tolerate abuse like NiCd's. They will die quicker if over-charged or allowed to discharge completely. I like them for many applications such as a digital camera, clocks, TV remotes, and an LED headlamp. I especially like them for my laser levels. Three cells rated at 2300mAh will last a week of heavy use before needing to be recharged. I carry an extra set and a fast charger that charges them in twenty minutes. NiMH's also are not as much of an environmental hazard as Ni-Cd's (Cadmium is a big no no) but still recycle all rechargeable batteries when they will no longer hold a charge. There are recycle bins at Home Depot, Lowe's, Staples and many other outlets that sell these batteries. NiMH's are fast replacing NiCd's and many companies are not selling consumer size NiCd's anymore.

Recently, Sanyo has introduced the Eneloop rechargeable NiMH that is advertised as the best of both worlds. It is shipped fully charged (actually shipped at 75%) and has a self discharge rate comparable to an Alkaline. Sanyo claims a fully charged Eneloop will retain 90% of its charge after sitting for six months and will retain 85% after a year. They claim the capacity ratings are just slightly lower than conventional NiMH and have equal life expectancy of 1000 recharges. They cost similar to regular NiMH's and use the same chargers. An Internet search turns up one independent review. Sanyo does slightly over-rate Eneloop's self discharge rate and capacity, but they still are very impressive. The reviewer also noted that the Eneloop has a lower internal resistance which makes them very suitable for cameras and flashes. And like all other NiMH's, they will suffer from abuse.

Lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries were first proposed in the 1970's and refinements have been constant. They power laptops, cell phones, cameras, and many other items. They can be formed into a variety of shapes to better fit the cavity in which they will be placed. They are lighter than other types of rechargables. Their biggest flaws are that they do not last as long, suffer degradation from heat, and will

not tolerate ANY full discharge or over charge. I left my Nikon camera on once and ruined the Li-ion battery. Even if not used, Li-ions will lose capacity. If you notice that your laptop or cell phone needs more frequent charging or the charge is not lasting as long, it's not your imagination, it's the li-ion battery that is getting long in the tooth and short in capacity. Charging li-ions with the proper charger is most critical. Use only one recommended by the manufacturer or the one supplied with the device that uses it. Some suggestions for prolonging li-ion use:

- Lithium-ion batteries should be charged early and often.
- Lithium-ion batteries should not be frequently fully discharged and recharged ("deep-cycled") like Ni-Cd batteries, but this is necessary after about every 30th recharge
- Li-ion batteries should never be depleted to below their minimum voltage.
- Li-ion batteries should be kept cool. Ideally they are stored in a refrigerator (not freezer). Aging will take its toll much faster at high temperatures. The high temperatures found in cars cause lithium-ion batteries to degrade rapidly.
- Li-ion batteries should be bought only when needed, because the aging process begins as soon as the battery is manufactured.
- When using a notebook computer running from fixed line power over extended periods, the battery should be removed, and stored in a cool place so that it is not affected by the heat produced by the computer.

Lithium-ion poly batteries (abbreviated Li-poly, Li-Pol, LiPo, LIP, PLI or LiP) are similar to lithium-ion but a polymer holds the lithium-salt electrolyte and they do not have a rigid metal casing. This allows the battery to be formed in just about any shape, and can be much smaller than other battery designs. Li-poly batteries are capable of more than 20% higher energy density than that of a Li-ion. They are more susceptible to fire and explosions by puncture, short circuits, or fast current drain. With proper circuitry protection, they have found favor in many applications, including model aviation. On a visit to the Lazy Loopers RC Club, I found five pilots flying very small helicopters powered by LiPo's.

These batteries also power small PDA's and some Apple laptops.

#### Advantages of LiPo's

- Very low profile - batteries resembling the profile of a credit card are feasible.
- Flexible form factor - manufacturers are not bound by standard cell formats. With high volume, any reasonable size can be produced economically.
- Lightweight - gelled electrolytes enable simplified packaging by eliminating the metal shell.
- Improved safety - more resistant to overcharge; less chance for electrolyte leakage.

#### Limitations of LiPo's

- Lower energy density and decreased cycle count compared to lithium-ion.
- Expensive to manufacture.
- No standard sizes. Most cells are produced for high volume consumer markets.
- Higher cost-to-energy ratio than lithium-ion

When choosing a battery, one should couple the demands needed with the characteristics of the battery. Buy cells with highest available capacity (mAh) for longer use between charges. If a device uses multiple cells, make sure all cells are the same type and capacity. Use a charger matched to the cells or battery pack. It is VERY important to follow the manufacturer's instructions about conditioning, care, charging, and storage and to use ONLY the specified charging system - unless you have a PhD in electronics. With proper care and use, a typical rechargeable battery will last for 1000 charging cycles. Remember to RECYCLE DEAD RECHARGEABLES - they have toxic chemicals in them.

An internet search for each battery type will produce enough information to turn your brain into mush. Much of my support information was gleaned from Wikipedia.com. Below are other links used for research for this article:

<http://www.grinningplanet.com/2004/11-23/rechargeable-batteries-battery-charger-article.htm>

[http://www.stefanv.com/electronics/sanyo\\_eneloop.html](http://www.stefanv.com/electronics/sanyo_eneloop.html)

<http://www.eneloopusa.com/eneloop.html>

## National Associates

4walls.com

- Advance Equipment Mfg. Co.
- Ahlstrom, FiberComposites
- AMERICAN Blind & Wallpaper
- American Safety Razor Co.
- Blue Book of Building & Construction
- Blue Mountain Wallcovering, Inc.
- Bradbury & Bradbury Art Wallpapers
- Brewster Wallcovering Company
- Bullwinkle Systems, Inc.
- Cavalier Wall Liner
- Chesapeake Wallcoverings Corp.
- Contract Wallcoverings, Inc.
- Crawler Products
- Crosspoint Fabrics
- Custom Laminations, Inc.
- Design Tex Group (The)
- Duron Paints & Wallcoverings
- Environmental Graphics
- Environmental Solutions International
- Flavor Paper
- Fromental Ltd.
- Gardner-Gibson, Inc.
- Hyde Tools
- Innovations In Wallcoverings
- J. Josephson Company, Inc.
- Jacaranda, Inc.
- Len-Tex Wallcovering
- LSI Wallcovering
- Luxe Surfaces
- Maya Romanoff Corporation
- MDC Wallcoverings
- Monadnock Paper Mills, Inc.
- National Wallcovering/Tapo-Fix
- OLFA - North America
- OMNOVA Solutions, Inc.
- Pacific Laser Systems (PLS)
- Rife RE Enterprises LLC
- Rimkus Consulting Group
- Roman Decorating Products
- Roos International, Ltd.
- Roysons
- Rustoleum/Zinsser Company (The)
- Schooner Prints
- Sherwin Williams Company
- Silk Dynasty, Inc.
- Southern Nevada PDCA/FCA
- Stark Wallcovering
- Tajima Tool Corporation
- Thibaut Wallcovering
- Thybonny Wallcovering Company
- Vahallan Papers
- Vitrulan Corporation
- Wolf-Gordon, Inc.
- York Wallcoverings, Inc.

# TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

By Steve Boggess, Steve Boggess Paperhanging, Richmond, Virginia

First, let me say how gratifying it was to conduct my presentation in Asheville. Those who attended may say it was reminiscent of a Gallagher or Carrot Top show. Seriously, I hope you came away with something of value. Afterwards, so many installers came up to me and spoke about their own experiences and innovations. I couldn't help but notice the spirit of sharing—as we know, that's what the Guild is all about. In that spirit, I've been asked to run through a summary of my presentation.

## The Workstation

I've been toting and tweaking my utility crate for the past fifteen years. It's basically a 24 in. tall bin for



carrying my workstation, but once on the job it has many uses. It's a resting place for pasted material—the plastic

grid design makes it a clean and non-sticky surface to do so. It's a place to store rolled up sheets to be machine-pasted. It's a great seat at the pasting table around lunchtime (no kidding), a paint tray platform, and most importantly, a large container for carrying stuff to and from your vehicle at the beginning or end of the job.

At one point, I attempted to have this crate system manufactured by injection molding, but at a price of \$250,000, I decided to stick to assembling it from sections of three crates. As stated, the crate primarily moves my workstation to and from the job. The workstation consists of the following:

- 1) An 80" x 36" pasting table (a.k.a. the lowly, lightweight Luan bi-fold) that is cut and hinged at 40", creating two independent 18" x 80" boards that collapse to 18" x 40" for easy transport
- 2) Three pasting table trestles, one for either end, and one for the center. I use four to accommodate my 40" Tapofix at one end of the table
- 3) A 15'x 6' drop cloth, made by

cutting a 15'x 12' drop cloth in half and then sewing the raw edge. This drop is very washing machine-friendly and the extra foot or two of width gained over standard runners is worth the ten minutes it takes to sew the raw edge

- 4) A lightweight straightedge (a.k.a. the lowly aluminum yardstick. Relax; I have a brassbound straightedge in the van, should I need it)
- 5) A rollup trash receptacle (available at Lowe's) and trash bags
- 6) A large priming tray, brushes and paint rollers
- 7) A level
- 8) Miscellaneous microfiber towels and rags, etc.

Although the utility crate loaded with the workstation weighs five pounds more than a 5-gallon bucket of adhesive, it is just as easily carried, with one arm inserted through the crate while grabbing the lower hand-hold. Its loaded height is 43 inches and easily fits upright through most minivan sliding doors. For the not so stout I have just purchased a collapsible, lightweight hand-truck from Sam's Club that attaches to the crate, making it accessible to just about anyone.

## Numbered Drop Match System

This three-prong system for cutting up drop matches evolved for me at least twenty years ago, when having an entire room cut up and sequentially laid out on the table, to be hand-pasted, was the norm. I apologize if this sounds similar to some other method. I ran this by several installers and they felt it was a worthy topic to discuss here. I didn't even have a name for the system before the Asheville conference.

I say three-prong because the sheets, the wall, and the schematic are similarly numbered, allowing you to have a schematic of the numbers on the table and the wall, making it easy to find and correct your sequence should something get out of order. It also allows you to quickly get a count of the various lengths of ones and twos (odd and even) sheets and to keep up

with and strategically use defective goods. On the conference handout, I used a very basic half bath to more easily illustrate how the system works, yet where the system really excels is in more complicated situations.

## Make-Your-Own Telescopic Laser Pole and Pole Stand

I bought a bunch of 11' metal telescoping poles at a salvage store and have been unable to locate them for sale since. If someone knows a source for just the poles, please let me know. They can be purchased in a Safe and Easy Light Bulb Changer Kit for around \$20 at Lowe's, and with little modification, will stand in any area less than 11' tall, providing a place to attach the magnetic PLS lasers and shoot a level line virtually anywhere on the wall.

With a 1-1/4" hole saw, cut a piece of a kneeling pad, thong sandal or some other high density foam and place on top of the pole and hold in place with a bicycle-like handle grip, which I have a case of if any chapters would like to order quantities of them cheap. These stationary poles are also great for casting side lighting with clamp lights or quick-drying repairs anywhere on a wall. It's easy to set up. First, throw a microfiber towel over the top to prevent marring the ceiling. Extend the pole to the size of the opening while pushing up and twist locking it. It's surprisingly stable and really great for level lines. It will shoot vertical (plumb lines), but when you consider that plumb lines must be perpendicular to the wall you are shooting to be accurate, it's best to use something a little more mobile, like the tamper pole stand. Also, if you're fortunate enough to own the new PLS 180, the only pole you will need for the stand is a 4 or 5' metal paint roller pole.

To make the tamper pole stand, the first thing you will want to do is remove the tamper handle. Drill four 1/4" holes 1/2" down from the top of the tamper, using the four flanges as guides for the hole locations. Thread the four holes with a 5/16" tap bit. Put the four 5/16" bolts into the four holes, leaving room to insert a 4"

cut-off roller frame handle. Use the four bolts around the top of the tamper to center the frame handle in the tamper. In between the bolts, insert wooden shims (wooden stir sticks from a coffee shop work well) to help secure the roller frame handle in the tamper. Drill the lower ¼" horizontal hole through the base of the tamper and roller frame handle. Insert ¼" bolt and put on nut. Drill second horizontal hole 1" above and perpendicular to lower hole. Insert bolt and nut. These two bolts eliminate any movement in the lower portion of the frame handle. Remove the shims. Now screw metal pole into the roller frame handle. Use the laser to tighten the upper four bolts and permanently align the handle in the stand.

To add more stability to the "flat" PLS magnetic bracket while attached to the "round" pole, cut two 3 ½" pieces of 1 in. aluminum L channel, sand and apply contact cement to two sides. Tightly join the two sections of L channel around the PLS magnetic bracket, creating a removable aluminum C channel for the PLS magnetic bracket. If you failed to make the C channel tight enough to stay on the mag. bracket, don't despair, a piece of wallpaper or business card will make snug it up.

### VOV, Clay and Joint Compound Caulking Tubes and Caulking Caps

Last year a friend challenged me to install paper-backed vinyl wallpa-

per in a small unvented plaster bathroom so that it wouldn't start peeling off the walls and ceiling like it had twice in the recent past. After stripping, cleaning and priming the walls, I caulked the inside corners with clay wallcovering adhesive, let it dry, and installed blank stock. I caulked the inside corners, let them dry, then caulked the inside corners and perimeters of sheets with VOV during installation of the paper-backed vinyl. It worked great and was worth the trouble of refilling the caulking tubes.

To empty the caulking tubes, you'll need a bicycle pump, a 2" section of 3/8 O.D. (outside diameter) clear vinyl tubing, and a \$2 inflator kit from Walmart. Put the 2" piece of 3/8" clear vinyl over the end of the caulking tube and attach the proper inflating device to your bicycle pump, join together and start pumping. Be sure to point the caulking tube into a trash receptacle or at someone you'd rather not have around. Next, clean thoroughly and put your arm into a low-density plastic bag (less likely to burst) grab enough of the material to fill the tube and turn inside out, working materials into a corner of the bag with a seam roller. Cut a hole and fill the tube. To make caps, cut a 2-1/2" section of half-inch O.D. clear vinyl tubing. Insert a half inch glue stick least a half inch into the end of the vinyl tubing and cut off. It's a tight fit and may require a little

water-soluble lubricant.

### Mesh Bag Storage System

Mesh bags are a great way to stay organized without spending half your life trying to do so. They also allow you to store and separate items while maintaining the ability to see what's inside, and also allow things to dry out quickly, a plus considering the

wet nature of our business. I have two 30-gallon bins stacked in my van, with the more frequently used bags located in the open upper bin.

I had 18 different mesh bags at last count. Some examples are:

- 1) Furniture sliders of all types
- 2) Various caulking tubes
- 3) Nuts, bolts, anchors, etc all stored and separated in tubular prescription bottles
- 4) Roller sleeves
- 5) Detailing rags
- 6) Different types of tape
- 7) Electrical parts

It's easy to customize the size of a bag should it be too large. First, turn the bag inside out. Second, place the items you would like it to contain in the bag. Third, mark it, empty it and neatly cut off the access. Finally, weave an 8" zip tie through the lower set of holes around the bottom of bag.

### Padding Kits

I've been making padding kits available to NGPP members for the last three years. For those who



Padding kit

don't know what I'm referring to, it's a 125' x 2" roll of 20 mil polycarbonate film, a splicing tool and tape, (used for re-attaching used material), all in a mesh bag for storage. The kit is primarily used for performing double cuts over sensitive areas such as uncertain wall surfaces or blank stock. Basically, in a room with a common ceiling line, you would cut two identical strips of the particular lengths the room will require and alternate them between the double cut you are about to perform and the one you are setting up. One change: I no longer reat-

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# The INSTALLER

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# CROSS-TRADE NETWORKING

By Scott Burt, Topcoat Finishes, Jericho, Vermont

In November, I contributed an article to The American Painting Contractor's Wood Finishing Guide. The piece was about a recent stain grade project on which we used an oil modified urethane to match up to custom finished lacquer cabinets. Shortly after the magazine came out, I was contacted via email by a number of people in the industry. NGPP member Kari Kronborg of Colorado was one of them. She told me that her company does some painting and wood finishing in addition to wallpaper installations, and she was looking for tips on how to darken some existing light stained and varnished woodwork on a paper installation project. I was able to make a couple of product and process suggestions and she was very appreciative.

My company, Topcoat Finishes, Inc., belongs to the PDCA and is located in Vermont. We have a great network of local trades people with whom we enjoy reciprocal referrals on projects. It brings a lot of value to our customers to be able to recommend others. As an example of the power of such relationships: last year, our primary supplier referred an out of state designer to us who was looking for a paint contractor for local design projects.

After working on a few projects together, I was able to refer one of our customers to the designer for a consultation. The consultation led to a home office design/paint project, which not only created a project for us and the designer, but also allowed me to refer a finish carpenter for some custom shelving. Our customer was thrilled with the results of the office, and asked us to do color consulting and painting in the stairway, hallway and the other surrounding rooms. Meanwhile, our designer placed some of our collaborations in national publications and websites. This exposure produced more local leads and referrals for our businesses. At the same time, the finish carpenter has referred paint work back to us, and we all send our customers to the supplier who initially brought us together initially. And so the cycle repeats itself.

I can't help but think of the possibilities for inter-trade networking between members of trade associations in different states and regions. It would be

beneficial to the painting and wallcovering trades if members were able to connect more, and especially if this were facilitated and encouraged by their respective associations. There are not many wallpaper installers in Vermont, so my company's relationships with NGPP members are very important. When we are asked to refer a wallpaper installation pro, I am able to contact Bill Archibald and find out if he himself can come up from Boston for the project, or if he can refer another NGPP member who might. For Kari Kronborg and I, that is a logistical impossibility - although I would love to do a winter project in Colorado and bring my skis - however it is mutually beneficial to share specific information to help each other out and improve our trades.

I have been lucky to become friends with several NGPP professionals who are members and even moderators of online contractor forums. These folks

have impressed me with their knowledge of paint products and processes, and their interest in learning more. I, in turn, have picked up a lot of useful information thanks to their willingness to share freely. So, when I heard from Kari, it was my pleasure to offer up some advice on interior wood staining. Somewhere down the road, she will have some answers for me. Several times a year, my paint company is asked to strip wallpaper, and I usually find that each situation is in some way unique. I always have questions, and there is a value to being able to consult an NGPP member on wallcovering and glue characteristics as well as which stripping products and processes to use for success. It's nice to know that I can add Kari to the list of pros in my network.

*Scott Burt owns and operates Topcoat Finishes, Inc. in Vermont. He can be reached at [www.topcoatfinishes.com](http://www.topcoatfinishes.com)*



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- Round trip bus transportation from Madison, Wisconsin
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Pkg #3 – 4 People per boat per person price: \$569.00 plus taxes

Prices are subject to change – a deposit of \$100.00 required.

This trip is open to all NGPP members, family and friends. Contact Steven Kaye, Midwest Regional Director, at [leensteven@aol.com](mailto:leensteven@aol.com) or (847) 338-9461 for more information.

# How It's Made: The Demo Wall

By John Little, John Little & Associates, Kennesaw, Georgia

At the recent convention in Asheville, North Carolina there were many accolades concerning the demo walls. Many thanks the members of the Atlanta Chapter and the Southeast Region who gave up their free time to help plan, construct, and then afterwards de-construct the walls. Have you noticed that destruction is much faster and more fun than construction? Without a doubt the successful hands-on aspect of the convention would not have happened without everyone who helped out.

The simple design of the demo walls was duplicated from the Atlanta Workshop held in July 2006 although on a slightly larger scale. The materials list included 68 2" x 4"s, 28 4' x 8' sheets of ½" drywall, 5 gallons of joint compound, a large box of wood screws and drywall screws, brad nails, steel reinforced tape for inside and outside corners, and numerous moldings to trim around. We had 144' of wall space in the Crowne Plaza Resort in Asheville and I'm glad that we did since it all got used at one time or another. Included were 10 outside corners, 16 inside corners, and numerous moldings and trim pieces to practice making templates for bamboo. How much fun is that?

The walls are basically a series of 6' x 8' sections attached to each other in the middle forming a series of H sections. This design makes the walls very stable and allows for simultaneous demos all around. Each panel consists of a top and bottom 96" 2" x 4"s (no cuts) and five 69" vertical 2" x 4"s which are placed 24" on center. It is important to have one placed directly in the middle since the panels will be attached together at that point. We saved the 27" pieces from the 69" cuts for corner blocking (to attach drywall in the inside corners) as well as a few angle pieces on top of the walls for added stability. We constructed all the sections at one time. Hold one section up, cross it with another section, like a T, attach in the middle (2.5" screw) and so on and bingo you've got a wall.

Installing drywall is pretty quick since most cuts are in half longwise

for the 8' sections, one full piece runs horizontally then a half piece to give you a 6' wall. The small sections are a full piece cut at 6' run vertically. We trimmed off the excess drywall on the outside corners after attaching it. We used the steel reinforced tape (like it) on the inside and outside corners and standard paper tape on the butt seams. We had the time so standard joint compound was used but in a rush a quick dry compound can be utilized. Keep in mind that some paints/primers do not adhere well to quick dry compounds and many drywall contractors will coat them with standard compound before finishing.

We finished them off with a good heavy coat of primer/sealer then a couple of Atlanta Chapter members with both the tools and skills attached all the various moldings and adornments. This challenge was a lot of work but well worth it. It was almost a shame to tear the walls down afterwards but I'm sure that the hotel had other plans for the room. Keeping with the "green" theme the maintenance guys did express interest in the 2" x 4"s as well as the empty buckets and leftover paper. If anyone has an interest in building similar walls at a future convention or workshop please contact the Atlanta Chapter and we'll tell you how to do it!

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*(Tools - continued from page 7)*  
tack used header material to the main roll. The kit is better served reattaching used header material to a separate header strip. The kits are relatively small, less than 8" across and 3" high and weigh less than three pounds, so they take up little space considering the quality assurance they can add to an installation.

I hope this recap has been helpful. Feel free to contact me at (804)647-0057 for more information or to add to these ideas. You can also log on to the NGPP Bulletin Board at <http://www.ngpp.org/lounge/> to read more descriptions, and see pictures of each topic covered here. Necessity really is the mother of invention, and your feedback contributes to the evolu-

# KOVNAT AWARD TO MIKE KELLY JR

By Vinny LaRusso, Time for a Change Wallpapering, Inc., Brewster, New York

The 2008 NGPP Sam Kovnat award was presented to Mike Kelly, Jr. C.P., Michael J. Kelly & Son, Inc., Wayne, Pennsylvania.

The citation for presentation read:

*Mike has been a member of the NGPP for 27 years. He has been a member of the Delaware County Chapter for many years, serving as president of the chapter, is one of the originators of the paperhanger training program at the Williamson Free School of Trade, is currently a Certified Paperhanger and a Certified Belbien Installer, was National Convention Chair for four years, is a PDCA member and liaison for the NGPP, served on the National Board as President, Vice President and has chaired several committees. Kelly has also been to 28 of the last 29 National conventions. A well deserved honor.*

Here's a little more about the man. He graduated from Radnor Senior High School in 1974. He is an avid golfer and was a crew chief on a successful semi-professional Corvette drag racing team for five years.

Mike's father, Michael J. Kelly, Sr. started the company just after World War II and taught Mike the trade from the ground up. Mike worked for his dad in the painting and papering business since he was a boy. They were partners during the late 80's and Mike started running the business solely in 1990 and purchased the business from his father in 1993. Mike's dad was a dedicated and active member of the PDCA for most of his professional career. Mike has followed his father's example by being an active and dedicated member of both the PDCA and the NGPP for decades.

Mike currently has 10-15 employees, depending on the workload and time of year. He specializes in high quality residential and commercial painting, wall coverings and specialty coatings.

Mike is the Mid-Atlantic Region's representative/dealer of Belbien, a sophisticated vinyl film surfacing product developed in Japan and introduced to the American market this

*(continued on page 16)*

# IT'S JUST ANOTHER DAY ON THE JOB

By Steven Kaye, C.P., Paper Craft Interiors, Inc., Algonquin, Illinois

Life is such a learning experience that it keeps on tapping on our shoulders and reminding us that we're never too old to smarten up. You would think after 30+ years of installing wallpaper that I would be prepared to handle any issues that arise when it comes to dealing with customers. Who thinks that their customer feels that they are being treated unfairly, even insulted, by your business practices?

Please let me return to when it all started. It was early June, business is great. What could be better, summer in Chicago with both ball teams in 1st place and the talk of World Series? I get a call from a homeowner who wants a fabric-backed vinyl installed in their stairway. The job consisted of two side walls for each set of stairs and another small side wall off of the second floor.

I met with them and gave the estimate. I got to see the samples of the wallpaper from the wallpaper book and I measured for a total of 14 rolls. It was one pattern of six and six for each stairway, the other two for the small side wall. Prime and install for \$750, giving 10% to the painter who recommended me. I'd walk out of there with \$675 for 8-10 hours of work.

The homeowner wanted it installed before July 4th. They were having family visiting from out of state and wanted to spruce up the place. I had a day for them and everything was set.

They ordered the wallpaper and told me it would be in on time. Unbeknownst to me the homeowner decided to have their stairway and hallway hardwood floors refinished before I was to wallpaper.

Now for those of you who don't know about summers in Chicago, they can be quite humid. I was to wallpaper for them on Monday, June 30th and called them the Friday before to confirm the day and to make sure they had the vinyl. That's when they told me about the floors and that they would not be ready to walk on.

I was able to fill the time and re-schedule for later on in the week. Another day goes by and the homeowner tells me the color is wrong and the install will have to wait till after the 4th. Trouble is brewing.

I finally get down to them to wallpaper on Tuesday, July 15th. I arrived at 7:30 a.m. and the homeowner tells me that when he opened up the bag of wallpaper (just before I arrived) that the order was incorrect. They had 12 rolls for the small side wall (a different pattern) and two rolls for the stairway. They were extremely apologetic (no kidding) and I, well, to say the least, let them know that I was not happy with their apology.

After a half hour of all of us standing around, I came up with the brilliant idea of switching the patterns, since they were coordinating patterns anyways. I started priming the walls while they decided on what to do.

An hour later they said it would be fine to go along with my suggestion. I cleaned up my primer tray and brought it out to my van, brought in more drop cloths, and my table and set up to hang.

Now it keeps on getting better. I pull out the wallcovering and start taking measurements. The vinyl that was meant for the small side wall was 26" wide; the vinyl for the stairway was 27" wide, each nine yards long. Remember, I'm going to switch the patterns. I mark out the first stairway wall and count six panels and a 6" strip of a seventh panel for the second stairway. I need a total of 13 sheets.

I realize something is wrong. I look at my notes from my estimate. I measured each wall at 162" and being that the original stairway paper was 27" wide I would need exactly 6 sheets per wall. Because of the drop of the stairway I knew I would get only two sheets per double.

I start to grumble to myself that my brilliant idea has backfired on me and this once positive day has

become anything but that. I explain to the homeowner that there will not be enough wallpaper and that they need to order an additional double roll. I hang what I have. BIG MISTAKE, as we all realize by now. This was a difficult position to be in and very easy for someone else (who has been in this predicament before) to give advice as to what to do.

Either way I lose. I figured if I tell them before I start, for me to come back down and finish the job I would need an additional \$180 that they would tell me to forget it, pack up my things and leave. I would think they would pay me for the priming. What would I get? \$150-\$250, that would suck.

As I said I hung what I had. When it came time for me to leave I brought up the additional labor (\$180) to come back and finish. To set up and hang two rolls then break down would take about three hours.

They didn't get it and they became very defensive. They said I was out of line, and that I was insulting them in what I was asking for.

I was stunned and at a loss for words. I couldn't get the words out and for those who know me I'm sure you are all surprised. Why didn't I say to them, "checking your wallpaper order just before I walked in your door was your fault and you need to pay for your mistake, not me?"

I settled for \$50. I went back to finish several weeks later when the additional two rolls came in. How disappointing was that? So I made \$725 for two days. I probably lost a customer, although I wouldn't go back to them if they asked me to, but that's just me.

Next time I won't get myself into this type of situation again. You see I now make sure that the homeowner checks to see if they have correct wallpaper and quantity. I'm covering myself, until life's experiences come up and bite me in the butt again. That will probably be tomorrow.

# WWWW CONTEST: BIGGER THAN EVER!

By Phil Curtis, C.P., Curtis Enterprises, South Holland, Illinois and NGPP Winning Walls With Wallcovering Committee Chair

The 2008 Winning Walls with Wallcoverings contest not only had a record number of entries but also a very diverse base of work. Evidence of that included the two hundred eighty-three pictures exhibited in a slide loop presentation during the WWWW luncheon sponsored by The Zinsser Company in Asheville. Also, new last year were posters lining the entrance into the WWWW luncheon that displayed a collage of the entrants' photographs from 2000 to 2008. These posters not only highlighted the winning projects with a blue ribbon but also had photos of many of the years' entries. This addition to the WWWW event also exhibits Zinsser's strong commitment to this valuable Guild program.

To begin with, I want to outline the contest changes for this year. Afterwards, I will highlight the first place winners from the 2008 contest. The second place and honorable mention winners will be featured in future *Installer* articles. The 2009 contest will again see some modifications to the rules. These modifications are the result of suggestions from the designers and industry personnel who helped judge the contest. They are also the result of feedback we continually receive from our paperhanger members and associates over the course of the entire year. This year we will be reducing the maximum word count of 2000 words for each essay to 1500 words.

Many members submit essays less than the maximum allowable word count. Some entrants have used the limit. The judges seem to agree that most everything they need to know about the project should be achievable with 1500 words or less. Over the years, the judges have heard the entrant's starting and quitting times, what they had for lunch, details about the client, and so forth. The judges have consistently said that superfluous information puts them to sleep and usually works against the entrant in the judging process. My advice to all the 2009 entrants is to



Glen Olsen, Jr., C.P., V & G Services, and John Damme, C.P., Exquisite Interiors, the first place winners in the Specialty category installed 30 yards of silk and 33 panels of a Stark scenic mural.



Scott Mulhern, Scott Mulhern Custom Paperhanging, won first place in the Residential category in the 2008 WWWW Contest. Scott installed a multitude of wallcoverings in a child's room in a nineteenth century loft building.

keep your essay well focused.

Conversely, the judges recommended that the maximum number of photographs will be increased from twenty photos up to thirty-five. Please remember that these pictures also need to "tell the story" of the project. It's strongly suggested that you submit "before and in progress" photographs in addition to the completed project pictures. It is always highly recommended that all pictures should be captioned and referenced to your essay wherever possible.

In the past we have recommended submitting pictures in the larger 8" x 10" format. With the increase in total number of pictures for 2009 to thirty-five, that can be costly. The judges have commented that the standard size of 4" x 6" prints works well when the subject matter of the photograph is not referencing any fine detail. Also, the "before" pictures of the overall job site or any rigging of equipment or set up again could be conveyed in the standard 4" x 6" format.

In our continued effort to preserve anonymity of the entries, this year we will not allow any pictures with people in them. Please do not send these pictures, as they will be removed from your entry prior to the judging. If you have already taken pictures of your project that have people in them, please crop the individuals out of the photos or blacken out the people.

Again, this year we would like your essay and pictures to be accompanied by a CD of your photographs. This electronic file is needed to have a high resolution image of your pictures which can be used throughout the year in the numerous trade magazine articles which now feature not only our WWWW winners but also stories about

(continued on page 12)

(**WWWW** - continued from page 11)

unique and challenging projects. This year your entire entry—the completed entry form, your essay, and your photos must ALL be postmarked by the contest deadline of June 15, 2009.

Please be sure to check the Guild website for additional WWWW information.

Now on to our 2008 Winning Walls with Wallcovering contest winners.

First place in the residential category was awarded to Scott Mulhern, Scott Mulhern Custom Paperhanging, Hopewell, New Jersey. Scott installed a multitude of wallcoverings in a child's room in a nineteenth century loft building in downtown Manhattan (New York).

Drawing on his decades of experience, Scott searched through endless wallpaper books and selected materials that would be perfect for this one-of-a-kind nursery. He chose Bradbury and Bradbury's "Empire Star" wallcoverings, a cloud pattern from Chesapeake, and a menagerie of giraffes, lions, monkeys, zebras, elephants, and palm trees.

Scott transformed this 12' x 18' room for his first grandchild into a whimsical but serious collaboration of clouds, stars, celestial objects, palm trees and nearly large as life jungle animals. He painstakingly trimmed every hair and detail on the animals and palm trees and carefully placed them on the walls overlooking the baby furniture. Scott also cut many materials into various shapes to create special effects and detail to the ceiling and walls.

Scott's process began with priming the room with tinted Shieldz primer to the various background colors of the wallcoverings he was installing. Most of the background papers were all hand trimmed and hand pasted. The animals and trees were very large and installed with generous amounts of VOV. After careful placement and smoothing, they dried to look as if they were actually part of the background paper. This project was more of a creation than a basic installation. Scott started with a general concept and added layers to it as he went along. Seldom does a project come along where an installer is provided the opportunity to couple his years of experience with his artistic imagination.

In the commercial category, this first place winner met every challenge that came his way. Keith Long of Quality Interiors, Corona, California overcame defective materials,

uncontrolled temperature fluctuations, and numerous other contractors on the jobsite—just to name a few issues.

Numerous contractors walked away from this job.

When it came to Keith, he had only ten days to complete this enormous project. Keith and his crew primed the areas with tinted Zinsser 123 primer to match the background of the materials they were installing. They installed sixty yards of burlap backed acrylic wallcoverings and seven hundred yards of fabric at the flagship Prada store on Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles, California. Keith and his four man crew, working up to fifteen hours per day, used their ingenuity to tackle some their problems; they used an airless sprayer to help speed up the pasting process and custom built two twenty foot tables to accommodate the large panels.

After the burlap backed acrylic was installed in the dressing rooms it had to be painted to look like metal. The fabric (which had up to a three quarter inch drift in the pattern) was installed on ceilings, soffits, walls, wrapped panels, doors, shelves, seating areas, and two forty foot long molded fiberglass walls made to look like curtains. Use of their PLS lasers was instrumental both in recognizing this pattern drift and monitoring for this defect during installation. Keith and his crew even used some of their upholstery skills to

cover several of the walls. Another of their problems they overcame was two ninety-foot long soffits that were hung railroaded with no seams. Keith is a relatively new member to the Guild and sincerely thanks the national and local chapter for making it possible for him to expand his commercial vinyl business into the areas of fabric and high-end installations. He states that it would not have been possible without the networking and exposure to other experienced Guild members.

The first place winners in the specialty category installed thirty yards of silk and thirty-three panels of a Stark scenic mural above a chairrail in a dining room that included three separate niches. One niche was a doorway that was set back to a butler's pantry; another included a curved niche and the last one contained shelf supports that the homeowner insisted could not be removed during the mural installation.

With the designer having no experience with scenic murals, the success of this project relied solely on the



*Keith Long, Quality Interiors, overcame defective materials, uncontrolled temperature fluctuations, and a tight time schedule to install 60 yards of burlap backed acrylic wallcoverings and seven hundred yards of fabric at the flagship Prada store on Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles. This job won the WWWW first place award in the commercial category.*

(Continued on page 16)

# YOU SEE BAD NEWS. . . I SEE SMART CONTRACTORS

By Greg Laux, MDC Wallcoverings, Elk Grove, Illinois and NGPP National Associate Member Committee Chair

None of us can avoid the dominating financial news. Our financial realm has become a whorl of uncertainty and insecurity. Critical questions are being asked in conference rooms throughout the industry: What does this post financial adjustment world look like from the associates' perspective? Where are we headed? How long will this last? How deep will this be? And most importantly (come on, we all know it): What will this mean for an installer whose primary business is residential?

In general, I would say the last quarter of the year caused a great re-assessment for most financial forecasts throughout what I like to call "Wallpaper World". That world is populated by those of us who make a living in any aspect of wallpaper: suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and installers.

The last quarter of the year is commonly a period of financial review (looking at the performance of the last year and then projecting and budgeting for the next 12 months.) This time, however, the process involved a careful re-assessment which primarily focused on the tightening of credit throughout the business community as a whole and the real estate sector in particular.

What those conferences discussed is no secret if you have a television or a radio . . . restrictive lending has greatly and noticeably slowed both new construction and remodeling by choking the available money. (Of course this happened primarily in the commercial marketplace, but don't ignore the fact that the residential sector was already experiencing an acknowledged contraction.)

Okay and thanks, Mr. Obvious, but what meaning does this hold for me? A few thoughts:

1. Competition will increase to chase the fewer available dollars. Slowing business in the commercial real estate sector will show up with two factors: those contractors who moved into that commercial seg-

ment over the last 10 years will scramble to re-orient and garner back some of the residential work which they ignored while commercial work was plentiful...and...the money which came from this sector back into local communities will consequentially also tighten.

If the bankers and mortgage brokers, the developers and holders of commercial lease properties, the



owners of medium contracting and maintenance businesses, all return to their homes each month with less disposal cash to spend on their home, then the people who service those homes will soon sense the result.

All of that is further tightened when each layer realizes that the value of that home asset continues to shrink. The good news: most of these contractors will have a higher and less flexible overhead than smaller more nimble companies.

2. Your economy is not national. For most of you, that is the best news of all. Home values have not been impacted equally across all communities, certain industries are stronger than others, and diverse metropolitan areas can absorb a downturn better than communities with only a single industry dominating (think of Detroit).

3. No way to know how long it will last. Last time I looked, most economists missed the signals about what was going to happen in September. What makes you think they can now accurately forecast the turnaround with precision? Several "experts" have suggested the cloud surrounding real estate

will not lift until mid 2010. Waiting it out with no adjustment is simply not an option for most businesses. Appropriate adaptation is required.

4. In most cases, it would be accurate to suggest that the residential installer will be the last in a long line to feel the contraction of the local community spending. But that is not to suggest months of delay. Fear can be carried into many homes with the evening news. It takes not much more than a hesitant checkbook in the hands of a cowering consumer to remove a particular percentage of your annual income. How much? Again, that might hinge on where you are. In associates' conference rooms focused on commercial customers, some budgets have been adjusted 10-18% in a guestimate to reflect this new but yet unknown reality. But that might not be a relevant forecast for you. Those adjustments typically are based on national business and thus average large "trends" which may prove meaningless to you in your region.

So, how to adapt? Tighten non-critical spending, trade smarter and lower cost marketing concepts, find the weak link in your business chain and then strengthen it. Be confident. (No one wants to invite a contractor with fear in their eyes onto their project.) Polish up your business communications, remember how much experience you bring to each project, know that your proposal numbers are correct (because more of them will be challenged this year) so you can confidently justify them.

Most of all, remember that the problem solving skills that you hone everyday during installation are the same skills which you will use to determine how you will adjust and make . . . well, let's just call them necessary corrections.

If that doesn't work, perhaps a fine Steve Andrews rendition of "New York, New York" will make you smile. And we can all use the occasional smile.

# NEW ENGLAND PDCA MEETING REVIEW

By Heidi LeBaron Johnson, Fine Interior Finishing, Williamsburg, Massachusetts

On the rainy, dark weekend of November 14th and 15th, 2008, an assorted team of NGPP members from Berkshire, Boston, and at-large gathered to characteristically either fully attend or respectfully lurk at the New England Council Paint and Decorating Contractor Association annual meeting.

The full two-day meeting was held in Northampton, Massachusetts at the Clarion Hotel, which is ten minutes north of the familiar-to-many West Springfield location of the NGPP March Madness Workshops I through V.

PDCA's New England Council generously invited the neighboring NGPP Northeast Region to host an information table at the Friday afternoon Vendor Expo. Members Bill Archibald, Tim Bodine, Roger Coupal, and Heidi Johnson staffed the booth, promoting networking across the trades. Archibald and Bodine showed PDCA members the NGPP website's "Find a Paperhanger"

directory on their laptops. Lincrusta samples were introduced to attendees by Johnson, while Coupal shared samples and information one-on-one with curious painters. For Coupal, "The best part was talking shop and seeing some good friends."

The convention program was comprised of two tracks, business based or technically oriented. Johnson and NGPP member Michael Germain, C.P. registered for the "Business Boot Camp." This forum provided input for gathering information on varied topics ranging from establishing a business plan to estimating and assessing strengths, weaknesses, and threats, to weathering a recession.

"The all-day Business Boot Camp workshops were quite relevant, being led by fellow trade business owners," reports Johnson. "The combination of lecture and roundtable discussion for the multiple

one-hour segments ensured that each participant could apply the information to his/her own business, right then and there."

At the close of Saturday morning's panel discussion, which presented perspectives from four categories of New England painting businesses and moderated by PDCA's Richard Bright, Germain appreciatively exclaimed, "That was the best one of those I've ever been to!"

In retrospect Germain adds, "Normally networking is my favorite part of trade conventions. However this time the Business Boot Camp was my favorite. Hearing other business owners share information about topics like marketing, insurance, and hiring and firing among other things was eye opening. It let me know that I am doing some things right, and that I could improve a lot of others."

*(Continued on page 16)*



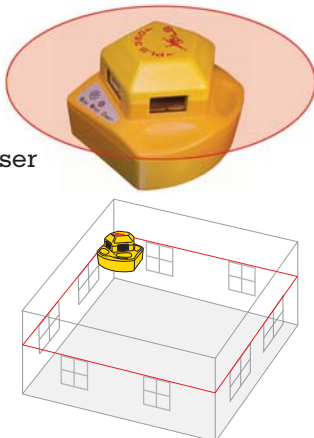
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# WHAT IS THE GOING RATE? PRICING, ESTIMATING, AND SUCCESS

By Brian Phillips, BEP Enterprises, Inc., Houston, Texas

One of the most challenging aspects of running a contracting business is estimating jobs. For someone with little experience, estimating can be a rather scary endeavor (it can also be scary for someone with tons of experience). After all, the accuracy of the estimate will have a huge impact on the contractor's success.

This, I believe, is the primary reason we see so many questions asking what to charge for a job. But such questions are misdirected, because what I (or anyone else) would charge is completely irrelevant and doesn't address the real issues.

The price of a job is comprised of four basic components: labor costs, material costs, overhead, and profit. Estimating is the process of identifying the labor and material costs. We add our overhead and profit to those costs to obtain our price.

Overhead—advertising, rent, insurance, utilities, phone, owner's salary, etc.—is completely unique to each company. Without knowing these numbers, it is impossible to properly price a job.

Profit goals are also unique to each company. Again, without knowing the specific profit goals for a company, it is impossible to properly price a job.

Consequently, any attempt to answer a pricing question in the absence of these two key numbers is essentially meaningless. More to the point, pricing questions ignore the fact that a large percentage (often more than 50%) of the job's price should be comprised of overhead and profit. (My suspicion is that those who pose such questions don't know their overhead, and mistake gross profit for net profit. But that's a different issue.)

As I said, estimating is the process of identifying the labor and material costs for the job. Labor costs are determined by the type of work performed, the production rates of the workers (the time required to perform each task), and pay rates. As with overhead and profit, these numbers will be unique to each company. Material costs are determined by the type of materials required, the quantity required, and their purchase price.

For example, let us say that a painting contractor knows that his painters can prepare and paint a certain style of door in 30 minutes. He looks at a job that has 10 of these doors. He knows that his painters can prep and paint these doors in five hours. He can also calculate the materials required by the spread rate of the product he will use. The contractor can now determine what his costs will be for the job. By adding his overhead and profit to these costs he will have his price for this job.

While the above example is simple and uses a painting project, the same principle applies to every contracting job—large or small, simple or complex—regardless of trade.

What should I charge for X really means: what is the total of my labor costs, material costs, overhead, and profit? And the answer to that question requires a substantial amount of additional information. Providing an answer without that information is simply a guess.

Accurately pricing a job is not rocket science, but it shouldn't be based on conjecture, blind guesses, or another company's numbers either. Certainly accurate estimating takes effort, but owning a successful business isn't easy. Asking what to charge for a job is asking for a short cut, but there are no short cuts to success.

Such questions about prices for a job are inappropriate, because they ignore the many factors that determine the price. Providing a price in response to such questions is also inappropriate, for the same reasons.

It is a documented fact that 90% of small businesses fail within five years. Of those that make it five years, another 90% will fail within the next five years. This means that 99% of small businesses inevitably fail within 10 years. One of the primary reasons for failure is not charging enough. Contractors are as guilty of this as anyone.

There seems to be no shortage of hacks willing to work for dirt cheap prices. And there doesn't seem to be a shortage of replacements for those hacks when they do inevitably fail. One of the most effective means for avoiding failure is to know your numbers. Asking

what to charge for a job is simply an admission that you don't know your numbers.

I hasten to add that there is nothing wrong or inappropriate with asking how to price a job. But how to price is different from what price to give. Learning the process is a good thing. Looking for an easy way out isn't.

Putting wallpaper on the wall is a trade skill. Pricing a job is a business skill. A skilled craftsman does not necessarily make a good businessman, because different skills are required. The owner of a contracting company does not necessarily need to have trade skills, but it is imperative that he have business skills if he is to succeed. The longer you wait to obtain those skills, the closer you move to joining those 99%.

*Brian Phillips is the owner of PhilPaint, Inc. of Houston Texas, and runs a website for creating business systems for contractors. He also writes a daily blog which contains valuable insight to the painting/decorating industry.*

## CHAPTERS

Atlanta (Georgia)  
Baltimore (Maryland)  
Bay Area (Florida)  
Berkshire (Massachusetts)  
Boston (Massachusetts)  
The Carolina's  
Central Pennsylvania  
Chicago (Illinois)  
Coachella Valley (California)  
Columbus (Ohio)  
Connecticut  
Delaware County (Pennsylvania)  
Greater Cincinnati (Ohio)  
Los Angeles (California)  
Miami Valley (Ohio)  
Milwaukee (Wisconsin)  
New Orleans  
New York (Long Island)  
Northern California  
Northeast Ohio  
Northern New Jersey  
Northern Virginia  
Northwest (Oregon)  
Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)  
Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania)  
Rockford (Illinois)  
Rocky Mountain (Colorado)  
San Antonio (Texas)  
San Diego (California)  
South Jersey  
Twin Cities Metro (Minnesota)  
Upstate New York  
Washington DC  
Westchester County (New York)  
Western Carolina (South Carolina)  
Western Lake Erie (Ohio)

(PDCA - continued from page 14)

On the technical track, Archibald and Bodine learned about application tool composition in fibers, filaments, and fabric.

After class, Archibald described the session on the different fibers and fabric used in making brushes and rollers. "It showed how they differed and how the synthetic fibers are made. I thoroughly enjoyed it".

Meanwhile NGPP associate member Jack Ford, of Rustoleum/Zinsser, gave his classic "Mold and Mildew" presentation. Of the registrants, Jack noted how "the business and technical classes were very well attended. My feeling is that those who attended were there to learn and not just socialize."

The learning continued at each of the six meals included in the registration. This provided the time for networking and shoptalk, where NGPP members fielded a number of questions from PDCA members specifically on surface preparation and wallcovering removal. Friday's dinner was also the scene where young paint list-serve members were enthralled to discover they were sharing the table with two of the more entertaining senior paint list-serve participants. For Tim Bodine, this "networking with other painters was the highlight".

Longtime PDCA member and USSPP graduate, and now recent NGPP member, Charlie Gilley of Woodstock, Vermont looks ahead saying "It was nice to meet everyone and I look forward to becoming more active in the Guild and seeing folks in March."

March Madness VI, that is.

(Kelly - continued from page 9)

past decade for interior and exterior commercial, health, educational and entertainment facilities.

At the Asheville convention NGPP First Vice President Elsie Kateina, C.P., enumerated a litany of Mike's accomplishments, initiatives, positions, and responsibilities.

- Delaware County Chapter member of the NGPP since 1984.
- Co-Chairman with Izzy Dubin of Convention Committee 1985
- Appointed NGPP Convention Chairman 1989-1993 under Lou Schiavo, National President
- Delaware County Chapter Board Member from 1985-1993
- Delaware County Chapter President from 1987-1991
- Committee Chairman for the chapter workshop for two years
- One of the three originators of the paperhanging training program at the Williamson Free School of Trade. Currently on Advisory Board
- Current NGPP Certified Paperhanger and a Certified Belbien Installer
- PDCA member from 1993 until present
- National NGPP Member Services Chairperson
- NGPP Trustee for four years.
- First Vice President of the NGPP for our years under Joe Maurer from 1993-1997
- National President for 2 years in 1997-1999
- Current member of the Zinsser Committee Catastrophe Relief Fund
- Current NGPP PDCA Chair

(WWW - continued from page 12)

expertise of Glen Olsen, Jr., C.P., V & G Services, Woodridge, Illinois and John Damme, C.P., Exquisite Interiors, Hickory Hills, Illinois. These seasoned installers meticulously measured, provided detailed site drawings, and completed all the wall preparation for this project. Twenty-four hours of measuring, moving, deleting and reversing elements yielded detailed drawings that were passed from the designer to New York and China so the artists could produce the panels to exactly fit each area.

The installation began with surface prep and a coat of Gardz primer. This was then followed with a coat of Roman's R-35 tacky primer. After this, muslin was dampened and allowed to soak overnight. It was then applied with Pro 880 strippable clear adhesive. After a suitable drying period, blankstock was applied with Pro 838 and then glue sized with Pro 838 adhesive. Glen and John carefully installed the hand painted panels with the utmost precision. Absolutely no adhesive or water could get on the front of these panels because they are so sensitive. Even perspiration could affect these hand painted materials. Trimming was also a very delicate procedure. At times they trimmed as little as 1/16" from the middle of a panel while removing as much as 1/4" from the top and bottom of the same panel.

Besides all the intricate cutting these professionals faced, the elaborate shelves and curved niches in this dining room also demanded great attention to detail and precise cutting. Glen and John learned that the curved niche was not a true curve. They had to employ slip sheeting to avoid cutting through the muslin and blankstock. They were then able to maintain plumb seams during their installation. This project took one hundred and sixty-seven man-hours to complete. Glen and John state with pride that the results from jobs such as these are why we remain paperhangers.

Be sure to check the next issue of the *Installer* for a recap of the 2008 second place winners of the Winning Walls with Wallcoverings contest!



## THE KILLPOINT

*Submitted by Jennifer  
Haigler & Vicki Turner*

What do you do when you forget to bring ladder mitts to the jobsite? You improvise!