

giving the painting industry an image boost—



the craftsman operating procedures

by D. Cochran

Members of the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America (PDCA) are passionate about their craft and their industry. That passion is shown in their pursuit of excellence for their skill and product. For over a hundred years the PDCA has been setting standards for the industry. Yet, the painting industry has an urgent problem: defining the professional painter and improving the industry's image. According to Mario Guertin, PDCA Accredited Contractor and the Founding President of the Craftsmanship Forum, part of the problem has been that, "Typically, if you put 10 painters in a room, you will have 10 different ways to accomplish a task — a variety of different skill levels resulting in varying degrees of quality for the end product." Acknowledging this problem, Dr. Ian R. Horen, CAE, PDCA CEO states, "Unless a painting and decorating contractor is on the job personally, or has established a painter training program, how things are done on site is left up to the foreman or head painter. In cases where the owners are not on the job, the quality, image and ultimately reputation of the company are really being determined by employees, not the owner." Dr. Horen goes on to explain, "One of the most important areas of systems and procedures that is too often overlooked is how room set-up, surface preparation and paint application actually occurs in the field. There is a great deal at stake when owners permit independent judgments

to be made by painters in the field. Aside from company reputation, there is a dilemma of matching the estimate to techniques, procedures and time."

Finding the Solution

The PDCA through the Craftsmanship Forum has developed a solution to this problem — the Craftsman Operating Procedures. The Forum has and continues to create procedures that define and teach the mechanics of proven techniques. By so doing, they are setting a standard for a consistent skill level and a superior quality product every time that specific task is done. This raises the level of quality and professionalism in the industry to a higher standard.

The Craftsman Operating Procedures or COPs place emphasis on the key aspects of the successful completion of paintwork in a craftsman-like manner. Among the components of each COP are the craftsman means and methods laying out the actual sequence required to complete a task. The materials, supplies, tools and equipment, safety, and appearance are identified for each COP as well as definitions of terms where applicable. Each COP provides a linkage to PDCA Industry Standards and literary sources for further illustrative and instructional detail. To quote Mario Guertin, "This is an approach that can become an integral part of your company's quality assurance program. This entire system

is designed so that the business owner can define the company's work, not the painter in the field. Until now, there has been nothing like it available."

Standards and Your Business

How will a standard operating procedure affect you and your business? Documenting these procedures and implementing them enable you to fulfill your promise to your customers of a quality product every time. You are more relaxed because you have created a system that will run your business. You can now depend on this system with confidence knowing that your employees are consistently meeting high quality standards. You have the tools to implement an in-house training program, improving and refining the skills of your employees. This will actually attract and retain employees — employees who are serious about their craft. You will also attract and retain loyal customers, who know they can expect your company to deliver a high standard of quality work on every project.

Implementation Process

Training your staff on the COPs begins with a monthly training session. Two weeks prior to the session, the COP that is to be taught will be mailed out along with an open book test to the employees. It is said, "Repetition is the mother of retention." By going over

the material and completing the test, the process of retention begins. The employee is expected to read through the COP as many times as needed to feel confident that they know the material. They have time to discuss it with the other employees over the following two weeks. If there is a language barrier, the discussion with the other employees will be extremely helpful in clarifying what the employee may not comprehend. Each employee is expected to return the completed open book test to the office the day before the training session. This allows the training to focus more on what was not understood or clear to the employees from the written material. At the beginning of the actual training session a short closed book test of about 5 or 10 minutes, is given to see what the employee has absorbed. Then the training session begins. A physical demonstration of the techniques with one person going through all the steps is now enacted. A passing grade is determined by how employees participated in the training session, and their grades on the two written tests. The company establishes the criteria for a passing grade. The employee must show evidence that they came prepared. A reward, determined by the company, is given for the completion of training.

Proven Success

Rich O'Neil, Chairman of the Forum's COP Committee, implemented the COPs into his company, Masterwork Painting, Inc. Rich points out, "These COPs are a culmination of over 150 years of painting professional experience (referring to the total experience of the committee members). The procedures have been developed with a process of creating, reviewing, and critiquing. The COPs are a collaboration of the committee members who incorporated their expertise and experience into technique and procedure. When I have a training session with my employees based on the COP's objective techniques

and procedures, my employees adapt to the change because it is a non-confrontational approach introducing new techniques and procedures and refining old ones. No employee is being singled out. The COPs provide a foundation that makes it easy to address problems with tasks. The attitudes of my employees have improved. They have become more open to adapt to these new processes. They respect the collaboration of the professionals that wrote the COPs. They pay more attention to detail."

Since Rich has implemented the COPs in his business he has found benefits are two fold; "I see tangible benefits in the consistency of the process and the quality of the end product. In addition, my employees are more open to changing the way they do things to comply with the way the company has decided to do things. There is less resistance to learning new tips that make the job go faster. There is more confidence to base changes on COP standards. To tell a new client that we utilize COPs' in-house training program is an impressive surprise to a prospective client. It says we care about craftsmanship and the quality of the job."

According to Rich, "The COP approach should apply across the industry not just in the residential area. It is not only about being a master painter. It's a mindset — an approach to work that sets a high productivity level in quality that in turn increases profitability. Because the task is done in a logical sequence, the job is done faster and more thoroughly — more quickly with equal quality! A shorter time gives the opportunity to charge a higher rate, and more jobs are accomplished in the same amount of time. Using the COPs makes sense for high volume business. The high production rate and the valuable standardizing steps create an efficient and very profitable way of operating. At the same time improving the image of the industry."

Long Term Goal

Long term the goal of the Craftsmanship Forum is establish a certification program for painters. Mario Guertin commented, "The COPs are a critical link of the training system within a company. They are the missing link in professionalizing the painting field. Not only will they help in quality assurance, but long-term they will establish the benchmarks for a painter certification program where PDCA will not only set the standard levels of competency, but instill pride for the craftsman as well."

Attitudes To COPs

Do the painting professionals realize the immense value of the COPs? A series of 20 COPs were offered for sale at the Pace Show in Dallas. After a demonstration by PDCA's CEO Dr. Ian Horen of its use as a training vehicle in how to paint a door, 13 copies of the series of 20 COPs sold immediately. Yes, once exposed to the COPs, professional painting companies are not only acquiring them but they are eager to find out when more COPs will be added to the series.

The End Result

Summing up the effect on the industry, Dr. Horan says, "Ultimately, these COPs will also help define the work of painters, not as a replacement for in-depth training and trade school programs, but as a means to define how to apply acquired skills in practical circumstances. This marriage will distinguish the professional painter from all others, assist with the definition of painting quality and excellence, contribute to company profitability and help create a true profession where none currently exists."

We have a responsibility to the profession of painting to promote the trade as the skilled craft it truly is, an art. The skill, experience and talent of the master craftsman should





be portrayed and perceived with the respect it justly deserves. The more professional painting companies adopt the COP's, the more rapidly the negative perception of the professional painter will change to a positive one. The public will have good reason to have a favorable image of our industry and respect the talented and skilled craftsman who values professional development and holds his craft to a higher standard.

Where to Find It

For a COP sample and a list of available

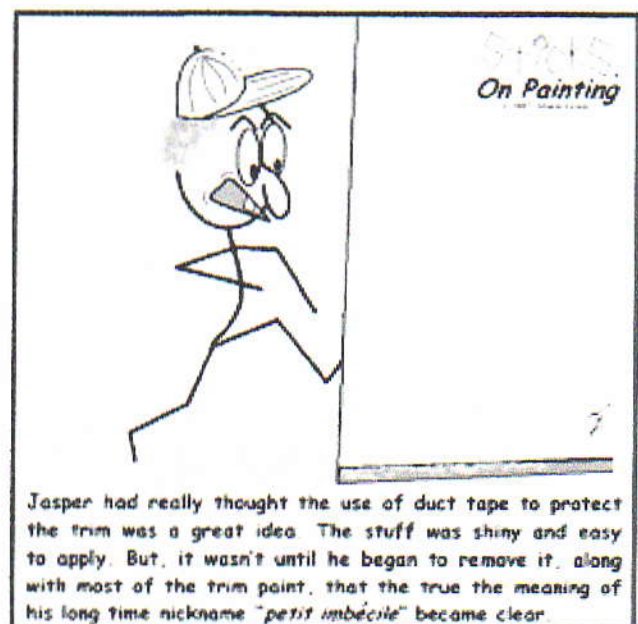
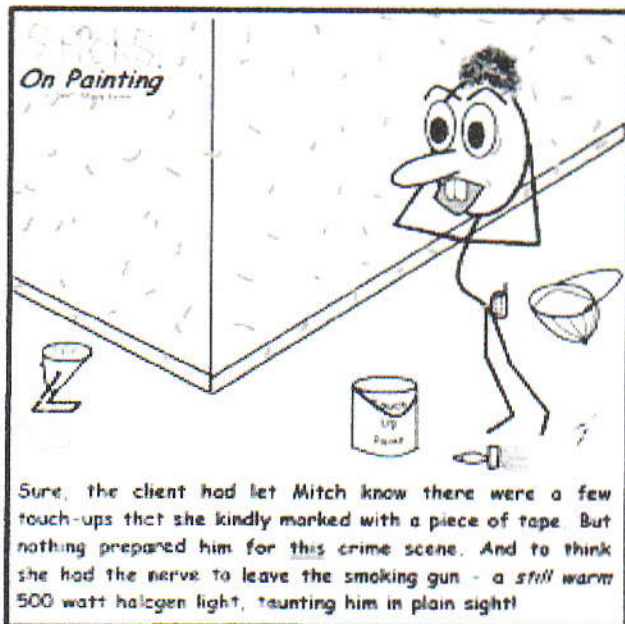
COPs, visit the PDCA's website at www.pdca.org — Click on the Craftsmanship Forum's section. COPs can be ordered by filling out the order form on the Forum's website.

Wanted: You, Your Experience and Expertise

We all talk about investing for our future. There is something you can invest that is not monetary. It is your unique experience and your expertise. It has been obvious that the main ingredient in establishing the COPs are

the professionals that develop them. COPs are still being developed. Why not add your experience and expertise into the mix? The Craftsmanship Forum is looking for new members and participants on the COP Committee. You can be someone who makes a difference in your profession — not just for the present, but also for the future. Visit the PDCA's website and become a member of the Craftsmanship Forum. There are incentives in the form of discounts on membership, Contractor College credits, and discounts on PDCA publications. Be counted among those who are putting their fingerprint on the industry.

sticks on painting « by Mark Lewis



If you like Sticks on Painting or think they would look great on your wall or coffee mug, see more of Mark's work by visiting www.cafepress.com/stickcraft. If you have ideas for a great Sticks cartoon, feel free to e-mail Mark at mark@pccontracting.com.