



GREAT TIPS
for paint
professionals



Let's get down to the reality of painting as a profession – you need a solid business plan and excellent technical skills – and you need them now. Well, **PROFESSIONAL PAINTER** is here to help, with 50 of the hottest business and technical tips you can find from some of the best painting and construction industry professionals in Canada.

ON SITE

1 PRETTY FACE TIP

To make cleaning your hands and face after a day on the job a lot easier, consider using a barrier cream. There are many options on the market and the thing you want to look for in a product like this is how well it penetrates. A cream that does not penetrate into your skin will leave your hands slippery and you also run the risk of getting some on the surface and then you have a problem of spotty paint failure. Try a quarter size amount in your hand, rub it in, wait a couple of minutes and then snap your fingers. If your fingers still feel slippery or your snap is not crisp, then the cream is not soaking in like it needs to. Gloves in a Bottle is one brand that penetrates, moisturizes, protects and will not leave a residue on surfaces even after only a few minutes on your hands.



*Randy Gerrits,
Dynamic Paints Ltd., Edmonton, AB*

2 A PROFILE TEST

When choosing a tape to mask off a surface (especially a smooth one like a window) that involves brushing or rolling and you want to avoid paint bleed under the tape, do a profile test. Take a strip of the tapes you are considering and adhere them to a smooth surface and run your finger over each of them to see which one has the lowest profile. A tape that sticks closer to the surface is far less likely to allow paint seepage. And before you paint, consider taking two minutes to run your finger or the end of your brush along all the edges of all your tape to ensure it is giving you the protection and adhesion you are looking for.

*Randy Gerrits, Dynamic Paints Ltd.,
Edmonton, Alta.*

3 USING PROTECTION

When needing a drop sheet for rooms with laminate, hardwood, tiles or any slippery surface, use a fabric-coated drop sheet because they will not slide. Use one for protecting stairs as well. They are heavier, more pliable and will cling better to the treads and risers. Don't rely on the sheer weight of a drop cloth to decide on its quality because a heavy weight drop cloth with a very loose weave will not give you the protection you need against spills, drips or overspray whereas a lighter drop cloth with a very tight weave will work great.

*Randy Gerrits, Dynamic Paints Ltd.,
Edmonton, Alta.*

4 ADVICE ON TAPE

When choosing fiberglass mesh tape for drywall taping, be sure to look at the tightness of the weave first and not the price of the roll. A mesh with a looser weave will not bond to the drywall as well (less points of contact) and will lead to premature cracking of the joints.

*Randy Gerrits, Dynamic Paints Ltd.,
Edmonton, Alta.*

5 ACRYLIC CLEANING

To make cleaning your brush easier, especially when using 100 per cent acrylic paints, rub a little bit of acrylic paint glaze into your brush before you start, every time you take a break and after cleaning. This will go a long way to preventing fast drying paints from sticking permanently to the brush filaments and will prevent the brush from becoming useless before its time.

*Randy Gerrits, Dynamic Paints Ltd.,
Edmonton, Alta.*

6 RIGHT BRUSH

When the job at hand is best suited to be done with a three inch brush but you find this size of brush too heavy, consider using a short handle Dynamic Half Pint instead – you'll find it easier on your hand.

*Randy Gerrits, Dynamic Paints Ltd.,
Edmonton, Alta.*

7 POLY/BRISTLE BLEND BRUSH

If your daily routine requires you to switch often between alkyds and acrylics, keep a polyester/bristle blend brush close. It is a great filament mixture that does well in the extremes of the paint spectrum.

*Randy Gerrits, Dynamic Paints Ltd.,
Edmonton, Alta.*

8 BOX IT UP

Power tools are useless if you can't find that little wrench that came with them. Every saw eventually needs a new blade, and a router is worthless without a bunch of bits. It seems like a small thing, but putting every hand-held power tool you own into its own box keeps the accessories organized and at-hand, saving you time and boosting your productivity.

*Steve Maxwell, union carpenter, writer,
Manitoulin Island, Ont.*

9 DELEGATE

Have in place an on-site foreman before any project gets underway so that someone other than you knows exactly what the client wants. Having another person make the minute-by-minute decisions—without having to consult you—allows you to handle several projects at once.

*Brian Hoar, Brian Hoar Inc.,
Port Carling, Ont.*

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

10 CHECK COLOUR MATCHES

If an interior designer gives you a specification that clearly identifies a paint company, paint name and number but you choose to colour match it with another company, provide a sample of the matched paint. We have run into situations where the painter painted the wrong colour because the colour match was not done correctly at the paint store. The painter didn't bother to check it against the chip or the spec and he had to repaint the entire project.

*Dianne Winter, The Interior Design Group,
Nanaimo, B.C.*

11 RESPECT PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

If you are working with a designer or other professional on the job, there should be mutual respect for the area of expertise of each person. Look for ways to work as a team. Conflict between the players can create uncertainty in the client.

*Moya McPhail, Moya McPhail Design,
Toronto*

12 PLAN FOR THE SMALL STUFF

Make sure you have time to take care of the details. Take off all the hardware, loosen the caps on light fixtures, and remove all nails or screws. That allows for flexibility when it comes time to replace things. But don't get involved in moving small furniture accessories and table-top knick-knacks – that's someone else's job.

*William Ryan, William Ryan Design Associates,
Port Hope, Ont.*



13 STOP BLAMING NATURE

We were hired to build an art studio in an old house and rather than waiting for dry weather—almost an anomaly in B.C.—we built a “weather-guard system” over the entire house so that no rain or wind would disrupt our work or ruin the artwork. We were working in shorts and T-shirts in February, and the owner felt relieved.

*John Juzyniec, Solution Renovations,
Coquitlam, B.C.*

14 MAKE NICE

Keep peace with the neighbours. This means telling them who you are, how long you expect the job to take, and how they can contact you. If you keep your jobs clean and stifle dust, paint and dirt from getting onto their properties, you're likely looking at future clients.

Annette Darling-Manchester, Cochren Homes, Oakville, Ont.

15 COMMUNICATE OFTEN

On longer jobs, weekly progress reports with digital photographs keep clients happy—they see where their money is going. It takes time, but as your reputation for being a reliable communicator grows, you can place higher job bids. Clients pay more for someone who writes well and keeps them informed.

*Steve Maxwell,
union carpenter,
writer,
Manitoulin Island,
Ont.*



BUSINESS

16 MENTOR

Teach your employees from the bottom up so that promotion comes with a solid understanding of how the entire business operates. Most of our employees have been with us a long time and worked through the ranks so they know how all the pieces fit together.

*Ben Young,
Raymar Group of Companies (Raymar Construction),
Halifax*

17 KNOW YOUR ROLE

Define your role in the company and focus on performing the tasks essential to that role. Don't get caught up in problems that are not your concern. For example, if your role is to run the company and win work, don't get distracted by a computer glitch, a personal email not related to work, or a drawing that should be passed off to your designer. Stay focused on what you do.

*Dennis Bryant, Bryant Renovations,
Toronto*

18 BE AN IDEAS COMPANY

Great ideas are the bread and butter of success. There are 11 key elements that need to be in place for ideas to flourish in your company:

1. Fun

Humour changes the way you think and fosters creative thinking. Humour is two frames of reference slammed together. Ideas come in the same way. Make sure there is room for humour in your company.

2. A willingness to be idea-prone

Like being accident-prone, being idea-prone means you tend to attract ideas. Become idea-prone by thinking of yourself as someone who always gets into ideas.

3. Goals

The pressure of goals is a great motivator for ideas.

4. Innocence

Children are a font of ideas because they don't know any better. That's called innocence. Listen to people who have lots of ideas. They often sound like children, full of enthusiasm and innocence. You need the same attitude.

5. Curiosity

A thirst for knowledge will always cause ideas to pop up when you need them most.

6. Courage

Some ideas don't work at all, but you need to have the courage to try them or you will never score big on the good ideas. Encourage fearlessness.

7. New thinking

Think visually. Creative people think in pictures, not in words. Manipulate those pictures in odd combinations.

8. The habit of combining things

Make an exercise of bringing two thoughts together in weird combinations to see what happens.

9. The right definition of the problem

Always ask yourself, "What is the real problem I am trying to solve here?" Don't solve the wrong problem.

10. Bulldog determination

A good idea half-heartedly applied is worse than no idea at all.

11. A willingness to let go

It sounds like a contradiction to bulldog determination, but it is actually a compliment. Ideas that don't come in the battle will often come during the break.

*From the book "How to Get Ideas" by Jack Foster
Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., San Francisco*

19 TALK HONESTY, NOT MONEY

Never walk in the door and talk money right away. Present yourself as a professional by arriving with an organized, up-to-date portfolio that includes a long list of references, your licensing, and insurance—the whole package. Encourage the client to phone your references and visit the homes you've worked on. It sets a personal tone and shows your capabilities. If you're young and just starting out, tell them so. Your honesty will likely land you the contract.

Mike Holmes, host of Holmes on Homes, Toronto

20 BE SAMPLE CITY

Hang on to every sample you do when you are preparing faux finishes. I am always experimenting with faux finishes and have a ton of samples left over from failed bids as well as successful ones. They become part of my portfolio. What didn't work on one job might be perfect for the next.

Lori LeMare, Lori LeMare Studio Inc., Toronto.

21 FOLLOW UP

We became very successful as faux finishers because we followed up on all our contacts and worked hard to keep our names in their minds all the time.

Lori LeMare, Lori LeMare Studio Inc., Toronto.

22 KEEP UP APPEARANCES

If you show up with clean, canvas drop cloths, dressed in whites, with your tools organized, your clients will feel they are in good hands. Keeping tools and materials organized and confined as you work will mean less stress on the job site.

William Ryan, William Ryan Design Associates, Port Hope, Ont.

23 EXPLAIN YOURSELF

If you're charging more than the next painter, explain how you are offering a greater level of service. Are you going to wash down the walls with TSP? Are you using premium paint? Will you be doing extensive sanding? Be sure to include mention of it in your quote. If you don't, your price may seem inappropriately high.

William Ryan, William Ryan Design Associates, Port Hope, Ont.

24 BAN LOSS LEADERS

There is a general temptation to allow loss-leader thinking on small jobs. That is, you do small jobs at a financial loss in order to gain the customer for future work. But it never works that way because that first job plants a false price expectation in the customer that never goes away. It inevitably happens that, as you begin to introduce more realistic pricing on subsequent jobs, the customer thinks you are taking advantage of the relationship, gets offended, and goes elsewhere.

Dennis Bryant, Bryant Renovations, Toronto

25 BUILD AN ARCHIVE

Win bids by giving clients information packages with digital photos and videos. Take an hour a week to document every job you do, archive the results on a honking-big hard-drive, and you'll look like a million bucks when it comes time to introduce yourself, even if you're a one-man show.

*Steve Maxwell,
writer for the construction industry,
Manitoulin Island, Ont.*

26 MEET AND MEET AGAIN

A lot of contractors meet with the client once and then make a bid, but it's much more effective to meet with the client several times—suggesting alterations to the plan, discussing materials—so by the time the bidding gets underway, you've already worked through the details, the client trusts you, and you'll land the bid.

*Jim Walowski, Four J's Construction,
Red Deer, Alta.*

27 GET A WITNESS

Post client testimonials and pictures on your website so that potential customers can read and view your work—even before they speak with you. Everyone claims to be trustworthy, but reading it through other people—and seeing the photos—reinforces it. It shows you've got nothing to hide.

*John Juzyniec, Solution Renovations,
Coquitlam, B.C.*

28 INVEST ONLINE

Have a great website, not just a good one. We get a lot of business from people who find us online. They can view our testimonials, see the awards we've won, and view project galleries. It shows that we're professional and established.

*Paul Rawlings,
Rawlings Homes,
Idleton, Ont.*



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

29 ADMIT IT

Be quick to accept responsibility. Nothing builds respect like the willingness to acknowledge that you don't know the answer to a question, or that an error was your fault. I once did some damage to a car parked in the client's driveway. It would have been easy to deny it, but as soon as I could, I contacted the owner and described what happened. They were upset but appreciated my offer to pay for the damage, and then, kindly, turned it down. When you admit you don't know something, you actually increase your client's confidence in you. It's counter-intuitive to admit ignorance, but it works.

*Frank Cohn, Cohn Construction,
Mississauga, Ont.*

30 OPEN YOUR MIND

Be willing to learn, adapt and change. For example, if you have worked with a client in the past and a new designer with new ideas is added to the mix, try to make it work. That will open up possibilities for everyone.

*William Ryan, William Ryan Design Associates,
Port Hope, Ont.*

31 LISTEN WELL

Two-way communication is incredibly important. You are often translating language into paint colour. Learn to 'see' and 'hear' what the designer or client is asking for.

*Moya McPhail, Moya McPhail Design,
Toronto*

32 BE IN BUSINESS

Be a businessperson, not a painter. Even if you are painting because you are the only one in the business, always have in your mind that you are a businessperson first. Eventually, as your company grows and you hire people to take over those tasks, business will become your central focus and you will feel as if you're entering into a roll you were always meant to be in rather than a role that is totally unfamiliar and foreign.

*Michael Upshall, Probuilt by Michael Upshall,
Bolton, Ont.*

33 DON'T BE A LONER

Stop working in isolation and make a point of going to conferences and speaking with other paint contractors. Take courses and become active in your local association. If you aren't meeting regularly with other professionals, you will quickly become outdated and people will forget about you.

*Brian Hoar, Brian Hoar Inc.,
Port Carling, Ont.*

34 EDUCATE YOURSELF

Learn as much as possible so that you don't sound like a dummy. Educate yourself on the new paint products by reading magazines, going to trade shows, and enrolling in seminars. If you don't keep up-to-date, you're just part of the old system.

Mike Holmes, host of Holmes on Homes, Toronto

35 SPEAK THE TRUTH

If you make a promise to be somewhere at a specific time, be there. If you promise to finish on a given day, then finish on that day. People want to see results after you've made the promise and don't care why you could not fulfill your promise. Hire emergency trades, at your cost, if need be.

Doug Snowie, Classic Décor, Newmarket, Ont.

ESTIMATING

36 ALWAYS WIN

Take the attitude that you will win every job you bid on. There are no throw-away quotes. If it is worth going to see the first time, make your time count and put in an honest quote. It's better to add some money to a quote than to leave no wiggle room to start out with. Every one per cent extra means more profit, without being unreasonable.

Doug Snowie, Classic Décor, Newmarket, Ont.

37 DON'T LOWBALL

Give a fair and accurate bid no matter how much pressure you are under. Going for the low bid or an unreasonable price point will only cause you problems mid-project when you have to start haggling over every little thing.

Jim Morash, Jim Morash Construction, Halifax

38 LEARN TO QUOTE ACCURATELY

Take into consideration the materials, preparation, touch ups — everything, so that there are no surprises in the end. You should be able to come back at the end of the job to take care of minor details without quibbling about money.

Moya McPhail, Moya McPhail Design, Toronto

ADMINISTRATION

39 INTEGRATE YOUR SOFTWARE

We combined our accounting software with our project-management program so that everything is interlinked. Now we don't lose money by booking our guys in at two jobs at once, for example. It eliminates any overlaps and also keeps track of every dollar.

Paul Rawlings, Rawlings Homes, Idleton, Ont.

THE TRADE

Tips to the trade from Randy Gerrits, Dynamic Paints Ltd., Edmonton, Alta.

40

SANDPAPER TEST

One way to test the quality of sandpaper is with the fold test. Try to fold it in a straight line and if you have a real tough time getting it to fold nice and straight, that means either the paper is too heavy for use with a sanding tool or the grit is not evenly applied meaning it will likely not last long. Also, the fold test will tell you how long your paper will last by virtue of how much grit falls off. If very little grit falls off, then the paper will last quite long and if a whole bunch falls off when folded, the opposite is true.



41 VARIABLE EXTENSION POLE

An extension pole that goes from one to two feet can be your best friend so many times – hallway work, closets and other confined places that you can't get a ladder into and less strain on your back at the same time.

42 MINI ROLLER MAGIC

Using a mini roller to spot prime patches is faster than using a brush and eliminates any chance of having brush marks contrast with the roller finish when the final coat is applied. For staining fences with lattice components and/or fences with concave or convex boards, using a 4" or 6" mini roller will be faster than a brush, be a lot less messy, use less stain and save time. Don't let mini rollers fool you by their size alone – many fabrics used (especially micro fibres) are designed in such a way that they will hold a ton of stain or paint relative to their volume.

43 NEW TOOL PREP

Always comb out your new paint tools before using them to remove any loose filaments or fibers.

44 A TIP WITH A SPIN

Oil your spinner before and after every use.

45 SPRAY CLEAN

Spray equipment is expensive, a pain to clean and prone to premature failure when tons of overspray gets on it. Dynamic makes two sizes of inexpensive sprayer covers that are elasticized to stay on, breathable so the pump does not overheat and cheap enough that you can dispose of them when they get covered – way less expensive than the time needed to clean or fix the machine!

46 TEST THE SPONGE

Before you decide on a sanding sponge, do the squeeze test – check out how dense the foam in the middle is by squeezing the sponge. Generally speaking, you want a sponge with a very dense foam so that during use, the abrasive edge you are using stays flat and keeps the surface you are sanding flat too. Too soft a foam and you will have a very tough time sanding anything flat and that will add time and steps to your project.

47

CAULKING TEST

How to choose a finish caulking for those small beads? Take a tube of each caulk you are considering, cut the ends exactly the same, get the pressure in the gun up to the point where the caulk is just about to come out and then give a couple of full and even trigger squeezes. The caulk that comes out the least or the one that needs the strongest pressure to get it to come out is probably not refined enough to give you that controlled bead you need for finishing and will cause you lots of grief for this last step of many projects.



48 KNIFING YOUR PROFITS

When choosing a putty knife, the thing you want to look for is a nice consistent bend of the whole blade and a blade that does not bend too easily. A blade that is not tapered properly will bend more at the end or more towards the handle and in neither case will you get the control you want to apply filler, spackle or drywall mud evenly. That means more sanding will be needed or second fillings will be needed – more steps equals more time and more time means less profits!

*Bruce MacKinnon, Editor,
Professional Painter
Toronto, Ont*

49 FINESSE YOUR FINISHES

Observe the finer points of paint finishes, like the various gloss levels and applicator textures, and be ready to choose what's best for the project. Discuss this with your client or designer. For instance, I prefer a brushed texture on cabinets rather than a rolled or sprayed finish.

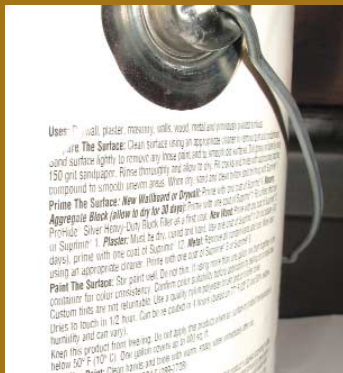
*William Ryan, William Ryan Design
Associates,
Port Hope, Ont.*

Your Pro Painter Tips

Got some good ideas our readers could use? Share them by emailing Robert.koci@rci.rogers.com. If we post any of them on our website (www.get-painting.com), we'll send you a Dynamic angle sash brush from our new Infinity line free. With your published tip, we'll include your name, the company you work for and city you work in.

While you are looking up your tips online, you'll soon be able to browse our full catalogue of top-notch Dymanic products and then go to the store locator page to find the store nearest you that is selling them. It's convenience and service to get you painting profitably with Dymanic paint products.

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UNDERSTAND PAINT

You need to know your paint. You should be able to discuss everything from drying time to the number of coats required, along with properties like sheen levels and washability. If you don't mix colour yourself, make sure that you use a paint store with a person who knows colour well.

*Moya McPhail,
Moya McPhail Design,
Toronto*