

More Learning = More Earning

Authentic Eco-Friendly Tools Important To Growing Number of Painters

With every eco-friendly purchase, productivity and performance are essential considerations to paint contractors and homeowners alike. The challenge for buyers and sellers in today's flourishing green marketplace is to determine which vendors are providing genuine earth-friendly tools and which are greenwashing, or overstating their own environmental initiatives or product benefits.

Many painters who shop PDRA member stores are smarter than average and are reasonably skeptical of purported green proclamations. In eco-friendly tools, they demand real results and superior performance.

While low- and zero-VOC acrylic coatings have been increasingly popular in recent years, eco-friendly paint applicators are a new innovation. At Purdy and Bestt Liebco, our area of expertise is in creating tools that enable painters to enjoy superb results while applying today's coatings. With that in mind, allow me to provide a few insights regarding what to look for when evaluating eco-friendly applicators. Truly, the advice I offer extends across the aisles and can be applied to many product categories.

Quality Comes First

Quality is paramount. A supposed earth-friendly paint sundries product that performs poorly will end up in a landfill or recycling bin fast. Always keep in mind: Pro painters are paid to deliver quality results first and foremost. Further, even the most earth-friendly homeowners do not want to see unattractive brush streaks or bits of lint all over their freshly painted wall. In other words, painters want the same thing in green products that they re-

ceive in traditional products: quality and value.

It may surprise your customers to learn that genuine DuPont™ filaments are ideal components in a green brush. It is not unusual for Purdy to receive requests for "100-percent natural" brushes for a green painting project. You likely receive similar requests. Unfortunately, natural bristle immediately goes limp in water-based, eco-friendly paints. The results are dismal. Thankfully, DuPont™ has developed smart methodologies to secure virgin, scrap Tynex® black nylon from its manufacturing processes. Now, rather than heading to the scrap pile, the material is recycled and offered in select brands of paintbrushes. Here, at Paint Sundry Brands (PSB), EcoPro™ by Purdy® is the label

we offer pros. It includes 100-percent recycled DuPont™ Tynex® filaments. For consumers, it is the EarthTones™ by QuickSolutions® product line.

Key Features

A number of applicator companies offer their own eco-friendly selections at varying price points and quality levels. As you study the products best suited for your market, I encourage you to seek out the same qualities in an eco-friendly brush as you would in traditional gear. Tipped and flagged filaments ensure superior coverage, whether the filaments are original or recycled. Look for solid, round, tapered (SRT) filaments, which stay stiff and retain their shape over time compared to low-cost hollow-shaft filaments. Also, consider the total recycled filament content and how meaningful that matter is to your eco-aware customers. Some brushes offer as much as 100-percent recycled filaments; others are built with a paltry 5-percent recycled filament content. That 95-percent variance is a relevant consideration.

For pros and serious DIYers, the handle should be a sturdy natural hardwood that wicks moisture from the



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painter's hand. Some manufacturers take the extra step of offering eco-friendly wood handles that include the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) emblem. The FSC is widely recognized as the most credible system in forest-management certification and is regarded as one of the most important initiatives of the last decade to promote better forest management worldwide. Companies that undergo certification and whose products bear the FSC insignia offer a visible sign to painters of a manufacturers' commitment to maintaining sustainable forests.

Regarding recycled roller covers, many of today's models are knitted fabrics created from recycled plastic soda bottles. Surprisingly, the fabric's performance will impress many painters. As with brushes, study whether the content is 100-percent recycled materials or a smaller amount. At PSB the EcoPro™

and EarthTones™ roller covers feature 100-percent recycled materials and are marketed in economical three-pack designs to maximize savings and minimize waste. For a time, specially marked packages allow painters to plant a tree through the American Forests® Global ReLeaf® Campaign.

Packaging & Merchandising

Some of your customers will be interested in learning about the product packaging of eco-friendly products. Some manufacturers use the same materials as their standard packaging. Others use 100-percent post-consumer waste packaging and soy-based inks for brush keepers and a thin-mil plastic wrap on their roller cover packaging. Again, it is up to every PDRA member to determine the level of significance these packaging features play in the minds of the customers in their market.

From a merchandising standpoint, in these challenging economic times, I recommend placing top-quality eco-friendly paint gear front and center in your promotional campaigns. End-caps, dump bins, countertop displays and homeowner kits will all help you generate incremental sales. Cross-merchandising brush combs and a 5-in-1 tool alongside eco-friendly applicators is a smart retail practice. Not only will it boost sales per order, it will help your customer properly clean their tools again for reuse at a later date—a big plus for the environment.

Aside from the economy, environmental considerations will have top-of-mind awareness in most painters' minds in the years ahead. So, start now to educate your customers on the benefits of eco-friendly tools and take the lead in becoming the earth-friendly market leader in your hometown. ■

PDRA TO AWARD \$5,000 SCHOLARSHIP

Scholarship applicants may only be nominated by PDRA retail members in good standing

- 🌿 Applicants must be an immediate family member of a PDRA retail member, or a PDRA member's employee or a member of an employee's immediate family.
- 🌿 Each applicant must submit a 500-word essay, describing how he or she will use the scholarship and why he or she feels deserving of the award.
- 🌿 Scholarship applications must be received at PDRA offices by March 20, 2009.

Scholarship packages and complete information were mailed to all PDRA retail members of record in January 2009.

**PAINT & DECORATING RETAILERS ASSOCIATION
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