

experts rely on professional distributors part one

by Steve Stephens



Many years ago, I made my living as a general contractor building new homes. Now I have always pressure cleaned, but there was a time of about twelve years when I considered myself a part-time pressure cleaner and full-time builder.

As a young builder, I was always seeking new ways to cut costs. I would like to think that I have always been wise enough not to “skimp” on craftsmanship. I never really tried to haggle with my sub-contractors on their price because I knew that if a problem occurred in five years, I wanted them to stand behind their work. Even if they would not, I would anyway.

So I never really tried to cut cost on craftsmanship. But, believe me, I would make those lumber salesmen work hard for their money! It was the same for the lighting salespeople, the carpet and hardwood salespeople, and all the way to the door, window, and drywall salespeople. The way I saw it, a number-two grade two-by-four is a number-two grade two-by-four whether you buy it from Lowe’s, Eighty-Four Lumber, or Home Depot.

Then I tried other ways of saving money. I decided I would save about eight thousand dollars per house by painting them myself. Man, eight thousand dollars is a lot of money! “Hey, I had been in the Air Force, and I have painted just about anything that wasn’t moving.” So I



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took on the task of painting. This was going to be a piece of cake.

I began to paint the outside of the first house, and each time I would get started, I would be paged, get a phone call, or would have to meet an inspector or homeowner. I spent two months painting just the outside

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of that first house! That is after I had gotten all my friends, girlfriend, and family to hold a brush for at least a couple of days. This small task turned into a monster of a job!

Then came the inside—the easy part—so I thought! I painted and painted. Once again, every time I picked up a brush, I would get paged, called, or have to meet a prospective homeowner “right away.” I felt like my life consisted of nothing in the world but painting! I learned I hated painting! I was dreaming about painting! Oh my! I was painting in my sleep; paint was everywhere! I thought surely if I died and went the wrong way, there would be a paintbrush with my name on it! “Oh Lord,” I pleaded, “If you just help me finish painting this house, I will never ever try to paint another one again.” I got trim paint on the walls, and, as if that wasn't bad enough, I would paint over that and then get some wall paint on the trim then repaint the trim and get more on the walls and the floor!

A painter came by one day and offered to give me a price to finish. I

was so happy I could have kissed him! I mean, how much could it possibly be? I was practically finished, except for touching up here and there. He gave me a price of two thousand dollars. I thought the guy had lost his mind! Two thousand dollars? I told him it seems like he could have just about started the job from scratch for that. He then told me that it would actually have been easier to start from scratch than to try and repaint over what I had already done! I did my best not to take it personally. I shook his hand and thanked him, but let him know there was no way I was going to pay two grand on a house that was just about complete! I did tell him to keep in touch because I knew I was not going to paint the house I was building next door for sure!

After about two more days of every spare moment I had with a brush in my hand, this scraggly fellow walked in with painter's clothes on. He smelled a little like beer. “Need some help? I been paintin' bout twenty some years.” Against my better judgment, but out of desperation, I said, “sure!” How much will you charge me to finish up? He looked around for about ten minutes, came back and said, “How 'bout eight hundred bucks?” I said, “When can you start and how long will it take?”

He told me he could start now, finish out the day, and it would be done in two more days. I gave him my brush and began to sing his praises on my way out!

How ironic, now I paint on canvas for pure enjoyment! And, although a recent accident has hindered my ability to do fine work, I look forward to bodily restoration someday, and I hope the good Lord will provide plenty of artist brushes, canvas, and an easel up there for me!

Well, the next day after the scruffy old guy started painting, I dropped by around noon, and he was painting

away. I couldn't really tell he had done much, but it was getting done and that made my day. Before I left, he asked if he could have half his money because he had been out of work awhile. I didn't know him, but under the circumstances I agreed. I then left to attend to builder's business, as I should have been doing anyway, instead of playing painter. About two hours later, I saw the painter on the other side of town as he waved at me joyfully. I got back to the house under construction later that evening to find all my paint supplies, a two thousand-dollar paint sprayer, and a two hundred-dollar heater gone.

I called the phone number he gave me and got an irate woman who threatened to kill him if she ever saw him again. She also assured me that I would never see him again. She was right.

I called the original painter that had stopped by with the two thousand-dollar quote. That's what I paid him to finish my mess. The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is that this painter was a professional, and we have had a fine business relationship for nearly twenty years. You see, my professional painter was focused on MY job. He was not interrupted by other things because his absolute goal was to paint that home and to please his client. Likewise, your distributor is focused on your equipment. His/her goal is to deliver you quality equipment and products so you can succeed! He/she wants you to excel because with your success in your business, he/she succeeds. The distributor allows the contractor the ability to focus on HIS/HER job.

I wish I could say that my lesson was learned with the painting; however, I did, on occasion, make other attempts on houses, driveways, patios, and decks to venture into areas beyond my expertise. But, I finally came to the place where I vowed to never attempt anyone else's trade. I think there is a word for someone like me who has to spend so much money and time to learn a lesson about doing what you are focused and trained to do....Stupid. *cr*