

Trade Partners

Working With Other Trades Can Bring In New Business



By **MIKE STARLING**, Editor, Professional Painting Contractor

If you're like most painting contractors, you're looking for new revenue opportunities wherever you can find them: breaking into different markets, embracing new products, learning new application techniques. Here's another way: Capitalizing on your relationships with other trades in your area.

Steven Foglia runs Illini Painting, a residential painting firm in Decatur, Ill. He has developed relationships with several area tradespeople that he says generate extra business. It started one summer when he met Peggy Phipps, owner of The Grand Design firm in Mt. Zion, Ill., at an industry event sponsored by the Sherwin-Williams Company.

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"She has turned into a valuable business ally," he says.

Phipps employs one painter and one paperhanger, but she relies on Illini Painting for larger jobs or projects that require special coatings expertise.

Foglia found working with Phipps so rewarding that he has reached out to other area designers and is now also cross-promoting his company with other trades such as carpenters and electricians.

Tom Walter, who operates a one-man paint business in La Crosse, Wis., also reaps the benefits of partnering with other trades. As a small shop, he says, it adds credibility to his operation when he can partner with other construction industry specialists. That gives his customers access to more area talent and the inevitable cross-referrals result in more business for both service providers.

"It's a win-win situation," he says. "We both recommend each other's services."

What can you do as a painter to make sure your company is an attractive prospect for other trades?

Communication between trades and homeowner is key, Walter says, especially if the homeowner is serving as their own general contractor.

"The hardest part of any job is timing," he says. "Everybody wants to be as efficient as possible." Since he also does small carpentry jobs and other handy work, Walter has a good understanding of the obstacles other trades are up against. Developing an appreciation for the workflow of drywallers, finish carpenters, concrete workers and others, he says, can help painters build better working relationships with other tradespeople. He also asks customers about positive experiences they've had with other contractors so he knows who he could work with or recommend in the future.

While building his business in the Los Angeles area, Carmine Carrano became the painting contractor of choice for Barbara J. Stein Interior Design. Stein says she chose to work with Carrano for a number of reasons.

Since she works on the premise that the customer's needs are No. 1, Stein said she that any contractor she works with has to share that same philosophy.

That means showing up to the job site on time, establishing a good rapport with the homeowner, and being willing to come back and do touch-up work even after the job is completed.

A professional appearance for both trades is crucial, she says. For their part, the paint company's workers must be clean and conscientious and maintain a tidy job site with a minimum of disruption. Just like the paint company owner, they have to respect and know how to handle customers and their families while working in their homes.

Finally, each contractor must be dedicated to making the other trade partner look good.

"I've been fortunate to work with painters like Carmine who could execute the vision I had in my head, and have it turn out even better than I imagined," Stein says. "A final product like that makes us all look good." **PPC**

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