

Headline: 10 Steps to a Successful Painting Project

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Building owners and managers have a lot on their plates at any given time. However, when a building is in need of repainting, inside or out, this can add a huge burden to their workload. The following 10 Steps to a Successful Paint Project can help ensure the job is done right.

Step 1 – Project Assessment

How do you know when it is time to repaint? The ideal time to consider repainting is when the current coating is still protecting the substrate but is showing signs of weathering, wear, and colour fade. You should plan to paint before you have cracking, peeling, flaking, chipping or any other symptoms that are allowing the elements to effect the substrate. Or perhaps you just want a change of colour. Plan to repaint as soon as possible if you have multiple areas of unprotected substrates caused by peeling, blistering, cracking, alligating (the surface looks like an alligators skin) and wrinkling.

Step 2 – Project Planning

In order to plan for a project there are many issues that must be addressed. Once you have determined that you need to paint and exactly what you need to paint, you should consider if you have enough money to pay for the project. This may be affected by the need for a professional painter's estimate for budget approval if you are the manager and not the owner of the building. Another important consideration is who will be the point person for the project. You have no doubt heard the old adage, "too many cooks can spoil the broth." You will also have to determine a start date and consider preparing written specifications. Then decide who will inspect and approve the work as the project unfolds.

Step 3 – Scope of Work

The "scope of work" is a list of things that you want a contractor to do for you. For example, you should have the complex washed before painting and this may include gutters, brick, and fencing if they are relevant to the area. Consider if any repair work needs to be done, i.e.: concrete/stucco repairs or wood replacement. You should also make a list of things you do not want painted. Decide if you want caulking replaced or all cracks and/or knot holes filled. It is very important that you know exactly what type of prep work you expect to be done.

Step 4 – Product Selection

To achieve a successful painting project you need to determine what products you should specify. Make sure that they have been tested and proven. Your best guide is the Master Painters Institute (MPI) approved products list. Look for products that offer you the most longevity and/or carry a long-term warranty. You should do your homework. Decide what level of paint quality you want, ensuring that they are the right products for the project substrates. Many painting contractors will use a lower quality paint to keep their costs down and are not as concerned as you to how long the product will last. You need to specify the level of quality you are expecting, and then inspect the products prior to application in order to confirm that the correct products are being used.

Step 5 – Preparing a Specification

To ensure a successful painting project, one of the most important things to do is to have a written specification. This specification is the painter's guide to your expectations and acts as your measuring stick during inspections. Specifications clearly state the scope of work, cleaning, application methods, a paint schedule, whether the painters are to wear identifiable clothing, and work experience of all staff (example: proven 5-year work experience for all employees). If possible, your specification should include a contract signed by the successful bidder and the owner/strata so there are no misunderstandings as to what is to be done. The specification should also spell out insurance requirements (WCB, liability) their references, bonding documents, start and finish dates, and all warrantees.

Step 6 – Choosing a Contractor

This is one of the most important steps to "getting it right the first time." One of the most common errors made by owners/managers is not doing enough reference research into the bidding contractors. Consider the following: Check the painting contractor out through the Better Business Bureau; Ask for a list of recent projects they have completed that are similar in scope of work and size, and go observe their work; Request a list of references; Ask if they are bonded or bondable; Find out if they use subcontractors or their own employees; Ask how long they have been in business. You should always advise them that you are hiring a third-party inspector and keep in mind that the lowest bidder isn't always the best choice.

Step 7 – The Pre-Bid Meeting

You should always hold a pre-bid meeting to ensure the same message is given to all bidders and it allows you to review your project and field any concerns you may have or adjust your specifications if necessary. Invite all contractors (usually 3 or 4) to the meeting at the same time. Make the site meeting mandatory (if they don't show they are out of the bidding process), and make sure any specification changes are addressed and any addendums sent to the contractors in advance of the closing date. Set a closing date and time. Include the address where bids are to be submitted. Be certain to allow enough time for the contractor to properly review the project and prepare his bid.

Step 8 –Awarding the Contract

Review every submission to make sure they have included the following: Proof of WorkSafeBC coverage; Proof of liability insurance; The ability to furnish a bond; A signed contract; Additional warranty; Project references; Financial references; Proposed start and finish dates. Be sure to do your homework – create a short list eliminating contractors based on supplied information and call all references they have listed. Conduct a visual review of recent projects that the contractors have listed and after careful consideration make your decision.

Step 9 – Pre-Job Meeting

Hold a Pre-Job Meeting to establish the start date, ensure notices are prepared and delivered to owners and tenants; establish parking; provide the contractor with any required keys etc.; establish paint and equipment storage (onsite or contractor provided); washroom requirements. It is also very important to establish daily start and finish times and determine if there will be work allowed or done on weekends. You may also want to request all workers to wear identifiable clothing for security reasons. In addition, payment schedules and approvals should be determined at this meeting. Other items to be discussed could include whether landscaping is required (cutting back foliage so painters can access the substrate) and to discuss any other concerns the contractor or owners may have.

Step 10 - Inspections (What to Look for and Why?)

There are four key areas to inspect on any paint project.

First review the washing and cleaning of all substrates to determine if all dirt has been removed. Paint will not adhere to a dirty substrate. Look for decaying wood, failing stucco or concrete, and rusted metal areas and arrange to replace or repair these. Make sure all algae or mould is removed and treated.

Secondly, review the prep work to ensure all loose or peeling paint has been removed and any remaining paint is sanded to a feathered edge. Make sure all bare substrates have been properly primed with the specified primer. Be certain that the contractor has replaced any failed caulking, filled knot holes and cracks and are using the specified caulking.

The third inspection step concerns the application of the top coats. Check that the products to be used are as per the specification and in sealed containers. Check the first coat application to see if it was properly applied (brushed, rolled or sprayed) and that no areas were missed (put some marks on the first coat with a pencil or marker in spots unknown to the painters) then, check to see that a second coat of paint has been properly applied (check your marks to make sure that they have been painted over).

Your final step will be to complete a Deficiency inspection. Look for and note areas missed, paint drops on sidewalks, decks, flashing etc.; areas that need a touch up; any overspray or overlapped paint and note any damages to plants, lawn, or the building caused by the painters. Review all deficiencies once the painter has addressed your list to ensure all work has been corrected.