

## Homeowner & Consumer Guide to Hiring a Professional Painting Contractor®

This booklet has been compiled to assist homeowners become better informed prior to hiring a contractor.

### YOU'LL LEARN ABOUT...

The importance of following manufacturer's recommendations when choosing paints, primers and other materials.

Questions to ask potential contractors about paint application, warranties and maintenance agreements.

Important information you should ask your contractor to provide you BEFORE you sign any work agreement.

PUBLISHED BY:



**NATIONAL  
ALLIANCE OF  
PROFESSIONAL  
PAINTERS™**

## Consumer Guide to Choosing A Professional Painting Contractor



This booklet has been compiled to assist homeowners and consumers who are considering hiring a professional painting contractor.

Like any home improvement or construction project, the chance of having a satisfactory experience depends largely on hiring the right contractor to perform the work. To that end, we believe consumer information is a key element to a successful painting project resulting in complete satisfaction for all parties.

In all likelihood, you've received this booklet from a member of the *National Alliance of Professional Painters (NAPP)*.

The National Alliance of Professional Painters is an organization made up of professional painting contractors from all over the country who share a common desire to provide our customers the best painting services possible.

Whether or not you ultimately hire a NAPP member contractor, we hope this publication will answer some important questions you may have regarding the hiring of your contractor.

Since many consumers have limited knowledge of paints and coatings, as well as the benefits a professional painting contractor can bring to their project, we'll outline some important considerations consumers should be aware of prior to choosing a painting contractor.

At the end of the booklet we've included some important questions you'll want to go over with any contractor you invite to provide you an estimate.

***There are four main areas to consider when purchasing professional painting services.***

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1. **Materials**—Choosing the right paints, primers and other materials used on your project.
2. **Methods**— Proper application of paints, including surface preparation.
3. **Monetary Investment**—Cost versus value of having your painting project handled by a professional painting contractor.
4. **Manpower**—The contractor you choose to perform your work.

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***Let's go over these areas one at a time.***



***Paints and materials...***

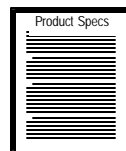
Materials include all the different paints, primers, finishes and sundry materials that will be used to complete your project. Choosing the right paint and sundry materials is essential to achieving lasting protection for your home—and maintaining your home's beauty.

Many consumers believe that all paints are basically the same. However, every paint manufacturer formulates a wide range of paints designed for specific applications. There are several grades of paint consumers can choose from depending on the type of work they are planning, and the budget they have to work with.

A professional painting contractor is familiar with the different paints and coatings on the market and can make the proper recommendation based on your specific needs. Also, new products are being introduced by paint manufacturers each year.

Professional painting contractors stay informed with these new advances by subscribing to industry trade magazines, attending manufacturer training courses, working with manufacturer representatives and by belonging to industry trade associations.

Part-time, or “summer painters” simply don't have the commitment to keeping current on all the advances in paints and coatings that professional painting contractors do—knowledge that will directly benefit you the consumer.



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***Product Specifications***

Paint manufacturers publish “**Product Specification**” sheets for each of their products. These product specification sheets outline the types of surfaces the paint is recommended for, along with important information about surface preparation, application of the paint, and the expected results that can be attained from the product. Many product specification sheets even list the quality grade of the product. (If you're in doubt, call the paint store to learn more about the quality rating of the paint that has been recommended by your potential contractor).

These product specification sheets are written in clear and easy to understand language. Consumers are encouraged to review the product specification sheets presented by their contractor.

The professional paint contractor will be familiar with these specification sheets and will include copies in his or her work proposal.

**Note: The cost of materials is the smallest cost of a paint job. Professional painting contractors wouldn't consider using inferior paints and materials in an effort to save just a few dollars for the following reasons:**

First, the professional painting contractor is committed to providing their customers the best quality paint job possible, which means using only premium grade paints and materials.

Secondly, professional painting contractors take pride in their work and wouldn't jeopardize their reputation by cutting corners and using inferior paints and materials.

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### ***Extended Warranty Products***



Traditionally, manufacturers have warranted their paint products against defects and replace the paint if it fails.

However, the labor cost of a paint job far exceeds the cost of materials. If a paint job fails the biggest cost to have it repaired is the labor.

New advances in paint technology has made it possible for paint manufacturers to provide warranty's not only on the paint products, but are now extending consumer warranties on the labor portion of the work as well.

What this means to the consumer is that the paint manufacturer will warrant that their products will last for a designated term – usually between five and 15 years, and if the paint job fails the manufacturer (not the contractor) will pay to have the work repaired.

Painting contractors wanting to extend these warranties to their customers must become "**Certified Applicators**" by the manufacturer to apply their paints and coatings. This normally entails a combination of formal classroom training, written exams, and product application training.

Ask your contractor if he or she is **Certified** by any manufacturers to apply extended warranty products. For the consumer, this may be the best way to ensure your home or property will remain in top-notch condition for many years to come.

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### ***Exterior Maintenance Painting Programs...*** **Keeping your home protected.**

**Exterior Maintenance Painting Programs** offer homeowners a hassle-free way to keep their home protected and looking great year after year.



Many professional painting contractors offer both their commercial and residential customers exterior maintenance painting services.

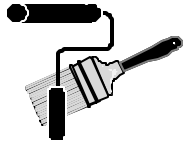
Preventative maintenance painting programs include scheduled visits to your home to review the paint job to make sure the paint is protecting your home properly.

These service programs are preventative in nature and can help ensure your home remains in top-notch condition. ***Preventative maintenance extends the life of your paint job; and the need to completely repaint becomes less often.***

Value retention for your home, along with keeping your home attractive, is the main goal of an exterior maintenance painting program.

Ask your contractor if he or she offers exterior maintenance painting programs.

## Proper Methods of Applying Paints & Coatings



Application methods of paint varies with the type of surfaces being painted, and the type of material being used.

As mentioned above, each manufacturer has a product specification sheet for every product they manufacture.

These specification sheets outline what type of surfaces the product is recommended for, the proper surface preparation requirements, the necessary thickness that the paint needs to be applied, the type of equipment or tools recommended for application, and safe handling of the products.

The professional painting contractor is familiar with the product and application specifications for each product he or she applies. These specification guidelines, when followed, ensure the application of the product is done properly.

### **Warranties Depend on Proper Application!**

Ask your contractor to review with you the recommended application methods as outlined by the paint manufacturer. Below are important questions to review with your contractor. Professional painting contractors will be happy to go over these items with you.

#### **1. What does the manufacturer specify about surface preparation?**

Surface preparation is the most important aspect of achieving a long-lasting paint job. Be sure your contractor explains to you how the surface preparation will be done according to manufacturer's specifications.

#### **2. What types of tools and equipment are recommended by the manufacturer for surface preparation and paint application?**

Power tools and equipment, such as; power washers, sanders and spray equipment can cause damage to your home if not operated properly. Knowledgeable painting contractors are experienced with the use of power equipment, and the safety issues involved.

#### **3. Has the manufacturer specified anything in particular concerning moisture?**

Is moisture a concern, and how will it be remedied prior to painting? Moisture is a major concern that needs to be addressed to ensure a long-lasting paint job. Has the contractor used a moisture meter?

#### **4. How thick (in terms of mil thickness) does the manufacturer recommend the paint be applied? Is more than one coat of paint recommended? How will the contractor ensure enough paint has been applied?**

Paint manufacturers are very specific as to how thick the paint needs to be applied. In fact, not applying the paint to the recommended thickness can void the manufacturer's warranty.

#### **5. Has your contractor explained the application methods he/she plans on using?**

Consumer's shouldn't assume every painting contractor understands or follows manufacturer's recommendations and specifications.

Ask your contractor for copies of the manufacturers product specification sheets, and an explanation on how he or she will perform the work according to specifications.



## Manpower



This area takes into consideration the contractor and the workers who will be perform the painting on your home or property.

Professional painting contractors continually learn more about the paints and coatings they recommend to their customers. Many take continued education courses in all areas of their business to be able to better serve their customers.

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### **Questions to ask your contractor...**

- 1. Does the contractor have a safety program in place to ensure a safe working environment?**



Working with ladders, tools and equipment can be dangerous. Ask your contractor about safety issues.

- 2. How long has the contractor been in business?**

There is a very high turn over of contractors in all trades. It's important you work with a contractor who has been in business for at least a few years.

- 3. Are the employees experienced painters?**

Ask if the contractor has experienced painters working for him, or about any training or job qualifications he has.

- 4. Is the contractor required to have any state or local licensing?**

If so, request a current copy of his or her license. Call the city or state office responsible for licensing to ensure the contractor's license is up to date.

- 5. Does the contractor have the necessary insurance? Is it adequate?**

It's extremely important that your contractor has all the necessary insurances to protect you and your home. (NOTE: Homeowner insurance policy's may not cover work performed by third party contractors.)



**Don't risk working with a contractor who is uninsured (or under insured) for general liability and workmen's compensation.**

- 6. Can your contractor provide a list of local customer references?**

Call the references provided to see how your contractor handled jobs similar to yours.

- 7. Does the contractor belong to any civic or trade associations?**

Membership in trade, consumer and civic organizations indicates a commitment on the part of your contractor to maintain his or her professionalism. Ask your contractor if he or she belongs to any professional organizations.

- 8. Does the contractor provide an extended product and work warranty?**

Most state laws require contractors warrant their work for at least one year. However, many contractors have extended work and product warranty programs. Ask you contractor about his warranty options and request a written copy.



- 9. Has your contractor put everything in writing?**

Professional painting contractors will provide their customers detailed written estimates, which include all the information concerning the work.

## **Monetary Investment**



The old adage of getting what you pay for certainly applies to the purchase of any type of contracting services.

Obviously, consumers should not pay more than necessary to have their projects completed, but it's not always wise to compare contractors solely on price. Unfortunately, many painting contractors get into business on a shoestring budget and simply cannot afford to maintain the required insurances and other mandatory business requirements. This applies not only to liability insurance but to workmen's compensation coverage's in the event their employees are injured on the job.

These business compliance costs are reflected in the paint contractors pricing. As a consumer, it's in your best interest to work with a contractor who is in compliance with all insurance and local business requirements. The risk is just too high to allow an uninsured – or underinsured—contractor to work on your property.

The turnover and failure rate for contractors is extremely high. This places a major inconvenience on the consumer in the event there is a warranty concern. Working with a financially sound contractor goes a long way to adding peace of mind, knowing your contractor will be around if you need him.

When comparing contractors spend some time reviewing exactly what each contractor has included in their proposals. Make sure you're comparing apples to apples, and most importantly, make sure that each of your potential contractors

has specified that your work will be performed according to manufacturer's recommendations. Professional painting contractors will be happy to provide you this assurance.



Base your buying decisions on the value you'll receive, and consider all the aspects each contractor can bring to your project. Not all contractors offer the same level of expertise and professionalism.

### **Choosing a contractor solely on price may end up costing you more in the long run.**

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#### **Other questions to go over with any potential contractors include:**

1. Has your contractor put everything in writing for your review?
2. If a deposit is required, how is that handled?
3. Are the payment terms clearly spelled out in the work contract?
4. How will the work be reviewed after the completion to ensure your complete satisfaction?
5. Are the warranties included in the written agreements?



## Communication



Developing good communication and rapport with your contractor is probably the most important ingredient to achieving a project all parties will be happy with.

Just as you want to know more about the contractor you are considering hiring, he will need to know what your wants and needs are before he can outline a work proposal.

Letting your contractor know the following information will help get your project off to a good start, and keep it on track after the work is started.

- What is your overall goal for your project? Are you preparing your home for resell, or are you wanting to remain in your home for many years?
- What is your time frame to get your project started?
- Have you established a budget for your project? Will an estimate amount above your initial budget prevent you from proceeding with your work?
- Have you had other projects completed by professional contractors? How did it turn out?
- Do you have specific needs concerning daily work schedules?
- What information will you want to have from your contractor as your work progresses?

In general, spending a little time getting to know your contractor and explaining your needs will go a long way in helping your contractor provide you the service you deserve.

After all, painting contractors are business owners who want to develop a reputation for providing their customers outstanding service. Since most painting contractors rely on referrals made by satisfied customers, they have a vested interest in making sure you are 100% satisfied.



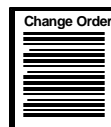
## Unforeseen Items Change Orders

Another important item to discuss with your contractor is how any unforeseen work conditions will be handled after the work is underway.

This isn't to suggest that every job will have unforeseen work conditions, but in case something comes up it's a good idea to know how you and your contractor will handle them.

For example: During the surface preparation it's discovered that some siding has rotted out and needs replacing. The siding appeared to be in acceptable condition when the work proposal was being written, but now it's obvious that the siding needs replaced.

Had this been known beforehand, the contractor would have included it in the work proposal.



Now that the job is underway a "Change Order" is written for the additional work and approved by the homeowner.

Determining how any additional work items will be handled **BEFORE** work begins will give both the consumer and contractor peace of mind, and will ensure the needed work is completed to the building owners satisfaction.

## Summary

As you can see, there is far more to achieving a top quality paint job than merely putting paint on your walls or siding.

Taking time to ask questions of each potential contractor- before you choose one- will go a long way to getting your project off to a good start, and ending with your complete satisfaction.

Making an informed decision in choosing your contractor comes down to asking lots of questions and comparing each potential contractor on the experience and professionalism he or she can bring to your painting project.

### **National Alliance of Professional Painters™**

To learn more about the National Alliance of Professional Painters, or to inquire about the standing of a NAPP Member, please visit us on line.

**www.TheNAPP.com**  
**or email us at:**  
**info@thenapp.com**



### ***Our Professional Standards focus on...***

- Providing the general public, to the best of our ability, professional painting services that meet the traditions and standards of superb craftsmanship and customer service.
- Continually training ourselves and our employees so that the service we provide meets these standards.
- Providing our customers proper work recommendations and specifications to meet their needs.
- Providing our customers written proposals.
- Performing our work in accordance with manufacturers published specifications and guidelines.
- Building consumer trust in our businesses and industry through continual education and improvement.
- Promoting the goodwill and use of professional painting contractors to the general public.
- Working together for the betterment of our trade, our businesses, our employees and our communities.

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**Notice:** The information contained in this booklet is designed to provide information to consumers only, and is not intended to recommend or endorse any particular contractor.



	Contractor Comparison		
	A	B	C
<b>Initial contacts and meeting.</b>			
Promptly returned initial phone call.			
On time for initial appointment.			
Asked questions about our project to understand our needs.			
Listened and communicated with us well—asked clarifying questions.			
<b>Product Recommendations and Warranty</b>			
Made product recommendations & offered alternatives.			
Provided manufacturers product specification sheets.			
Explained product and labor warranty.			
Has extended product warranty program.			
Has an exterior maintenance plan or program.			

<b>Work Specifications and How Work Will be Completed.</b>			
Explained work specifications and application methods.			
Outlined site and job safety.			
Explained work progress and project cleanup.			
<b>General Questions?</b>			
How long has contractor been in business?			
Provided us detailed written estimate including work specifications.			
Provided copies of Insurance Certificates, agents name and contact #'s			
Is licensed in my city, county and state (If applicable)			
Provided local references (Including trade and credit)			
Belongs to civic, consumer or trade Associations			
Explained how additional work orders are handled (if applicable).			
Explained work schedule and start date.			
Explained payment terms			