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COMMERCIAL PAINTING

2025 | VOL. 5 ISSUE NO. 3

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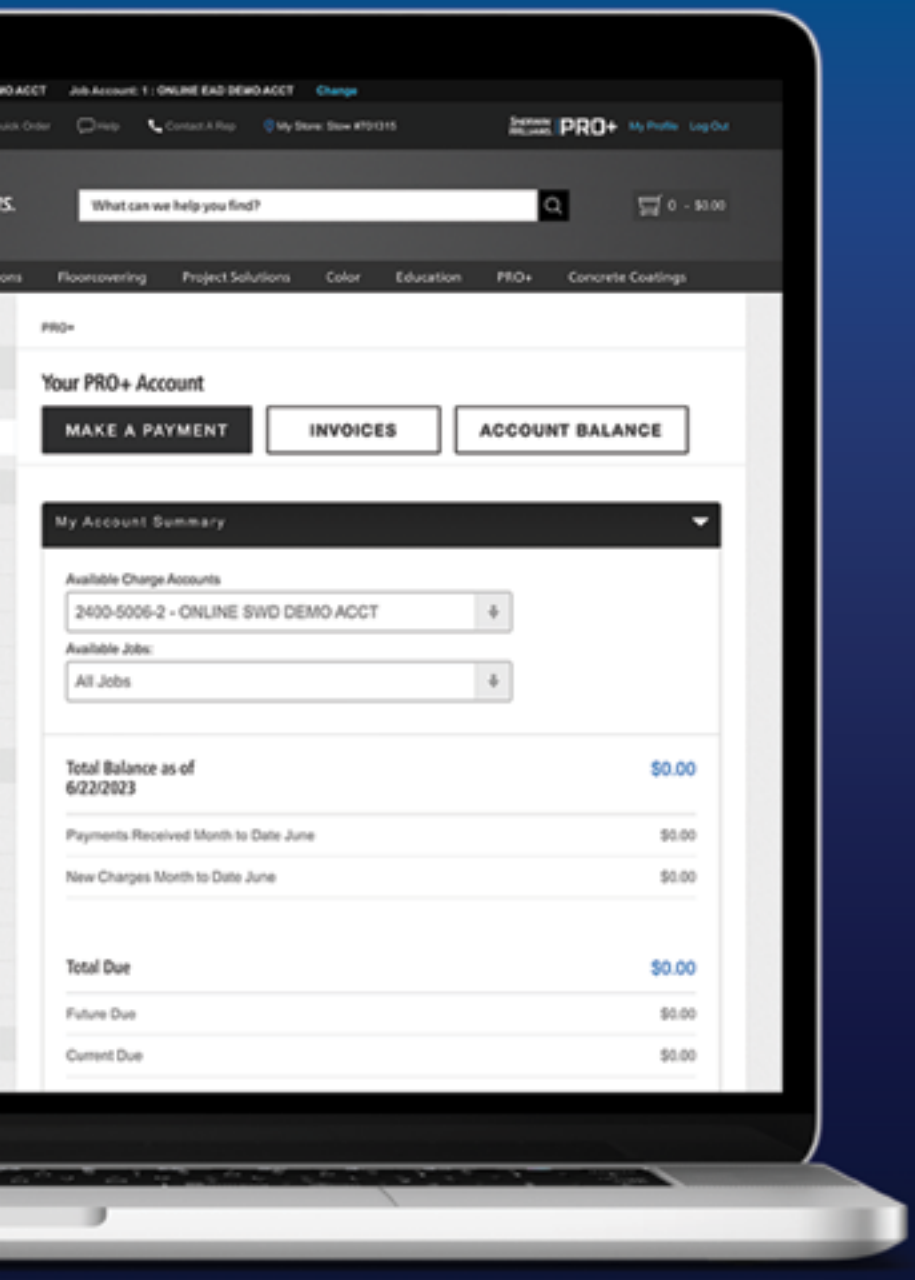
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Learning from the Industry's Finest

CPIA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE TO SPOTLIGHT BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL PAINTING EXPERTS AND STRATEGISTS

BY BRION D. PALMER, PROCONNECT 360

The Commercial Painting Industry Association (CPIA) is preparing to welcome business owners, executives, and industry leaders from across the country to its annual Leadership Conference, scheduled for October 5–8, 2025, at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson, Arizona.

This year's curriculum is designed to provide attendees with both high-level inspiration and practical tools to strengthen their companies. The program will feature two keynote presentations and three concurrent tracks focusing on management, operations, and emerging leaders. The combination of thought leadership and hands-on education is what makes the CPIA Leadership Conference unlike any other event in the industry.

Keynotes Set the Tone

The conference will open Monday, October 6, with keynote speaker Warren Rustand, a longtime entrepreneur, corporate executive, and former White House insider. Rustand has spent decades mentoring top leaders in business, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Rustand's keynote, "The Leader Within: Building a Culture of Purpose in a Changing World," will encourage attendees to consider how clarity and purpose can guide decision-making in both business and life. His message, organizers said, is particularly timely as companies navigate shifting economic conditions, workforce expectations, and technological disruption.

"Warren is someone who has lived leadership at every level," said CPIA Executive Director Mike Stanley. "His perspective will challenge our members to think differently about their role as leaders and inspire them to build organizations grounded in purpose."

On Tuesday, October. 7, attendees will hear from Matthew Goerke, founder of The Memory Switch. Goerke has trained Fortune 500 executives, educators, and government officials with techniques that sharpen memory, improve communication, and increase productivity.

In his keynote, Goerke will share tools designed to help leaders retain information more effectively, connect better with their teams, and navigate the fast pace of modern business. His engaging style and practical strategies are expected to resonate with professionals across all areas of the commercial painting industry.

"This isn't just about tricks or parlor games," says CPIA Co-Founder Steve Hester. "Matthew's work helps professionals build true confidence and presence. In an industry built on relationships and precision, those are critical skills."

Focused Learning Tracks

Beyond the keynotes, delegates will choose from three educational tracks tailored to their specific needs.

The **Management Track** will address succession planning, technology stacks,

CONT. PAGE 2

CONFERENCE DETAILS

Oct. 5–8, 2025

Loews Ventana Canyon Resort

Tucson, Arizona

thecpia.com/2025-conference

Features at a Glance

- ▢ Management Track
- ▢ Operations Track
- ▢ Emerging Leaders Track
- ▢ Networking Activities
- ▢ Industry Forecasting
- ▢ Strategic Exchange with Suppliers
- ▢ Contractor Roundtables
- ▢ Resort Amenities

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brion D. Palmer is the CEO of ProConnect 360 and event management partner of the Commercial Painting Industry Association.

PHOTO: 2024 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, COURTESY OF THE CPIA

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Commercial Painting is published for the Commercial Painting Industry Association (CPIA) by ProConnect 360, 1063 Summer Place, Pittsburgh PA 15243-2073, Pittsburgh, PA 15243-2073, USA, 2025. Printed in the USA. Views expressed by authors or advertisers in *Commercial Painting* do not necessarily reflect those of the association, its publisher or its editors. *Commercial Painting* subscriptions are tied to memberships of the CPIA. To sign up, visit thecpia.com. **POSTMASTER:** Address changes to Commercial Painting, 1063 Summer Place, Pittsburgh PA 15243-2073. Customer Care Center: Commercial Painting, 1063 Summer Place, Pittsburgh PA 15243-2073.

CONT. FROM PAGE 1

diversification strategies, and emerging technologies. These sessions are designed to help leaders evaluate new opportunities and implement strategies that position their businesses for long-term success.

For those focused on day-to-day performance, the **Operations Track** will feature a series of case studies and expert-led discussions. Topics will include coating systems, specialty coatings, project management, estimating best practices, and a deep dive into a new floor coating system.

"These are the kinds of conversations you can't find in a textbook," said Aaron Moore, co-founder of the CPIA. "They come directly from people in the field who understand the unique challenges of our industry."

The **Emerging Leaders Track** will offer a dedicated curriculum for rising professionals. While details will be highlighted separately in conference materials, the track is expected to help develop the next generation of leaders by focusing on communication, leadership skills, and industry knowledge.

Presenters for all sessions will include contractors, consultants, and suppliers who bring real-world experience to the table.

A Unique Opportunity for Growth

The CPIA Leadership Conference is the only national event built exclusively for the commercial painting industry. The CPIA Leadership team emphasizes that the combination of peer-to-peer networking and targeted education makes it a valuable investment for companies of all sizes.

"This is a rare opportunity for our members to step away from the jobsite, connect with peers, and return home with new strategies they can immediately put into action," Moore said.

With its blend of inspiration, technical expertise, and forward-looking strategies, the 2025 CPIA Leadership Conference promises to deliver a program that meets the industry where it is today while preparing it for tomorrow. More information is available at thecpia.com/2025-conference.

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Cover Story

CPIA peer groups are finding meaningful ways to strengthen their networks — outside the meeting space.

By Emily Howard for the CPIA



PHOTO: COURTESY OF GINA KOERT

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By Brion D. Palmer, ProConnect 360

An update on sessions and speakers to be featured at this year's CPIA Leadership Conference in Tucson.

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By Aaron Hockel, AltaVista Strategic Partners

The contractors that consistently land high-value projects have this in common: a recognizable, professional brand.

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An Essay by Emily Howard

Early adopters assess the applications and limitations of drone technology in commercial painting.

36 Finance: Big Tech Moves

By Emily Howard for the CPIA

As your painting business grows — and grows more complex— you may need a more powerful accounting system. Owners and business consultants share their insights.





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IMAGES: (COVER) COURTESY OF AARON MOORE AND DAVID CHISM; (THIS PAGE, TOP) NUTHAWUT / ADOBE STOCK; (BOTTOM) C.ARCURS/PEOPLEIMAGES.COM / ADOBE STOCK

CPIA Binder

CURRENT EVENTS, UPDATES AND MORE

INDUSTRY NEWS

CPIA Emerging Leaders Program Returns

WITH A ROADMAP FOR RESIDENTIAL PAINTERS ENTERING THE COMMERCIAL MARKET



Aaron Hockel, AltaVista Strategic Partners, led a discussion last year on building a company brand.

Residential painting contractors looking to expand into commercial work can gain step-by-step guidance this fall at the Commercial Painting Industry Association's Leadership Conference. The event runs Oct. 5-8 at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson, Arizona, and features an eight-session educational track tailored to contractors who have little or no experience in the commercial sector.

"This is designed specifically for residential painting companies that want to add commercial services but don't know where to start," said Scott Lollar, a business consultant and CPIA member. "They'll leave with the knowledge, tools, and connections to make it happen."

Emerging Leaders Curriculum

The targeted track will be presented by industry veterans who work directly in commercial painting. Topics will include:

- **Introduction to Commercial Painting.** How adding commercial work can strengthen a business.
- **Building Your Brand Foundation.** Attracting commercial clients through branding, marketing, social media, websites, and more.
- **Sales Processes.** Differences between residential and commercial sales, and how to increase close rates.
- **Estimating and Creating Proposals.** Best practices for accurate bids and winning contracts.
- **Project Management and Operations.** Strategies for running profitable commercial jobs without surprises.
- **Key Performance Indicators, Finance, and Cash Flow.** Metrics to watch, funding growth, and managing money.
- **Q&A Session.** Speakers return for an open discussion with attendees.
- **Peer Groups Introduction.** How joining a CPIA peer group can support long-term success.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

To apply for the program or refer a candidate, email or call Scott Lollar at scott@consulting4contractors.com, 630.774.6581.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE CPIA





Beyond the breakout sessions, attendees will have access to general sessions, keynotes, and networking opportunities with commercial contractors from across the U.S. and abroad. Social events — sponsored by Sherwin-Williams, Benjamin Moore, and PPG — will feature gourmet food, drinks, and entertainment.

Added Benefits

As the first and only trade association created exclusively for commercial painting professionals, the CPIA is in a unique position to help contractors enter and grow in the field. It was founded on the belief that meaningful connections and amazing experiences among industry leaders elevate member companies and the commercial painting industry as a whole. The association's mission is to nurture a peer-based community of industry experts dedicated to learning and development through collaboration.

As CPIA members, Emerging Leader Program participants will have access to all the relevant resources and guidance required for further business growth. They will interact with successful business owners, key personnel, and top executives, and they'll learn how to best leverage their business with suppliers from the suppliers themselves.

Qualifications and Cost

To qualify for this special track, the applicant's business should not have more than $1,500,000 in 2024 revenue, and no more than half of that should be commercial revenue. Applicants who do not quite fit these parameters are welcome to contact Scott Lollar for consideration.

Accepted Emerging Leaders Program candidates receive a special all-conference rate of $999. That is $900 off the full conference rate for nonmembers and *includes* a CPIA basic membership for one year. Better still, room rates are only $209 per night while space lasts.

Scott Lollar *(top photo)* coordinated the Emerging Leaders Program and conducted sessions with aspiring commercial painting executives in 2024.

Current Executive Members and Emerging Leaders Program participants *(above)* connected at dinners and receptions.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE CPIA



Newly Formulated Eco Spec Hits the Market

Benjamin Moore has announced a new release to its Eco Spec line. Originally introduced in 2008, it's the brand's greenest and lowest-odor paint, formulated to help maintain good indoor air quality without compromising performance. According to the manufacturer, the product is zero VOC with zero emissions, even after tinting. It features an antimicrobial additive that inhibits the growth of mold and mildew on the surface of the dry paint film.

Backed by Benjamin Moore's Green Promise, Eco Spec has been tested by multiple independent green certifying organizations, including the Asthma and Allergy Friendly Certification Program and Green Seal, ensuring that the product meets or exceeds rigorous environmental and performance criteria.

The goal of the new Eco Spec is to deliver lower odor that completely dissipates within an hour after application. Application and touch-up properties are the same as the previous formula, but the new one has improved chemical resistance to common cleaners and disinfectants that are often used in facilities. In addition, sheen/gloss specifications have been adjusted to keep consistent with the rest of Benjamin Moore's commercial lines.

The company asserts that the latest version of Eco Spec provides better value for facility managers, as it offers excellent hide and touch-up in addition to its resistance to chemicals in cleaning products.

Eco Spec can be tinted in any of Benjamin Moore's 3,500 colors and is available in flat, eggshell and semi-gloss finishes—each adding its own unique characteristics to a project. To receive the full benefits of Eco Spec, a primer is available to deliver a full system with zero VOCs.

This new formulation aims for minimal disruption and quick return to service, assuring efficiency and convenience for larger spaces that must always remain accessible.

To learn more about Eco Spec, visit benjaminmoore.com.

The new Eco Spec formula is available in flat, eggshell and semi-gloss finishes, in any Benjamin Moore color.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BENJAMIN MOORE

OSHA Expands Penalty Reductions

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) says it's working to incentivize prompt hazard abatement and decrease the burden on small businesses by updating the penalty guidelines in OSHA's Field Operations Manual. It says the goal is to make it easier for small businesses to invest in safety measures.

The update includes an expansion of the 70% penalty reduction, previously only available to companies with fewer than 10 employees, to those with up to 25 employees. In addition, it includes a new guideline for a 15% penalty reduction for employers who immediately take steps to correct a hazard, and it has updated the timeline qualifying "immediate" for more complex situations, provided that employees are not exposed to the hazard while it is being remedied.

Employers without a history of serious, willful, repeat, or failure to abate violations will be eligible for a 20% penalty reduction.

"All employers should be offered the opportunity to comply with regulations that help maintain a safe working environment," said Deputy Secretary of Labor Keith Sonderling. "Small employers who are working in good faith to comply with complex federal laws should not face the same penalties as large employers with abundant resources.

"By lowering penalties on small employers, we are supporting the entrepreneurs that drive our economy and giving them the tools they need to keep our workers safe and healthy on the job while keeping them accountable," said Sonderling.

Go to osha.gov for updates.

> BY LOWERING PENALTIES ON SMALL EMPLOYERS, WE ARE SUPPORTING THE ENTREPRENEURS THAT DRIVE OUR ECONOMY."
>
> — *Keith Sonderling*



Designer Council Collaborates on 2026 Behr Commercial Colors

Behr Paint Company recently unveiled a newly curated color collection for commercial buildings. The company says that the collection balances natural elements, nostalgic touches, and technology influences.

"We see an increased desire for environments that honor traditional color sensibilities while embracing contemporary digital aesthetics," said Erika Woelfel, Vice President of Color & Creative Services at Behr Paint Company. "The 2026 Commercial Color Forecast is a collection for commercial interiors that feels authentic, balanced, and connected to both our heritage and future."

This marks the first year that Behr partnered with its newly launched Designer Council to help inform the selection of colors for 2026. The council is made up of eight designers across the US, spanning several markets.

"We're thrilled to collaborate with this talented group of designers to gain deeper insights into how we can better support and engage the design community," said Andy Lopez, Senior Vice President and Head of Marketing at Behr Paint. "This invaluable partnership will help accelerate initiatives to offer the right colors, services, and tools needed to empower designers and elevate the outcomes of their projects."

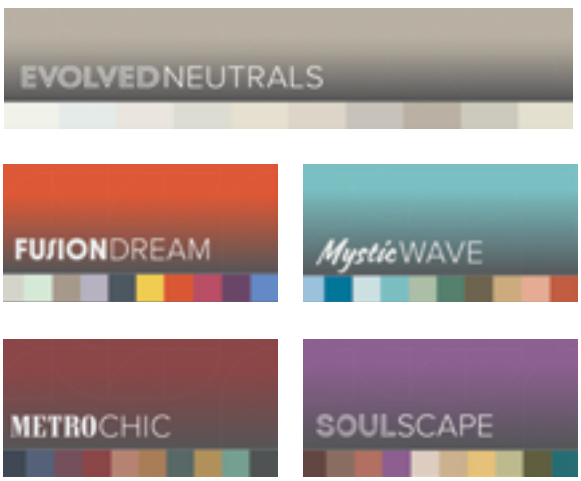




The collection has five subpalettes:

1. EVOLVEDNeutrals
2. SOULScape
3. MYSTICWave
4. METROChic
5. FUSIONDream

These can be used interchangeably in many commercial settings.



PHOTOS: COURTESY OR BEHR



The full complement of colors in the Behr Commercial Collection is available to explore at behr.com/2026colorforecast.









Volunteers with A&K Painting filled 400 paint buckets with school supplies to be distributed to local schools.



Helping Teachers and Students In Need

A&K Painting Company wrapped up its 17th year coordinating a massive donation of essential school supplies to local students, schools, and teachers in need. The effort went beyond a simple cash donation as participants dedicated their time to assemble 400 five-gallon supply-filled paint buckets dubbed "Buckets of Love."

Each bucket included roughly $80 worth of school supplies, including pencils, notebooks, glue sticks, highlighters, and more.

Two hundred buckets were allocated to Classroom Central, a Charlotte-based nonprofit that provides free resources to teachers and students in need, and the other 200 buckets were distributed to local schools selected by the company.

"In our Buckets of Love program, we really just want to show that we're a family-oriented bunch who cares about our local teachers and kids. It's all about giving back to the community that's like family to us," said President Kevin Robbins.

A&K Painting Company is not alone in this venture. Partners and clients joined in by donating to the cause. Sherwin-Williams, for example, provided the buckets and $2,000 for supplies.

The project began with a pre-planning phase, during which the donated materials were selected, followed by multiple days of labeling buckets, filling pencil pouches, and presorting stacks, and culminating in a community service day where employees filled all the buckets.

The donation program was initiated in 2008 and has steadily gained steam over the years. Two years ago, A&K started its non-profit, A&K Cares, to deepen connection and commitment to the local community and further foster a culture of caring.

For information about A&K, visit akpainting.com.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF A&K PAINTING COMPANY

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What a Shot!

GRAYDAZE PM TAKES CITY AM TROPHY

Congratulations to Masen Ward, a project manager with CPIA member company Graydaze Contracting, for winning the 2025 Richard C. Kramer Salt Lake City Amateur golf tournament.

The 25-year-old was a dark horse to anyone paying attention; he had not played competitively since college. So what made him decide to compete this year?

"I started playing golf with friends and family, with some really good under-par rounds. I was playing some of the best golf I have ever played, and that's what made me decide to play in this tournament," said Ward.

The Layton, Utah, resident closed out Saturday, May 31, at a 70, but on Sunday, June 1, Ward drew huge attention by hitting an incredible hole-in-one on the 200-yard ninth hole.

"I have never had a hole-in-one before this and didn't expect to get one," he said, "especially on the hardest hole of the course that day."

Ward continued to charge the back nine, finishing the tournament at a total 6-under 138 to beat out well-known Brigham Young University golfers Peter Kim and Jackson Mauss by a single stroke.

"I wanted to see how I still stacked up with some of the best amateurs in Utah and if I still had the ability to play good golf under pressure," he said. "I think taking that time off was the best thing for me, being that I didn't put golf as my number 1 priority like I did in college."

As an added benefit to the memorable day, he had his older brother caddying. "It was really special to share that moment with him."



Graydaze's Masen Ward was a surprise winner in this year's Richard C. Kramer Salt Lake City Amateur golf tournament.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF FAIRWAYS MEDIA / RANDY DODSON

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New Podcast Episodes

The Commercial Painting Podcast explores strategies for overcoming the challenges standing in the way of your growth. Recent episodes cover social media marketing, tech solutions, finance staffing, and offshore talent.

bit.ly/CPP-Episodes

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Google Podcasts

iHeartRADIO

SOCIAL MEDIA THAT SELLS: THE $9M PLAYBOOK WITHOUT A SINGLE AD



Zach Kenney from ZK Painting joins Aaron and David to discuss the social strategy he used to sell a staggering $9 million in painting jobs on Instagram without spending any money on ads. Most contractors will be relieved to know that you don't need a team, a million followers, or a camera crew. This method simply requires you to keep your customer in mind and make something.

Kenney outlines his simple steps for employees to relay day-to-day updates that can serve as content and the qualities to look for in an employee who can spearhead the posting. All of this advice revolves around keeping it simple, fast, and effective.

Website: zkpainting.com

HOW TODAY'S TECH CAN HELP GROW YOUR BUSINESS



Glenn Williamson, founder of New Haven Painting and Mighty Stack, shares his journey from humble beginnings to running a respected painting business to starting Mighty Stack, a company that builds custom software solutions. Hear his lessons learned about building a painting company, transitioning into commercial work, and how relationships and word-of-mouth marketing got them to where they are today.

Williamson also discusses how a simple to-do list on Monday.com snowballed into a full-blown tech solution that revolutionized their business. By considering what information was required for each function, he was able to build dashboards that allowed employees to focus on their KPIs, increasing accountability and effectiveness.

Website: mightystack.tech

HOW TO SCALE YOUR PAINTING BUSINESS WITH VIRTUAL TALENT AND FRACTIONAL CFOS



Annie Newton from ProfitWorks dives into the world of fractional CFOs and remote staffing solutions. For years, contractors scaling their businesses have struggled to effectively staff the back office.

With over two decades of experience in the trades, Newton offers deep insights on scaling smart, building your financial team, and leveraging remote talent responsibly.

Newton discusses common challenges with back office employees and how to restructure for growth, the pros and cons of hiring remote talent, clears up misnomers about hiring offshore workers, and outlines how to work with a global team effectively.

As always, Newton's insights are invaluable for leaders looking to scale their painting or trade business with confidence.

Website: profitworksusa.com

PHOTO: (TOP) VOLHA_R / ADOBE STOCK; HEADSHOTS COURTESY OF THE PODCAST GUESTS

Industry Calendar of Events

Plan ahead for conferences, exhibitions and other industry opportunities coming up in 2025 and '26. Be sure to watch your email for updates on CPIA events and activities.

2025

IFMA World Workplace
September 17–19
Minneapolis, Minnesota
worldworkplace.ifma.org

Healthcare Facilities Symposium and Expo
Sept 24–26
San Diego, California
hcarefacilities.com

Fifth Annual CPIA Leadership Conference
October 5–8
Tucson, Arizona
thecpia.com/2025-conference

NFM&T Remix
October 15–16
Orlando, Florida
nfmt.com/remix/2025

Healthcare Design Conference + Expo
October 25–28
Kansas City, Missouri
hcdexpo.com

2026

World of Concrete
Jan 19–22
Las Vegas, Nevada
worldofconcrete.com

NAHB International Builders' Show
Feb 17–19
Orlando, Florida
buildersshow.com

PCA Expo
Feb 16–20
Orlando, Florida
pcapainted.org/expo

Fourth Annual CPIA Executive Retreat
Watch thecpia.com for date and location

ConExpo-Con/AGG
March 3–7
Las Vegas, Nevada
conexpoconagg.com

AMPP Annual Conference + Exhibition
March 15–19
Houston, Texas
ace.ampp.org/home

NFM&T
March 10–12
Charlotte, North Carolina
nfmt.com/Charlotte/2026

American Coatings Show + Conference
May 5–7
Indianapolis, Indiana
american-coatings-show.com

AIA Conference on Architecture & Design
June 10-13
San Diego, California
aia.org/community/events/aia-conference-architecture-design-2026

Are we missing an event that should be in this calendar? Send details to editorial@thecpia.com.



CPIA Leadership Conference
Tucson, Arizona



Healthcare Facilities Symposium + Expo
San Diego



World of Concrete
Las Vegas

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY OF THE CPIA; ZENSTRATUS / ADOBE STOCK; COURTESY OF WORLD OF CONCRETE

Building a





Branding that Wins Premium Jobs

Winning premium commercial painting jobs takes more than experience and skill. The companies that consistently land high-value projects have something else in common: a recognizable, professional brand.

Branding is more than a logo. It shapes how your business is seen, trusted, and remembered by property managers, general contractors, and facility decision-makers. A strong brand communicates credibility before you ever submit a bid. It sets the tone, builds trust, and makes you memorable in a crowded market. Here's how commercial painters can build a brand that attracts and retains premium work.

Why Branding Matters for Commercial Painters

Your brand tells the story of your company. When property managers choose between several commercial painters, the decision often comes down to confidence. They want a contractor they can trust to deliver professional results, meet deadlines, and handle tenant-facing work without disruption.

BY AARON HOCKEL, ALTAVISTA STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Strong branding shows that your company is established, serious, and equipped for commercial environments. It also supports premium pricing. When your brand communicates professionalism, experience, and attention to detail, clients are more willing to pay for it.

Four Key Ways to Build an Effective Brand

1 MAKE VISUAL BRANDING CONSISTENT

Premium clients expect to recognize your brand at every customer touchpoint. From your trucks and uniforms to your proposals and social media profiles, everything should look and feel like it belongs to the same company. This creates a reliable impression and helps your company stay memorable.

Even on job sites, a clean and consistent look adds value. Crews wearing branded gear and arriving in clearly marked vehicles signal that your company is professional and organized. On large projects where multiple contractors are being watched closely, this consistency makes a difference.

2 ENSURE YOUR WEBSITE IS PROFESSIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL

For many prospects, your website is the first interaction they have with your business. If it's outdated, confusing, or slow to load, it creates doubt. A professional website reinforces trust and helps your company appear established and capable of taking on serious projects.

Your website is a key part of your digital relevance; it helps your brand show up when and where decision-makers are actively searching for your services. It should clearly outline your services, industries served, and geographic areas covered.

Commercial clients want proof. Include examples of past work and share photos that show the scale and complexity of your projects.

It's also important that the website is mobile-friendly, loads quickly, and includes easy ways for prospects to contact your team. A weak or generic website can be the reason a potential client never calls.

3 MAXIMIZE BRANDING THROUGH PROPERTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS

Groups like BOMA, IREM, and IFMA offer access to the professionals who control commercial painting budgets. But just paying dues is not enough. To turn your membership into meaningful opportunities, your company needs to be visible and involved.

Trade shows and expos are a chance to get in front of property managers who are actively looking for qualified contractors.

GROW YOUR CUSTOMER BASE BY ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS.



ILLUSTRATION (THIS AND PREVIOUS PAGE): NUTHAWUT / ADOBE STOCK





TARGET HIGH-VALUE PROSPECTS WITH THE RIGHT MESSAGE. FOCUS ON THE PROPERTY TYPES AND REGIONS WHERE YOU ALREADY DO STRONG WORK.

Take advantage of these opportunities:

- ▢ **Sponsor** local events and educational sessions to increase name recognition, especially when your logo is part of the marketing materials.
- ▢ **Advertise** in association newsletters or directories to stay in front of decision-makers.
- ▢ **Show up** regularly at networking events (even if you're not speaking or exhibiting) to keep the right audience familiar with your company.
- ▢ **Build relationships** at these events. Have a team member take the lead on developing these bonds.

Membership is the starting point, but consistent participation is what makes it valuable.

4 USE TARGETED ADVERTISING TO STAY TOP OF MIND

Branding shouldn't rely on organic visibility alone. Paid advertising helps you stay in front of decision-makers, especially when bids are seasonal or unpredictable. Search ads, programmatic campaigns, and social media advertising put your brand where commercial clients are already spending time online.

You don't need a large budget. Targeting a small group of high-value prospects with the right message is often more effective than broad outreach. Focus on the property types and regions where you already do strong work.

First-party data from your website, CRM, or email list can be used to build precise audiences on platforms like Meta and through programmatic advertising. These tools continue to improve, offering advanced targeting options that deliver the right message to the right people at the right time.

*Re*targeting also plays a key role. Even after someone leaves your website, your ads can continue to reinforce your message and remind decision-makers of your capabilities.

Final Takeaway

Premium commercial painting jobs go to companies that look and act like premium service providers. Branding is not about being flashy. It is about consistency, clarity, and professionalism. Every point of contact—from your business card to your booth at an industry event—is a chance to build trust.

Contractors who invest in their branding see better results. They win repeat work. They build relationships with larger clients. And they earn the chance to compete on quality and reliability, not just price.

If your goal is to win better commercial painting jobs, focus on building a brand that earns respect and stays visible in the right places.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Hockel is a partner with AltaVista Strategic Partners, which specializes in helping commercial contractors stay visible, relevant and ready to win. As the CPIA's official marketing partner, the company is a preferred source for contractors who want their online presence to work as hard as their crew. Learn more at altavistasp.com.

ILLUSTRATION: NUTHAWUT / ADOBE STOCK

FLYING HIGH OR Falling Short?

EARLY ADOPTERS ASSESS THE REAL-LIFE APPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF DRONES

AN ESSAY BY EMILY HOWARD FOR THE CPIA

The first time I wrote about robotics in the painting industry was around 2015. The first time I wrote about drones in the painting industry was in 2019, when Apellix won AkzoNobel's Paint the Future global startup challenge. While writing that article, I imagined a not-too-distant future with whole painting crews of robots and drones managed by operators sitting comfortably in an air-conditioned control trailer monitoring progress—and maybe even making use of some VR technology.

I will now admit that my predictions were overly grand and premature. What can I say? I was sold on the idea! Why wouldn't I be? It felt like the new tech could solve so many problems, including:

- **Safety Issues.** I'd written too many stories about OSHA violations, fines, and injured (or worse) painters — many working at heights.
- **Worker Shortage.** It seemed like a potentially creative solution to staffing problems.
- **Next-Gen Recruitment.** Drones are cool, and painting hasn't gained a ton of traction with the younger generation in quite some time. Could something like this attract new talent to the painting industry?



A drone is shown applying softwashing chemicals.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALPINE PAINTING & SANDBLASTING

What I didn't anticipate in my excitement was the actual challenge behind this endeavor. It's apparently not as simple as slapping a spray gun on a drone and flying it around.

"Turns out painting with the drone is in some respects technologically harder than self-driving cars," Apellix founder and CEO Robert Dahlstrom told me "For example, when you tell a self-driving car to stop, it stops. You tell a drone to stop, it's going to fall out of the air. It's always moving around with currents and things."

There are barriers to making this technology effective and efficient. And even if manufacturers have overcome some of them (which is still up for debate), there are plenty of remaining barriers to be broken through by trailblazing early adopters who have to train staff, determine production rates and pricing, sell this service, and make a profit.

For more than a decade, manufacturers have been hard at work on their part of the equation: fine-tuning painting and pressure washing drone designs. More recently, contractors are getting on board, ready to ante up and find out if this can really revolutionize the industry.

So how's it going? What's really involved? Should you be thinking about drones for your business? There's no shortage of sales pitches, case studies, and opinions from manufacturers, early adopters, and armchair analysts like me. So let's dig in.

> YOU REALLY CAN'T DABBLE IN THIS TECHNOLOGY. IT'S AN EXPENSIVE ENDEAVOR."
>
> *— Aaron Moore, PPD Painting*

Why Drones?

One of the biggest benefits that drones offer is a better option than ladders, scaffolding, manlifts and other methods for working at heights or at difficult angles. It's a whole new game for painting and washing hard-to-reach spaces.

"Think of the inside or outside of a stadium with millions of crossmembers. How do you get somebody in there? How do you get optimal results?" asked Barry Alexander, owner and founder of Aquiline Drones. "Whether it be staging or something else, a drone can do that in a short period and within a safer environment."

"The economic advantage is so great compared to a lift. Then, of course, the productivity is just so much faster, and you have the safety factor as well," said Dahlstrom.

> THE ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE IS SO GREAT COMPARED TO A LIFT … AND YOU HAVE THE SAFETY FACTOR AS WELL."
>
> *— Robert Dahlstrom, Apellix*

Many contractors start with pressure washing drones. The adoption of painting drones has been slower, mainly due to issues like overspray; however, painting drones are out there, and more are in development. Aquiline, for example, offers a painting payload solution to the Spartacus Endure, and Apellix is field testing a new drone that the company hopes to release in 2026. In South Florida, Nick Burgess started Summit Drones a little over two years ago to clean both residential and commercial structures, using drones. "I thought it was a really creative idea," he said. "When the opportunity came out, I decided to move forward with it."

Alpine Painting & Sandblasting in New Jersey uses drones for cleaning the exterior of water tanks, warehouses, and buildings. "We use it to eliminate our worker exposure to heights," said coatings specialist Ronnie Vasilik. "The other benefit is not having to drive our equipment on customers' lawns. It's easier to work around previously difficult-to-reach areas."

PPD Painting in Chicago has adopted drones for cleaning and, in some instances, painting commercial buildings. "We wanted to be on the front end of this technology," said PPD President Aaron Moore "We decided to just dive in headfirst, because you really can't dabble in this technology. It's an expensive endeavor."

Pony Up

One of the biggest barriers to entry is the cost. As Moore said, you can't dabble—you're in or you're out. A single drone costs $50,000 to $60,000.

"Our entry point was about $60,000, and then we had to get a soft wash and pressure washing trailer to accommodate the use of the drone," said Burgess.

One key decision is whether you want one or two drones. Like all high-tech equipment, more moving parts—blades, rotors, batteries—means more parts to break. Moore decided to go with two to ensure his team had a backup, while Alpine Painting & Sandblasting decided on one.

"We just have the one pressure washing drone right now while we prove the concept and confirm there's a market for it," said Alpine President Sam Scaturro. Another necessary component is trailer setup. "The trailer setup that you need is another $50,000 or so. Ours has all the different water tanks, a water heater, chemical tanks, soft wash pump, high-pressure pump, air compressor, and paint sprayer," added Moore. There also has to be a budget for staff—either training for current staff or hiring drone operators. "The nuance with our industry is that it's so new. There are very few drone pilots who are familiar with cleaning applications," said Burgess.

Dahlstrom also recommends insurance. "You have to make sure that you have the right insurance. It's called hull insurance, and we recommend people have flight insurance." All three contractors said to plan on spending at least six figures.

Operations On Site

It typically requires two to three people to run the drone. PPD puts three on a drone: one pilot, one at the trailer, and one spotter. For Alpine, they have two pilots on site who can switch off to manage fatigue. For more difficult jobs, they add a third person.

"This person is designated to move hoses around and help make sure the drone isn't fighting anything. It helps prolong the battery life and puts less strain on the drone," said Scaturro.



The pressure washing drone used by Alpine Painting & Sandblasting came complete with a three-nozzle arm.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALPINE PAINTING & SANDBLASTING

Summit can complete jobs with two but keeps three on staff for more complicated jobs. "One to two people handle groundwork, which involves scene safety, porting things off, changing batteries, keeping the pumps running. So, with the two people [one pilot and one for ground crew], they can really handle most things," says Burgess.

Training

First and foremost is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) part 107 certification to ensure pilots are proficient in drone operations and have the necessary knowledge, including emergency procedures and airspace regulations. At Alpine Painting & Sandblasting, Vasilik was trained to run the drone. "For me, that was the hardest part," he said. "I've been around robotics and video games. That helped me with the skills of actually flying the drone."

In addition to certification, pilots need plenty of hands-on practice before they hit a job site. "I would say, of all the equipment I've ever operated, the drone is the most stressful," added Vasilik. "There are a lot of variables: wind, load. You have to be a lot more cautious when you're operating a drone."

Maintenance training on the drone (especially if you only have one) is also recommended. Check with your insurance provider, as some require additional training.

> WE PLAN ON 300 SQUARE FEET PER MINUTE UNDER IDEAL CONDITIONS, NOT INCLUDING SETUP, BREAKDOWN, AND BATTERY SWAPS."
>
> *— Nick Burgess, Summit Drones*

Aquiline Drones offers a drone training program that runs three to five days for pressure washing and an additional one to two days for painting applications. The company also offers onsite deployment support.

"It typically starts on one of the first or larger jobs, so they're looking professional from day one," says Alexander.

Production Rates and Estimating

In the end, everyone wants to know: Is it faster? And what's the ROI? Manufacturers will tell you "yes" and "big" all day. However, those with boots on the ground often say it's not plug-and-play tech; figuring it out requires a healthy amount of grit, patience, and curiosity.

Production rates range depending on proficiency, job type, job site, and a host of other criteria. "For us, it depends on the surface. With the soft washing, we find that a person is generally a little faster than the drone, especially if you have heavy cleaning to do," said Scaturro. "But if you have light cleaning to do, the drone can actually be pretty quick."

He said that the drone excels when there are things that would create obstacles for a lift. "Then, the drone can be a lot faster; whereas, if it's wide open, I would say a person is probably a little bit faster than the drone."

Burgess, on the other hand, thinks drone use is faster than using lifts or booms. "For us, we plan on 300 square feet per minute



The Alpine Painting & Sandblasting drone washing trailer carries hose reels and a hotwash unit.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALPINE PAINTING & SANDBLASTING

under ideal conditions, not including setup, breakdown, and battery swaps."

One of the bigger challenges is that repeatable, large-scale applications have to be sold before you can test. "We had a big-enough job recently to really test it," said Moore. "We ran it daily for a week and covered about 20,000 square feet per day."

All of these unknowns make estimating challenging. "I think with this being such a new industry, estimating pricing is one of our biggest learning curves, because we're not really competing against other drone operations. We're competing against traditional operations," said Burgess.

The Verdict

As with all new technology, the verdict is a moving target. Someone who says it's a failure today might have a breakthrough tomorrow, and vice versa. But for these contractors, they are keeping an open mind, figuring it out, and working the problems they find.

"It took a while, but right now we're starting to get some really good traction with the drone cleaning and customers being interested," said Scaturro. "It's not for everything. It doesn't fully replace everything that a person would do."

But for a burgeoning business like Summit Drones, it's been a win. "We're on track to probably double our growth this year from last, and it's like any new technology early on—some hardware issues, some software issues—but we've really worked through them," said Burgess. He also noted that there are times when drone use outperforms traditional cleaning and other times when it underperforms. He manages this by being upfront with customers and underselling and overdelivering.

No doubt it's a cool invention, and both Moore and Scaturro reported some clients signing on just because it was innovative. However, real long-term adoption will take time and brave contractors to help work out the kinks, develop the market, and pay operators to practice and put the drones through its paces. "I think it was a good investment, but the return on that investment will take a long time," explained Scaturro.

MANUFACTURERS GET TECHY WITH OVERSPRAY

One of the objections to painting drones is overspray. I asked two manufacturers (though there are others either developing or offering this technology) how, given the air movement around propellers, they minimize or avoid overspray.

> We extended the lance quite a bit so it does not fall in the wake of the downdraft from the propellers. Then we shroud the nozzle, and the nozzle swivels. We also angle the end of the spring wand 45° to get a bit further away from any downdraft from propellers, and then swivel the nozzle tips 20° upward. It's a very, very carefully engineered solution. We've tweaked some of the more nuanced issues to get to that optimal result."
>
> *— Barry Alexander, Aquiline*

> Apellix is entering the testing phase of a new painting drone. In addition to addressing the placement of the spray nozzle, the company is focused on optimal transfer efficiency.
>
> "The drone is very good at maintaining speed, so we've determined the optimal speed for most of the coatings as well as the optimal distance from the surface.
>
> "That's one way of mitigating and reducing overspray. Because if the transfer efficiency ratio is perfect, it's not bouncing off the surface, and it's not atomizing and getting in the air. We try to minimize overspray by getting exactly in that zone for the most efficient transfer possible. There are different modes, but for normal painting, [the spray] only comes on when you're moving at the right speed and you're the right distance from the wall."
>
> *— Robert Dahlstrom, Apellix*



Shown is another angle of a drone applying softwashing chemicals.

> WE JUST HAVE THE ONE PRESSURE WASHING DRONE RIGHT NOW WHILE WE **PROVE THE CONCEPT** AND CONFIRM THERE'S A MARKET FOR IT."
>
> *— Sam Scaturro, Alpine*

Before I close out, here's a little of that armchair analysis: The on-ramp for this kind of technology is steeper than I originally thought it would be. It also may never save as much time and labor as I, and probably many others, imagined. However, for those companies regularly working in difficult-to-reach spaces, there could be noteworthy advantages, provided the drones themselves can measure up to the marketing hype (particularly on the painting side).

Regarding the enticement of a new generation of talent and the buy-in of new entrepreneurs: Summit Drones is a great example of how the technology is already attracting business owners. Aquiline is working to roll out workforce development training in high schools (not just in painting but in many industries). This is something I'll be following.

I'm curious to see if this new tech revives some interest in working in the trades, but I'm also interested to see how the next generation will approach the challenges differently than those who were trained using traditional methods. And, ultimately, I think that's what it will take—a mix of different people with different experiences testing, trouble-shooting, and ultimately advancing the technology.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Howard, owner of Sunflower Crafted Content, has had a long and rewarding relationship with the painting industry as both a freelance writer and as the former editor-in-chief of *American Painting Contractor*.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALPINE PAINTING & SANDBLASTING

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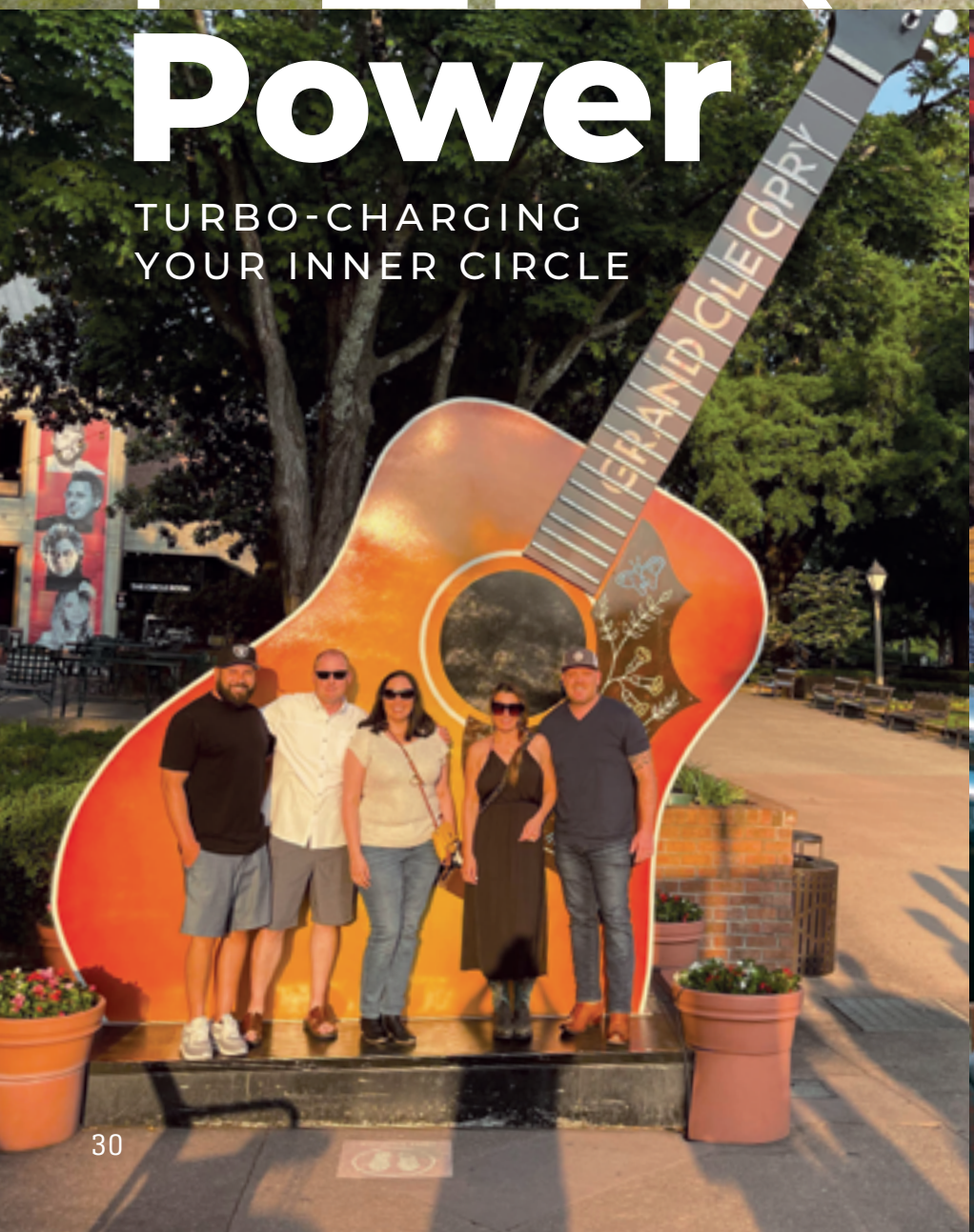
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PEER Power

TURBO-CHARGING YOUR INNER CIRCLE







Since its inception, the Commercial Painting Industry Association has offered its Executive-level members the opportunity to join small groups of professional peers to share business and industry insights and to learn from each other's career experiences. CPIA Peer Groups (for owners) and Leadership Development Groups (for key employees) are carefully curated to ensure that no members directly compete with anyone in their six-to-eight-member group, allowing all participants to speak candidly and offer useful advice.

Over the years, the peer groups have become a valued professional resource, and in some cases, they've nurtured true friendships among members. Here, Emily Howard explores the ways these groups have strengthened bonds outside the meeting room.

Building Trust

Regular meetings with a CPIA peer group, virtually and at conferences, are excellent ways to sharpen your skills and build your business. But the beauty of these small bands of painting brothers and sisters is that you likely have so much more than just business advice to share. If you haven't done it already, it might be time to ask yourself if it's time to join a peer group. And if you're already in one, have you considered all the ways to benefit from it?

"Spending extra time socially with my peer group builds trust and deepens relationships beyond the more formal meetings. It creates a foundation for more open communication and allows us to get to know each other better in a more relaxed setting," said Steve Hester of Hester Painting & Decorating and co-founder of the CPIA.

CONT. NEXT PAGE





Facing page: CPIA peer groups have not limited their interaction to video calls and emails. During conferences and retreats over the years, they have taken side trips to local attractions, renowned eateries, sporting activities, industry project sites and more. *This page: (top)* A peer group took a tour of the CarMax ballpark project in Richmond, Virginia; *(bottom)* the families of CPIA member Leslie West and association co-founder Aaron Moore gathered at Storm Lake in Montana.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE PEER GROUPS







Outside of peer group meetings, members have gotten to know each other better during activities such as *(clockwise, from top):* a wine tasting in Northern California's Napa Valley, drinks at a pub in Chicago, and a dinner in Austin, Texas. Spouses and significant others are typically invited to join in on the fun.

Curious about CPIA peer groups? Get in touch with Executive Director Mike Stanley for details: mstanley@thecpia.com

Many CPIA peer group members have taken trips that allow for more time, shared experiences, and, as an added bonus, more fun with fellow members. Whether your peer group adds a few extra days or outings around a planned CPIA event, or you're traveling to visit another member, or your peer group members take a full-blown trip together each year — there are excellent opportunities to get to know each other better and change up the routine.

"These aren't just colleagues. They are our friends," said Aaron Moore of PPD Painting. Here, members share a few of their favorite moments that they say helped solidify their relationships, build additional trust, and create many close friendships that they didn't see coming.

Keeping it Real

According to David Chism of Chism Brothers Painting, his peer group committed early in their formation to in-person meetings. In addition to their virtual meetings, they've agreed to meet in person three times per year: 1) at the annual CPIA Leadership Conference, 2) at the annual CPIA Executive Retreat, and 3) on one more trip planned specifically for the peer group. Recently, the group enjoyed a trip in Napa Valley, expanding their appreciation for different types of wines as well as differing business perspectives.

"One of the things I most enjoy is that all are free to have their views and to say what's on our mind, take it and use it or not," said attendee Mike Barrett of Pro Paint Solutions.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE PEER GROUPS

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Members had time to socialize at *(top)* Wanderlust Wine Company in Austin, Texas, during last year's CPIA conference, and *(bottom)* at the 2025 Cook Out 400 NASCAR Series Cup race in Richmond, Virginia. (Yes, that's Noah Gragson in front, driver of car number 4 for Front Row Motorsports.)

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"It's a safe place for honest feedback and encouragement. I've personally grown from just being part of the group."

Spouses also attended the event, which allowed families to spend time together outside peer group meetings. "We worked hard and enjoyed time *not* working — we became a stronger, tighter group," said Chism.

Plans for an ice fishing trip, a Graco tour and a possible Hawaii trip are in the works.

Growing Together

"Public, business personas are much different than the at-home family face," said Leslie West of WW Nash Painting & Wallcovering in Richmond, Virginia. Bill Curtindale of Pro Paint Solutions in Auburn, Washington, agreed, "Group excursions allow us to bond with our fellow group members in a way that is difficult to achieve at larger events with busy schedules."

Their group committed to visiting each member's shop "to build camaraderie and get to know each other beyond the brush," said West. "Since Richmond is known for NASCAR, and most of the peer group had never been to Virginia, it was perfect timing to take a trip to Richmond for the 2025 Cook Out 400 NASCAR Series Cup race weekend."

In August, Aaron and Briana Moore (PPD Painting), Liz and Harvey Perez (Service Contracting Solutions), Bill and Shana Curtindale (Pro Paint Solutions), and Matt and Amber Fackrell (Accent Painting) set out for Richmond to visit Leslie and Lloyd West (WW Nash & Sons, Inc.).

The group packed the weekend, touring the WW Nash shop, exploring the CarMax Park project, and holding a peer group update meeting. After that, it was on to some fun with group members and spouses.

"We had open, unfiltered conversations, free from egos and agendas — just honesty and shared experiences," said Curtindale. "My life is richer because of this time."

In addition to the NASCAR race, the group took in a minor-league Richmond Squirrels baseball game, floated the James River, and spent quality time with the West family.

"One of the highlights of our Richmond trip was the incredible hospitality from Leslie and her family. They created the kind of warm, welcoming atmosphere that made our time together truly special," said Moore.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE PEER GROUPS

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FINANCE

BIG Tech Moves

TIME TO CONSIDER NEW ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE?

BY EMILY HOWARD
FOR THE CPIA

QuickBooks has long been the standard accounting system in the painting industry (and in most industries, for that matter). Its simplicity, adaptability, and integrations are three major reasons for its wide adoption and high retention. However, as painting businesses grow—and grow more complex—owners often find their needs evolving. This can require a more powerful accounting system with better customization tools and more advanced reporting.

Some owners may also feel ready for enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, such as Sage, Microsoft Dynamics, and NetSuite. These are larger, more complex systems with robust accounting features that boast the ability to streamline all or most business functions.

"These are exciting times," said Annie Newton, Owner of ProfitWorks USA, of the latest software offerings. "We've not had such options and control of our data like we do now."

Advanced accounting and ERP systems can help you invest in growth, gain better insight, streamline operations, and decrease the number of manual tasks. But to be realistic, tech transitions like this can be difficult, time-consuming, and expensive. To find out when it's worth it, what it takes, and some of the challenges you'll battle along the way, I talked with three painting industry consultants and a few contractors who have made the leap.

PHOTO: LPHOTOWORKS / ADOBE STOCK



PHOTO: COURTESY OF COLIN NOLAN

Do I Want a New System?

Only you can answer that question, but remember the maxim, "With great power comes great responsibility." While these advanced software systems have power, they come with a healthy dose of responsibility and up-front work.

"We have three clients that have moved to Sage in the last year or two. It's significantly more robust, scalable, and customizable," said Colin Nolan, Business Coach at Nolan Consulting. "It's also more complicated. Most people can figure out how to run QuickBooks. Sage is not like that."

One of the biggest benefits of programs like Sage is **advanced reporting**, he added. For example, it's important to have clean, accurate gross profit numbers segmented by division as a company scales. Or you may want to be able to sort numbers by region.

If you don't already know where your reporting blind spots are, it's important to talk with your CFO, business coach, and professional peers to help you identify gaps and opportunities in your reporting—before you adopt a new accounting system.

Another benefit is **customization**. Nolan offered this example: "Some companies have overhead combined; whereas, some companies split overhead out."

He also called out the financial **budgeting tool** as a big benefit: "It has allowed one of our clients to transfer ownership to the department heads."

If you find that there are reports you want and don't have, don't jump too fast into the most challenging software. Investigate your current capabilities before making any big changes.



Colin Nolan

"Owners should think about the types of reports they want," said Newton. "If they must be pulled from multiple platforms, there may be [simpler] software to help do that, or a person can just curate everything needed."

Am I Ready?



Linnea Blair

It's not uncommon to look to revenue markers to make decisions about software. Nolan said that he's seen companies from $7 million to $60 million in revenue make the move but cautions that $7 million could be premature.

"I would recommend something like this at the $10-million-and-up range," agreed Linnea Blair of Advisors on Target.

However, there are a host of other factors to consider. The first is **business complexity**. "A lot of times, contractors are starting divisions in other areas, or they're acquiring other contractors, and getting into a multifaceted business can lead to a need for more complexity in your financial reporting," said Blair.

Newton also said that moving from repaint to general contracting work can trigger some changes to your accounting: "That's where cash flow can become unruly. You need to know how to navigate at that point."

Other things to think about are your data and your current tech stack. "It's not just size that will determine what platform should work. Cost, integrations, and level of control of the data should all be considered," said Newton.

These systems also allow you to migrate your CRM, inventory, and other functions—but that's not required. The contractors we spoke to opted to keep much of their current tech stack while transitioning only the accounting. If you are keeping any pieces of your tech stack, verify that the new system will easily integrate with them.

Ensure you have adequate staff with the right knowledge and buy-in from the right people. "The CEO should not be involved in this," warned Nolan. "[The CEO needs] to say what they want access to and when. The CFO needs to have buy-in."

Carefully consider where you're trying to go. "Know how much you plan to scale over the next 10 years; otherwise, the solution suggested may not be a fit," said Newton.

If you haven't done some hard soul-searching and planning about the future of your company and you don't have a clear path forward, this transition may not be worth it. Adopting a new software program cannot determine your vision for the future; it can only help you navigate there.

There are going to be more things that you need to think through, but the **last one we will talk about here is the budget.** Factor in costs for the software, transition, staff and seats required, consultants you want to hire, and any other anticipated needs.

Am I Prepared?

All three consultants hammered home the fact that this process takes time, money, and people. If you are short on any of those things, it could be a bumpy road.

"Once you are in it, you are in it. You can't go back," said Nolan.

To avoid delays and further complications, be sure that your team is

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ANNIE'S ADVICE



Annie Newton

ProfitWorks' Annie Newton suggests that, when exploring advanced accounting and ERP systems, be prepared to discuss the following with your software adviser:

1. Do you have employees, subcontractors, or both?
2. How many jobs do you handle monthly?
3. How many different types of projects do you expect to do?
4. Do you need job costing inside the accounting platform?
5. Does the platform need integrations with a CRM system?
6. Do you need more advanced reporting (for example, tracking by location, crew, and estimator)?
7. What revenue streams will be in your future?

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dedicated to the transition and not juggling a host of other tasks. "I would say three to four people working on it can make it happen, and a CFO overseeing it as well," Nolan added.

"If you use your software effectively, it can definitely make things easier for people, make a business more streamlined, and give you access to more information faster," said Blair.

What Are My Other Options?

Everyone can empathize with the dread that comes with changing any core technology. Sometimes there's just too much muscle memory to warrant a change.

If this is how you or any of your key players feel, but you need more power, there are options.

"Within the QuickBooks family, I think most folks who want to move up move to QuickBooks Enterprise. That has more capability while still maintaining the QuickBooks environment that people might be familiar with," Blair said. "It's worth seeing if it's a fit before leaping to something larger."

Newton also recommended exhausting your options with QuickBooks. "Look at Enterprise, which has more features to it. When you move to something like NetSuite or Sage, you are paying much more money for that software."

Committing to a Choice

In the end, there is homework to be done to make this decision. Look at what you have and what's out there, and really think about how the options fit into your grand plan. The technology is improving, and adopting it can improve your business if you take the time to do it right.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

See p. 28.

PHOTO: C.ARCURS/PEOPLEIMAGES.COM / ADOBE STOCK

CONTRACTORS GIVE THEIR FIRSTHAND TAKE

Leslie West, WW Nash & Sons, and Nicole Hanik, Painters USA, share their experience with transitioning to a more complex accounting software system.

1 What finance software are you switching from and to?

LW: In 2020, we moved from SAGE 100 ERP to SAGE 100 Contractor.

NH: We went from QuickBooks to Sage Intacct.

2 What triggers made you think you were ready for a different system?

LW: We needed a more construction-based system. We made ERP work, but Contractor was immediately more customizable for our job cost accounting needs.

NH: We are close to a $50-million organization, and we were running off QuickBooks. With the sheer volume and complexity of the work (multiple locations, multiple service lines) and our planned growth path to a $200-million organization, QuickBooks was not going to take us there.



Leslie West

3 What's been the biggest challenge so far?

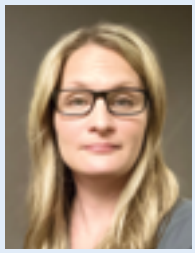
LW: Balance forwards.

NH: Making the right decisions on the front end for setup, because you're kind of stuck with them once you start using the systems.

4 What's been the biggest benefit so far?

LW: Project budgets for forecasting.

NH: We know reporting will be way better and more detailed. There's a lot of upside, but there's a lot of change that still has to happen through this year.



Nicole Hanik

5 What's the biggest benefit you are hoping to gain from the system?

LW: Using the estimating module in conjunction with job costing.

NH: Understanding all the numbers, and leveraging forecasting and trends within the project arenas so that we can be more informed to make better decisions.

6 How long did it take to transition?

LW: Minimum six months.

NH: We went through a whole vetting process, so it took us a year to go through the software selection. We started the transition in July of 2024 and went live in April of 2025.

7 Any advice for contractors considering this kind of transition?

LW: It's worth all the tribulation for comprehensive reporting.

NH: 1. Invest in the ability to understand your numbers more thoroughly and to be able to dissect them. **2.** Be clear what you want on the front end. Chances are the first thing you think you want is not what you actually need. **3.** Partner with somebody to help you vet the chosen system and make sure you get what you need. **4.** Don't plan to launch the system by yourself. You're not the expert. Have an implementation partner who knows the software.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF LESLIE WEST AND NICOLE HANICK



BEN ALLISON

Chief Financial Officer, KC Painting & Coatings
kcpcservices.com

Prior to his current position as CFO at KC Painting & Coatings, Ben held diverse roles across operations and accounting, with a recent focus on helping high-growth companies scale. At KC and sister company, Kilcor, Ben provides executive leadership in strategic planning, forecasting, and budgeting. Driven by his faith, family, and coworkers, Ben is passionate about building winning teams and finds the greatest satisfaction in seeing those he helps succeed. **About the Company:** Headquartered in Alpharetta, Georgia, KC is a comprehensive commercial and industrial painting and coatings contractor, servicing projects throughout the Southeast U.S.



ADAM DIAMOND

Division Leader, Commercial, KC Painting & Coatings
kcpcservices.com

At KC Painting & Coatings, Adam is a passionate and skilled Division Leader with a proven track record of delivering high-quality projects while maintaining excellent customer satisfaction and retention. Adam manages a team of project managers, estimators, and field staff, and he is responsible for securing new business opportunities, building clients relationships, and ensuring compliance with safety, quality, and environmental standards. He is proud to be part of a team that values integrity, innovation, and excellence. Fun fact: Adam is a winning race car driver. **About the Company:** *See description, above.*



FRANK MILES

President, Blair Commercial Painting, LLC
blaircommercialpainting.com

Coming from a background in sales and account management, Frank became the owner of Blair Commercial Painting, LLC in 2016. **About the Company:** A premier commercial and light industrial painting company based in Waukesha, Wisconsin, BCP has served Southeastern Wisconsin since 1980 in industries that include healthcare, education, manufacturing, and hospitality. BCP offers interior and exterior painting, epoxy flooring, structural steel painting, waterproofing, wall coverings, and pressure washing. With an in-house spray booth and a client-focused approach, BCP emphasizes quality, professionalism, and reliability.



CHRIS NEESON

Vice President & General Counsel, Inline Painting
inline-painting.com

Chris has served for three years as Vice President and General Counsel at Inline Painting, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Prior to that, he was in private practice as an attorney, working in the areas of business formation, and transaction, as well as litigation. **About the Company:** Inline Painting was established in 2007 by father and son, Larry and Sean Armstrong. Operations were bolstered with the addition of Chris to the ownership/management team, which worked to reinvent the company through innovation and modernization. The goal? To enhance production and take their obsession with client service to a new level.



TIM PAYNE

Operations Manager, Siegner and Company
siegnerandcompany.com, linkedin.com/in/tim-payne-b6416292

Tim brings over 20 years of production and management experience to the company, headquartered in Milwaukie, Oregon. He oversees all operations in shop and field. **About the Company:** Siegner and Company is a second-generation, family-owned commercial painting and finishing contractor serving Oregon and Southwest Washington. The team specializes in interior and exterior repaints, tenant improvements, high-performance coatings, shop finishing, acoustic panel installations, and wall coverings. Their mission is to exceed expectations while building relationships based on trust, service, and a reputation for excellence.



MICHAEL SLOANE

Vice President, Field Operations Supervisor, New Horizon Finishes, Inc.
newhorizonfinishes.com, linkedin.com/in/michael-sloane-7b306822

Michael is an industry veteran, known for his expertise in high-quality painting, finishing, and property enhancement. He oversees operations, client relations, and project execution, and has played a key role in expanding New Horizon Finishes' presence across Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire. His strong background in project management and industry best practices makes him a trusted partner for property managers, developers, and commercial real estate professionals seeking long-lasting solutions. **About the Company:** The Massachusetts-based company delivers high-quality commercial painting, wallcovering, and powerwashing with a focus on precision, professionalism, and long-term value.

Information is obtained from members or their websites, edited for length. Meet more new members next issue.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

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