COMMERCIAL

PAINTING

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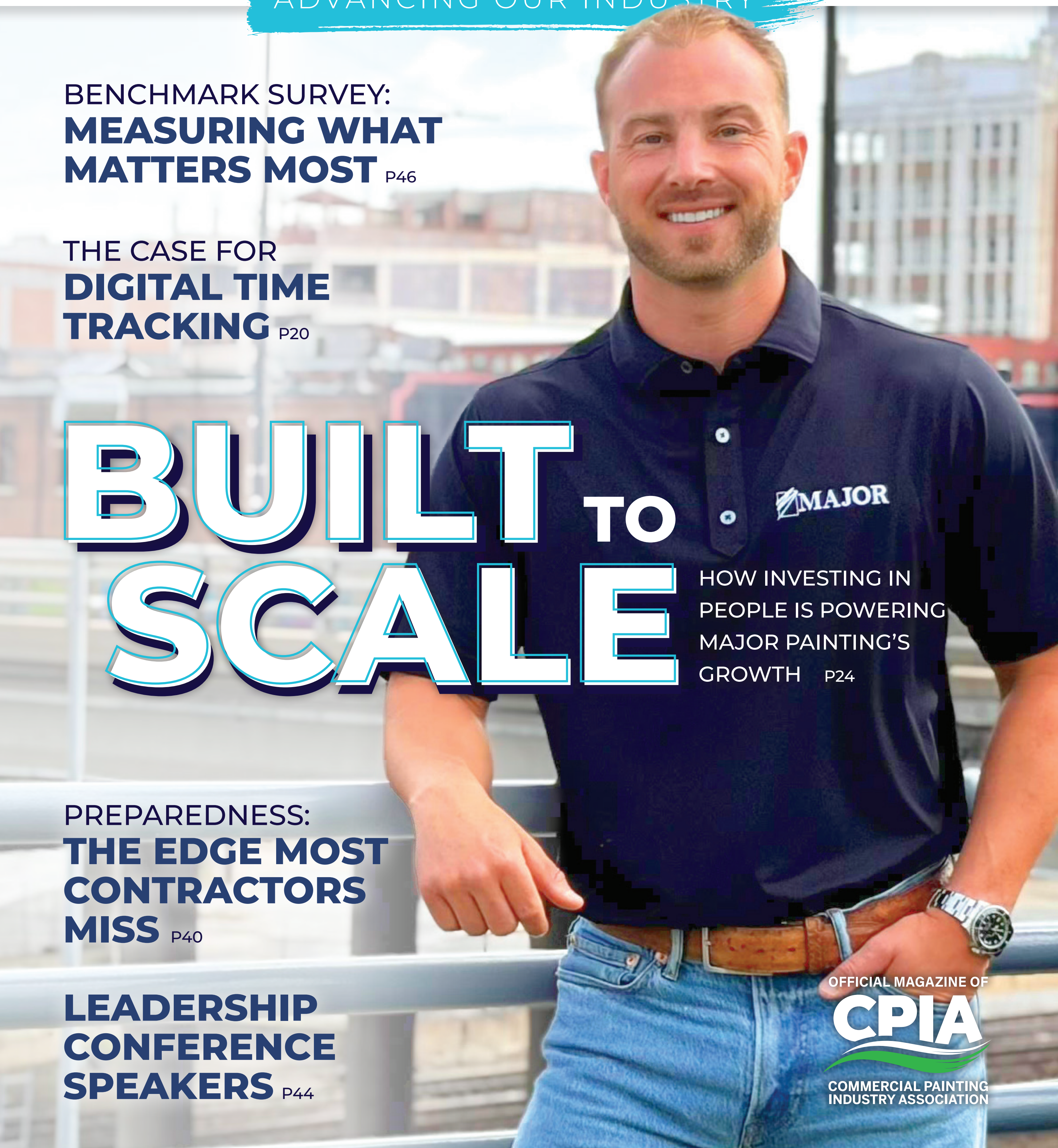
ISSUE NO. 2

ADVANCING OUR INDUSTRY



BENCHMARK SURVEY:
MEASURING WHAT MATTERS MOST P46

THE CASE FOR
DIGITAL TIME TRACKING P20

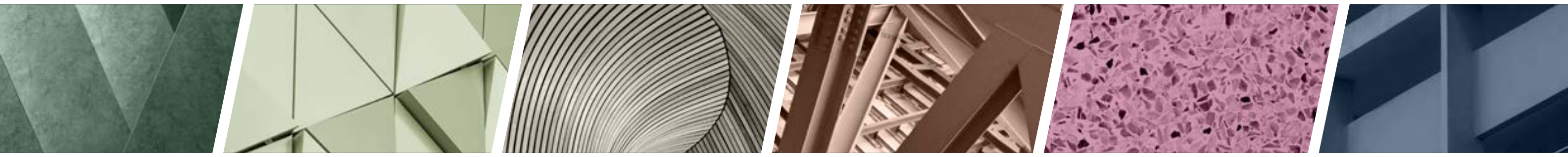
BUILT TO SCALE

HOW INVESTING IN PEOPLE IS POWERING MAJOR PAINTING'S GROWTH P24

PREPAREDNESS:
THE EDGE MOST CONTRACTORS MISS P40

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE SPEAKERS P44

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF
CPIA
COMMERCIAL PAINTING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



Strengthen Your Business with CPIA Insights

I hope your summer is off to a strong start and that your pipeline of business is solid.

The CPIA continues to enjoy impressive and sustained growth, and we're looking forward to our Annual Leadership Conference, September 27-30 in Nashville. Our registration pacing for the conference is unprecedented, and we expect to deliver the largest event yet as well as the most valuable few days of the year for all in attendance.

But before that, we have a critically important action item for you: **Please complete the 2026 CPIA Benchmark Survey.**

The only study of its kind in the industry, the survey delivers actionable insights to help you build a stronger, more professional, and more profitable business. Designed to create the most comprehensive benchmarking database exclusively for commercial painting contractors, its value grows with every participating company—making the data more powerful for everyone involved.

As a participant, you will receive:

- The complete CPIA Benchmark Report before it is made broadly available
- Access to industry benchmarks on revenue, profitability, labor, staffing, compensation, growth, and operational performance
- The ability to compare your company against peers and top-performing contractors
- Strategic insights that can help identify opportunities to improve profitability, efficiency, and long-term growth
- An invitation to the exclusive Benchmark Results Session at the CPIA Leadership Conference—Your Golden Ticket

The survey takes less than 30 minutes to complete; all information collected will be strictly confidential, **and the data will only be shared with you if you complete the survey.**

I encourage you to set aside time to complete it—the insights you'll gain will be well worth the investment.

If you haven't yet participated, you can access the survey on our homepage.

As always, we welcome your thoughts, questions, and ideas—don't hesitate to reach out.

I look forward to seeing you in Nashville this September.

Sincerely,

Mike Stanley

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mstanley@thecpia.com

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2026/27 INDUSTRY CALENDAR

Plan for conferences, exhibitions, and other upcoming industry opportunities. Be sure to watch your email for updates on CPIA events and activities.

2026

CPIA Sixth Annual Leadership Conference
September 27–30
Nashville, Tennessee
thecpia.com

Healthcare Facilities Symposium and Expo
September 28–30
Charlotte, North Carolina
hcarefacilities.com

Healthcare Design Conference & Expo
October 17-20
New Orleans, Louisiana
hcdexpo.com

IFMA World Workplace
November 18–20
Anaheim, California
worldworkplace.ifma.org

NFM&T West
November 3–4
Las Vegas, Nevada
nfmt.com/west/2026

2027

World of Concrete
January 18–21
Las Vegas, Nevada
worldofconcrete.com

CPIA Fifth Annual Executive Retreat
March 7–9
Charlotte, North Carolina
thecpia.com

NAHB International Builders' Show
Feb 2–4
Las Vegas, Nevada
buildersshow.com

PCA Expo
Feb 15–19
New Orleans, Louisiana
pcapainted.org/expo

AMPP Annual Conference + Exhibition
April 11–15
Columbus, Ohio
ace.ampp.org/home

AIA Conference on Architecture & Design
May 19-22
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
conferenceonarchitecture.com

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

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*EXPIRES 12/31/2026 Valid for one-time use at any company-owned *Pittsburgh Paints/PPG Paints* store only. No purchase required. Limit six (6) free gallons (total) of the following premium paints: ULTRALAST™, PROMINENCE™, PITTSBURGH PAINTS ANTI-SCUFF™, HI-HIDE®, PERMANIZER®, ACRI-SHIELD® MAX, or SUN PROOF®. Other restrictions may apply. Original coupon must be presented and surrendered at the time of order. Coupon may not be applied to previous transactions, used to make payment on monthly statements, or combined with other coupons or promotions. Product availability will vary by location. Comparable substitution may be offered if stated product is unavailable. Void where prohibited.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTIONS: Scan UPC code. Customer will be credited automatically based on purchases. Collection of certificate required.

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*Discount at register. One time trial offer. See store associate or sales representative for offer details.

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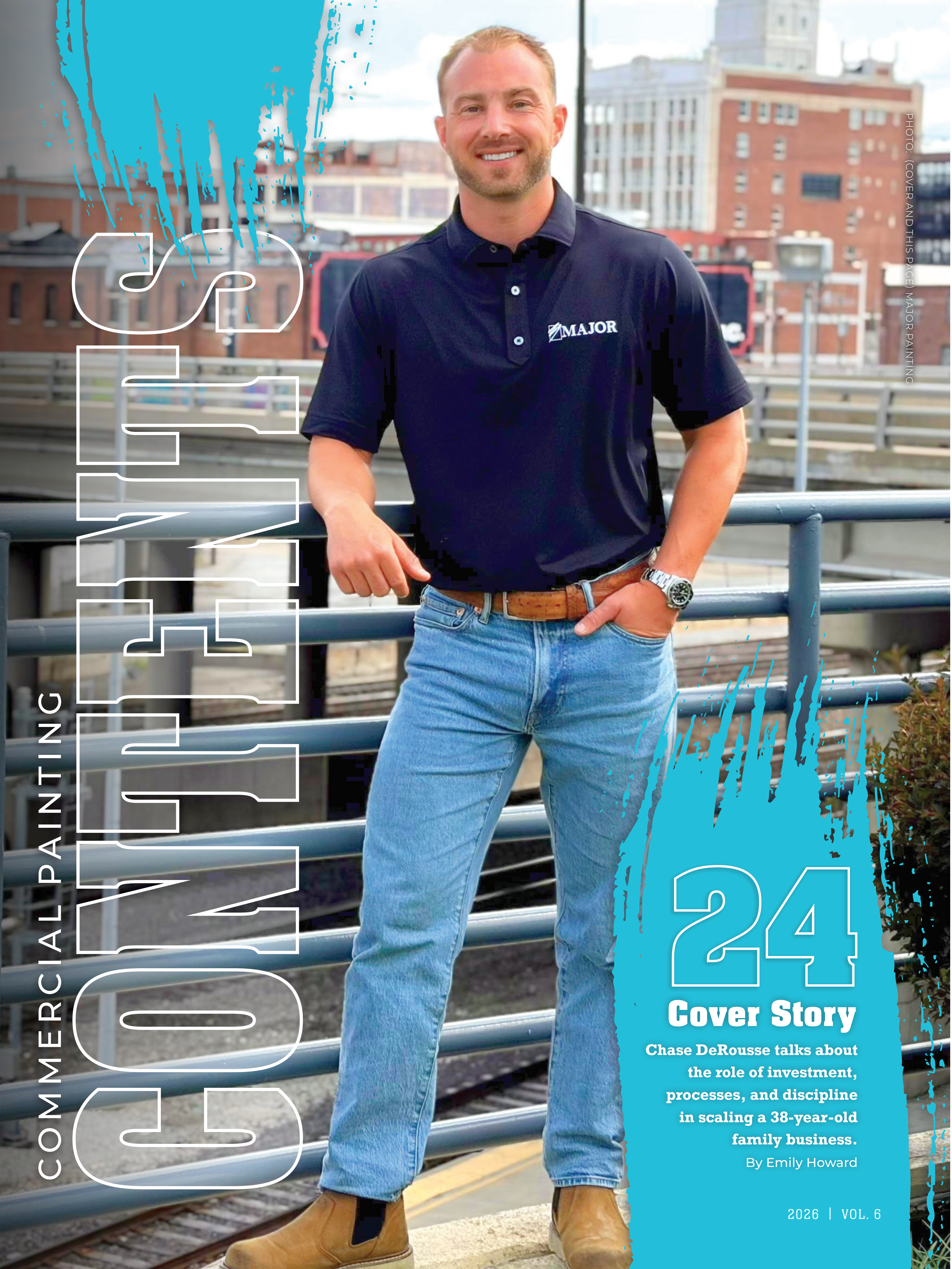

COMMERCIAL PAINTING

CONTENTS

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FEATURES

PHOTO COURTESY OF GRACO

DEPARTMENTS


REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN
Visit thecpia.com and book today!
SIXTH ANNUAL
CPIA
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
W HOTEL | NASHVILLE
SEPTEMBER 27-30, 2026

CPIA's Significant Other Program

THE EXPERIENCE BEYOND THE CONFERENCE

A standout feature of the CPIA Leadership Conference, the Significant Other Program offers an unforgettable Nashville experience for spouses and significant others. It's a chance to connect with others, build lasting friendships, reconnect with familiar faces, and become part of the close-knit CPIA community.

This year's program brings together live music, local exploration, and relaxed downtime in a thoughtfully curated Nashville experience.

Highlights include:

A Private Rooftop Concert by Lauren Gottshall

MONDAY FROM 3 TO 4:30 P.M.
W NASHVILLE'S ROOFTOP BAR

Join us for an intimate performance by rising Nashville recording artist Lauren Gottshall.

Blending country roots with a modern edge, Lauren's sound captures the heart of everyday life—love, resilience, and chasing big dreams. Her heartfelt lyrics, ear-catching melodies, and timeless storytelling have earned her a place on some of Nashville's legendary venues, including The Bluebird Cafe, The Listening Room Café, and 3rd & Lindsley. She has opened for country superstar Jason Aldean and shared the stage with O.A.R., Warren Zeiders, Chris Janson, and The Samples.

Throughout the performance, attendees will enjoy complimentary cocktails, appetizers, and skyline views.

Nashville Trolley Tour

TUESDAY AT 10 A.M.
DEPARTING FROM THE W NASHVILLE

A two-hour hop-on, hop-off trolley experience will deliver you to more than 15 of Nashville's most popular attractions. It's the perfect way to explore the city at your own pace and take in its rich history, culture, and iconic music scene.

Private Poolside Cabanas at the WET Deck

AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE CONFERENCE
W NASHVILLE'S ROOFTOP WET DECK

CPIA has reserved two private cabanas at the W Nashville's rooftop WET Deck, where spouses and significant others can enjoy poolside relaxation with food, beverages and spectacular city views.

Make this conference one to be remembered by you and your significant other.

For more information on the conference, visit: https://bit.ly/3RicarN
To register, visit https://bit.ly/4w65UCE

Welcome to Our Newest Members

Introducing members who recently joined the CPIA. Information is obtained from members and/or member web and social media sites, edited for length.

AUSTIN ABNEY

Owner/COO, Craftmasters Painting, Inc., Queen Creek, AZ craftmasterspainting.com

After earning a degree in mechanical engineering from ASU, Austin Abney worked as both an architectural consultant and application engineer before being recruited by his father-in-law, Joe Emig to help him with estimating at Craftmasters Painting, LLC. Austin's been estimating and running the painting operations at Craftmasters since 2016.

About the Company: Craftmasters Painting, LLC has served the greater Phoenix area for more than 25 years, specializing in commercial interior and exterior painting. Founded by Joe Emig, whose painting career began 50 years ago as an apprentice, the company has grown from a single spray rig and truck to a team of more than 40 painters, with son-in-law Austin Abney joining the business 10 years ago and bringing a mechanical engineer's perspective.

MATT KUYPER

Director of Commercial Services, Harpeth Painting, Nashville, TN harpethpaintingllc.com

Matt Kuyper is the co-founder and Commercial Division Leader at Nashville-based Harpeth Painting, a commercial and residential painting he founded with his wife, Maggie, in 2017. Matt focuses on commercial operations, project execution, and building strong partnerships with owners, general contractors, and design professionals while helping lead the company's commitment to craftsmanship, character, and continuous improvement.

About the Company: Harpeth Painting is a Nashville-based commercial and residential painting contractor serving clients throughout the Southeast. Through its multiple divisions, Harpeth Painting performs a broad range of work from residential repaints to multimillion-dollar commercial projects.

NICK PATEL

Co-owner, Gulfside Painting & Contracting, Sarasota, FL gulfsidepainting.com

Nick Patel is proud to continue Gulfside Painting's nearly 50-year legacy of delivering high-quality commercial and residential painting services with integrity and attention to detail. His focus is on clear communication, dependable workmanship, and creating lasting finishes that enhance and protect every property he paints.

About the Company: Gulfside Painting has delivered expert painting services since 1977 for commercial, residential, and specialized properties, enhancing both aesthetics and durability.

MARC POULOS

President, Marc Poulos Painting, Mount Prospect, IL marcpoulospainting.com

Marc has worked in the painting industry since college, gaining experience on high-profile projects while delivering five-star service. Committed to delivering an outstanding experience, he formed Marc Poulos Painting, knowing his name and reputation would be on every job.

About the Company: Marc Poulos Painting is a leading residential and commercial painting company in the greater Chicago area. With over 25 years of experience, they have a reputation for delivering exceptional quality work with a team that clients can trust.

CPIA Binder

CURRENT EVENTS, UPDATES, AND MORE

Painting Industry Ambassadors Bring First-Ever Paint Scholarship to Construction Ready CareerEXPO

Eight companies, all CPIA members, joined together to bring the first-ever Paint Scholarship competition to the Construction Ready CareerEXPO, an event that brings together students and employers for hands-on events, demonstrations, and networking.

Held annually at the Georgia World Congress Center, the event aims to introduce nearly 10,000 students to career opportunities in trades ranging from construction to cosmetology.

The two-day event is also home to the Georgia SkillsUSA State Championships, where qualified students compete against peers in a wide range of skilled trades for the state title and the opportunity to advance to the national competition. Since painting is not represented in the competition, painting contractors and suppliers joined together to create their own.

CPIA members present the first-ever paint scholarship at the Construction Ready CareerEXPO.

Paint Pros Take the Lead in Representing the Trade

In 2023, eight companies from the commercial painting world took it upon themselves to represent the industry to the next generation. Included were Atlanta-based paint contractors Benise-Dowling & Associates, Harrison Contracting, KC Painting & Coatings, and Graydaze Contracting. Joining them in creating a unified message about the opportunities and benefits the industry offers were Sherwin-Williams, Pittsburgh Paints, Benjamin Moore, and Graco. This year, the group took their efforts one step further by introducing a painting competition and awarding meaningful scholarships to top painting talent.

Celebrating Skill

Louie Boncyk, VP at Benise-Dowling and Associates, Inc., says that the SkillsUSA competition is a big deal. "If you get invited to the national championship for any trade, you are pretty much guaranteed a job right out of high school."

Competitors put their skills to the test in vignettes built to mimic real-world painting scenarios.

Recognizing that painting wasn't represented in SkillsUSA, the commercial painting industry leaders held their own competition this year to spotlight emerging talent in the field and showcase the benefits of a career in painting.

They distributed flyers (see below right) and invitations to area schools, inviting students to apply and compete at the World of Painting booth for one of three scholarships in the amounts of $2,000, $3,000, and $5,000.

To truly test the skills of competitors, vignettes were built to mimic real-world painting scenarios, and supervisors from the painting companies acted as judges, using a detailed checklist to evaluate techniques such as cutting in, mixing, cleanup, and more. After 29 contestants completed two days of competition, the scores were tallied, and three winners were presented with scholarships at a ceremony in front of their peers.

Promoting Opportunity

The effort allowed students to learn more about the commercial painting industry and the excellent career paths available, and schools that offer trade programs got a closer look at the underrepresented painting industry.

Boncyk noted that while the students always want to know how much money they can make, "The teachers have more detailed questions about what a painting program at their school might look like and what they can do to help."

Boncyk always acknowledged the importance of the participation of the paint companies. "It's great to have these four painting companies from the Atlanta area come together to represent and promote the commercial paint industry and focus on how we make it more appealing to the next generation."

The group is already looking forward to the 2027 event, where they will continue to educate and motivate the next generation of talent and host the second annual paint competition.

Nippon Goes It Alone in Bid for AkzoNobel Decorative Unit

After a failed joint bid with Sherwin-Williams to acquire AkzoNobel outright, Nippon Paint Holdings is making a solo move—targeting Nippon's decorative paints division.

The Tokyo-based manufacturer confirmed it submitted a proposal within the past month, though no formal decision has been announced. AkzoNobel has not engaged with the offer or disclosed it to shareholders, according to sources familiar with the matter.

Valued at roughly 12 times projected 2026 EBITDA, the decorative unit is a critical asset, particularly in Europe, where it generates nearly two-thirds of AkzoNobel's revenue. For Nippon Paint, the deal would expand its presence in mature markets while strengthening its global brand portfolio.

For commercial contractors, the implications are notable. A successful acquisition would reunify the Dulux brand under one owner, potentially improving product consistency, distribution, and availability. Greater scale could also impact pricing, innovation, and supply chain stability—key factors in project planning.

Any potential hesitation on AkzoNobel's part may stem from its existing agreement to merge with Axalta Coating Systems, a deal still under regulatory review. If approved, the combination would create a coatings powerhouse with an estimated enterprise value of $25 billion, with AkzoNobel holding a majority stake and shifting its listing to the U.S.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AKZONOBEL

Pittsburgh Paints Co. Unveils Protective Coatings Brand, Expands Commercial Portfolio

Pittsburgh Paints Co. recently launched PITTSBURGH PAINTS Protective Coatings, a new brand that replaces PPG High Performance Coatings and brings a broader, more unified offering to commercial and industrial paint professionals.

The new brand consolidates established products, full-system solutions, and future innovations under one name. As part of the rollout, Pittsburgh Paints Co. will also serve as the exclusive distributor of PPG Protective & Marine Coatings, expanding access to widely specified systems across the U.S. and Canada.

Company leaders say the change is intended to streamline the portfolio while maintaining continuity in product performance. "Customers will continue to get the trusted formulas and reliability they've depended on, now supported by a broader product range and expanded distribution," said Dennis Karnstein, president and general manager of commercial at Pittsburgh Paints Co.

The first product to launch under the new branding is BUILDING RENEWAL NeverFade Exterior Coatings with Kynar Aquatec PVDF resin. Designed for architectural applications, the system is engineered to extend the service life of commercial and industrial building exteriors by more than 15 years.

Built on PVDF technology, the coating system features carbon-fluorine bonds that help resist UV degradation, chemical exposure, and temperature extremes—key performance factors for assets exposed to harsh environmental conditions. The system meets AMPP SSPC Paint 47 standards and is formulated as a low-VOC, water-based solution.

The NeverFade lineup includes four components:

- Original Base for substrates such as wood, stucco, masonry, concrete, fiber cement, and EIFS
- Metal Base for primed steel, aluminum, galvanized, galvalume, and coil-coated metals
- Universal Primer
- Bonding Primer

For commercial paint professionals, the shift signals a more streamlined product lineup backed by familiar performance, along with a stronger emphasis on system-based solutions and long-term durability. In addition, pros will have access to a wider range of high-performance options for restoration and long-term protection.

Over the next 12 months, the company's full protective coatings portfolio will adopt new branding. Updated labels will feature clearer product information, including mix ratios and QR codes for quick access to technical documentation—an update aimed at improving efficiency both in the shop and in the field.

For more on the new brand, visit ppgpaints.com/protectivecoatings.

Designed for architectural applications, the system is engineered to extend the service life of commercial and industrial building exteriors by more than 15 years.

More Work in the Pipeline, but Not Everyone Is Feeling It

Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) released its latest Construction Backlog Indicator in June, and the headline is pretty straightforward: work is still stacking up.

In May, backlog rose to 9.1 months—up 0.3 months from April and 0.7 months compared to this time last year. That puts the industry near a three-year high, which signals steady demand across much of the country.

Regionally, backlog increased everywhere except the South. Even so, the South still has the largest backlog overall and has seen the biggest year-over-year gains. For commercial paint contractors, that likely means continued opportunity in large-scale and ongoing projects, especially in consistently active markets.

At the same time, ABC's Construction Confidence Index readings for May showed a dip in expectations for sales, profit margins, and staffing. That said, all three metrics remain above 50, which means contractors generally expect growth over the next six months—but with a bit more caution than earlier this year.

According to ABC Chief Economist Anirban Basu, much of the backlog growth is being driven by data center construction. Contractors working on those projects are reporting significantly longer backlogs—about 11.6 months compared to 8.6 months for those who aren't.

That surge is creating a bit of a split in the industry. Larger firms and those tied into major data center work are seeing stronger pipelines, while others may not be feeling the same momentum. That imbalance likely explains why confidence softened slightly, even as overall backlog increased.

Bottom line: there's still plenty of work out there, but where you sit—and what types of projects you're tied into—matters more than ever right now.

CONSTRUCTION BACKLOG INDICATOR

	May 2026	April 2026	May 2025	1-Month Net Change	12-Month Net Change
Total	9.1	8.8	8.4	0.3	0.7
Industry					
Commercial and institutional	8.8	8.9	8.8	-0.1	0.0
Heavy industrial	10.0	9.1	7.2	0.9	2.8
Infrastructure	10.1	9.9	7.2	0.9	2.8
Region					
Middle States	8.2	7.2	7.5	1.0	0.7
Northeast	9.0	8.5	8.7	0.5	0.3
South	10.3	10.7	9.4	-0.4	0.9
West	7.6	7.5	7.5	0.1	0.1
Company Size					
< $30 Million	7.9	7.3	7.6	0.6	0.3
$30-$50 Million	9.1	8.8	9.9	0.3	-0.8
$50-$100 Million	10.4	9.1	9.4	1.3	1.0
> $100 Million	12.7	14.2	10.9	-1.5	1.8

TABLE: ASSOCIATED BUILDERS AND CONTRACTORS

Sherwin-Williams Opens New Global Headquarters

Sherwin-Williams opened its new global headquarters in downtown Cleveland this May, marking a major milestone not only for the 160-year-old company but also for the commercial coatings industry it serves.

The new campus is hard to miss. At roughly 1 million square feet, it includes a 36-story office tower, a two-story welcome center, and a multi-level parking garage—all part of the company's "Building Our Future" initiative. More importantly, it's designed to bring teams together, making it easier to collaborate, move faster, and keep innovation moving.

For commercial paint contractors, the investment points to a continued focus on improving what happens in the field—better support, stronger products, and responsive field-level service.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE SHERWIN-WILLIAMS COMPANY

Company leaders say the goal is simple: strengthen the teams that work closest with contractors and job sites every day.

"This investment reflects how we intend to lead in the future," said Heidi G. Petz, Chair, President, and CEO of Sherwin-Williams, during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "Most importantly, it strengthens how we support the teams closest to our customers, every day and in every market."

By housing product development, technical services, and sales teams under one roof, the new headquarters is expected to streamline collaboration, speed problem-solving, and deliver improved coating performance.

And by continuing to grow in Cleveland—the city it's called home since 1866—Sherwin-Williams is doubling down on its roots while looking ahead. For contractors, that translates to ongoing investment in the people, tools, and expertise that help keep jobs running smoothly.

For more information, visit sherwin-williams.com.

New Podcast Episodes

Looking to stay ahead of commercial painting trends and learn innovative business strategies? Hosted by Aaron Moore, Co-Founder of the CPIA and President of PPD Painting, and David Chism, owner of DC Marketing Group and Chism Brothers Painting, The Commercial Painting Podcast series explores strategies for overcoming the challenges standing in the way of your growth.

NO LAYOFFS SINCE 1954: THE EMPLOYEE-FIRST CULTURE OF THE WOOSTER BRUSH COMPANY

What does it take to stay strong for 175 years? In this episode, Wooster Brush leaders Ben Maibach and Michael Stephens talk about building a people-first company with zero layoffs since 1954, keeping jobs in the U.S., and designing products painters actually want. They also dive into automation, leadership, and where the industry is headed, and how staying rooted in your community can drive long-term success.

Website: woosterbrush.com

PART 1 - BEYOND THE HYPE: HOW AI IS ACTUALLY HELPING BUSINESSES GROW

In Part 1 of this special two-part episode Kathy Slowinski, CEO of Trilogy, breaks down how to use AI to scale smarter, cut busywork, and unlock serious growth. From hackathons and hands-on training to AI agents handling admin, scheduling, and contracts, this is a playbook for staying ahead. If you want to move faster, work leaner, and lead through rapid change, this episode delivers.

Website: theaiboss.ai

PART 2 - BEYOND THE HYPE: HOW AI IS ACTUALLY HELPING BUSINESSES GROW

In Part 2 of this two-part episode, Kathy Slowinski breaks down how to manage AI "drift" and use tools more effectively across business functions. She shares practical strategies like project folders, "second brain" knowledge systems, and tool selection to improve accuracy and efficiency. The episode also explores AI adoption, data governance, and the growing role of peer networks like YPO, a global leadership community, in helping leaders navigate change and scale smarter.

Website: theaiboss.ai

FIND YOUR AUTHENTIC VOICE: LEADERSHIP, MARKETING, AND AI

CPIA's own veteran editor Emily Howard reflects on nearly two decades in the commercial painting industry, her move from publishing to farming, and the leadership lessons gleaned from two very different fields. The conversation explores how contractors can use storytelling, PR, and authentic content to strengthen their brand, motivate teams, and stand out. It also examines AI's role in marketing, stressing that efficiency matters, but genuine voice and useful, human-centered storytelling still matter most.

Benchmark Your Business.

STRENGTHEN YOUR FUTURE.

If you're making key business decisions without clear industry comparisons, you're not alone—but you are at a disadvantage.

This is your opportunity to see exactly where your company stands and how top-performing contractors are operating right now.

What You Get

Complete the survey and receive exclusive access to:

- ▢ Industry benchmarks across revenue, margins, labor, and staffing
- ▢ A clear view of how your performance compares
- ▢ Insight into what leading contractors are doing differently

No speculation. No guesswork. Just real numbers from across the industry.

Why Participate

This isn't general industry data—it's specific, relevant, and only available to those who contribute.

Your input strengthens the dataset. Your participation unlocks the insight.

What Happens Next

Survey participants receive:

- ▢ Full benchmark results
- ▢ Invitation to a private presentation at the CPIA Leadership Conference
- ▢ Actionable takeaways you can apply immediately

Take the Survey

Participation is free and takes 20–30 minutes.

Visit thecpia.com and click the Benchmark Survey link at the top of the homepage.

Conference Access

Participants will receive a Golden Ticket at registration, granting access to the exclusive survey presentation and reception.

Stop Guessing, Start Managing

THE CASE FOR DIGITAL TIME TRACKING

BRACKEN ANDERSON, SENIOR PARTNER MANAGER AT ALIGNOPS BUSYBUSY

For decades, commercial painters have relied on paper timesheets. Often completed from memory at the end of the week, riddled with guesswork, and nearly impossible to verify, the seemingly mundane administrative task was and often remains a costly blind spot.

In an industry where labor accounts for 40–50% of total project cost, inaccurate time tracking isn't just inefficient—it's a direct hit to your margins. And, when you consider that production hours are often based on estimates instead of real data, it's hard to miss that every bid, forecast, and staffing decision carries unnecessary risk and compounding liability.

For those reasons alone, switching from paper to digital time tracking is more than a 'nice to have' tech solution. It's a means to gain control of one of your largest expense lines and capture real production rates. In fact, contractors using digital platforms report up to a 30% increase in profitability within the first year—not because they're working more, but because they're finally seeing what's actually happening in the field. When you look at it that way, 'nice to have' transforms to 'must have' pretty quickly.

PHOTO: MAKSIM KABAKOU/ADOBE STOCK

From Paper Chaos to Real-Time Clarity

Paper systems create delays at every step. Crews reconstruct hours days later, supervisors approve what they can't fully verify, and office teams spend hours chasing down missing or illegible information. By the time payroll is processed, the data is already outdated—and often inaccurate.

Digital time tracking replaces that lag with real-time visibility. Crews log time on-site, as work happens. Office teams shift from manual data entry to quick verification. What once took days becomes a streamlined, same-day process.

The bigger shift, however, is operational. You move from reacting to problems after the fact to managing them as they happen.

From Job Cost Guessing to Live Cost Control

The primary operational benefit occurs in project management and estimating. Under a paper-based system, a contractor typically discovers labor cost overruns weeks after a project is finished—long after the opportunity to course correct is gone.

Digital tracking changes that by shifting management from historical auditing to real-time budget monitoring. Instead of entering vague notes like "painted second floor," field crews log time against specific tasks, such as:

- **Prep:** Masking, scraping, drywall patching, and surface preparation
- **Application:** Production airless spraying or multi-coat wall applications
- **Detail/Trim:** Brush and roller work on trim, frames, and accents

This structure and real-time tracking give project managers a whole new level of insight into performance. If a crew has burned through 70% of prep hours but only completed 40% of the work, adjustments can be made immediately—before the job slips out of margin.

That's the difference between managing jobs and hoping they turn out.

Built-in Accountability and Site Verification

Digital tracking also improves field attendance verification. Unlike paper tracking that relies on manual supervisor sign-offs and is susceptible to human error and rounding inconsistencies, GPS-based clock-ins and geo-fenced jobsites provide a clean, objective record of who was on-site and when. If a GC or client questions progress or billing, you have time-stamped records and supporting documentation—including GPS-stamped entry/exit logs and daily photos—ready. For companies managing multiple crews across multiple sites, that level of visibility protects both revenue and reputation and allows for faster client billing.

The Real Challenge: Crew Buy In

With today's tight labor market, many owners hesitate to introduce mobile time tracking due to fears of pushback. They worry that rolling out digital time tracking will push their best team members to the competition. But here's the truth: your top-tier field talent isn't looking to hide in messy paper processes. They want clear structure, absolute transparency, and the tools and system that reflect their effort.

As BusyBusy Founder Isaac Barlow says, "A-players don't fear accountability; they crave it. They want to know the score, they want to know if they're winning, and they want a system that proves their value."

The key is positioning. If the rollout feels like surveillance, you'll get resistance. If it feels like support, you'll get adoption.

The Phased Adoption Strategy: Managers, Influencers, and Feedback Loops

Successful technology adoption doesn't happen overnight.

Any rollout must be an intentional, well-communicated process shared well in

> **By treating digital time tracking as more than a single-purpose tech upgrade, you set your company up for better profitability and easier growth.**

advance of implementation and structured for success.

The structure includes three stages:

- **Establish leadership alignment:** Ensure owners and senior managers understand how the system impacts operations, estimating, and profitability.
- **Train operational leaders:** Project managers and estimators need to master the tech and understand how the data supports better decisions.
- **Leverage field influencers:** Your foremen and top crew leaders set the tone. Train them and then run a controlled pilot launch with them. This allows them to get comfortable with the tool and establishes a direct feedback loop with management. When that team is comfortable with the tech, let them lead adoption in the field.

When the rest of the crew sees a respected supervisor confidently using the app and explaining how it simplifies their daily routine, skepticism decreases, and adoption follows naturally.

> "A-players don't fear accountability; they crave it. They want to know the score, they want to know if they're winning, and they want a system that proves their value."
>
> *— Isaac Barlow, BusyBusy*

Create a Supportive Environment

As with any new technology, early mistakes are part of the process, not performance issues. Be sure to treat them as such. Keep training simple. Host short on-site toolbox talks and quick 5-minute walkthroughs of the interface. Supervisors should act as supporters rather than enforcers, focusing on troubleshooting and coaching.

Reinforce success in the first 30 days with incentives to build consistent habits. For example, reward the first crew to hit 100% accurate timecards with gift cards or a team lunch.

Adoption accelerates when the system feels easy, not enforced.

Address Cell Phone Concerns Head On

Even with buy-in and support from A-Players and leadership, employees may be concerned about downloading a work app on their personal devices.

While understandable, these concerns are often based on a misunderstanding of how the software works. While every app is different, most modern time-tracking apps are designed to minimize intrusion.

Important points to convey during app rollout include:

- **Limited tracking:** Most construction apps do not continuously monitor location. The software only references GPS coordinates at the exact moment of a punch-in or punch-out to verify they are within the virtual site boundary. It does not track them on lunch breaks or after hours.
- **Battery Drain:** Because the software operates on transactional GPS hits rather than constant background tracking, its daily power consumption is minimal, often lower than standard navigation or social media apps.
- **Data Usage:** Most time-tracking apps consume just a few megabytes per month—roughly equivalent to watching a ten-minute or so YouTube video using cellular data.

If this last point causes friction, you may want to offer a small, monthly stipend to cover data usage.

Work Smarter, Not Harder

By treating digital time tracking as more than a single-purpose tech upgrade, you set your company up for better profitability and easier growth. Real-time visibility into your labor turns guesswork into control—and gives you a clearer, more manageable path to scaling.

More Than Paint. A True Partner.

For generations, our passion for producing products and colors made from premium-quality ingredients has been our highest priority, resulting in exceptional performance you can trust. Professionals who select Benjamin Moore products benefit from greater efficiency and stronger customer loyalty that drives referrals.
Here's what you can expect from Benjamin Moore:

Exceptional Spread Rate for Material Savings
Advanced formulas provide better coverage per gallon,[1] resulting in less material and greater efficiency that can help you save money.

Faster Dry Times for Lower Labor Costs
Quick recoat times allow you to apply multiple coats in a day,[2] so you can finish projects more quickly and move on to the next.

Flawless Application for Confident Results
Smooth, consistent application reduces touch-ups, callbacks, and jobsite disruptions, saving time and boosting productivity.

Durable Products for Lasting Results
Our proprietary Gennex® Color Technology delivers durable, long-lasting color, keeping properties looking fresh and protected for customer satisfaction.

Trusted Support for Long-Term Partnership
Our responsive sales team provides expert advice, while our retailers deliver quality service, product knowledge, and a commitment to supporting your business.

Tailored Programs for Business Success
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[1]Regal® Select Interior delivers 50 more square feet per gallon (approximate gallon coverage at recommended film thickness - sq. ft.) than a leading national competitor. [2]Recoat with Regal Select Interior in as little as one hour (dry time at 77˚F [25˚C] at 50% RH) versus a leading national competitor's four-hour recoat time.

Scaling Through People + Processes

EMILY HOWARD TALKS WITH CHASE DEROUSSE, OWNER OF MAJOR PAINTING

"It's hard to scale small service businesses. It's all about investing in the people and knowing that the return is coming down the road."

These are the words of Chase DeRousse, a second-generation contractor who recently completed his first year as owner of the family business, which currently has two brands: Major Painting and MAJOR. In a conversation with Emily Howard, he reflects on how a longstanding culture of trust—and a deep investmenet in people—has driven the company's success since its founding.

Emily Howard (EH): Tell me about Major Painting.

Chase DeRousse (CD): The company was founded in 1988 by my father, Steve DeRousse. He initially ran a lawn care business during high school and college. But when Kansas City experienced a historic drought, he picked up a project painting his parents' home, then his neighbors' home, and expanded from there. He quickly realized painting was more lucrative than mowing lawns. For a time, he managed both businesses, but after earning his accounting degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, he decided to commit fully to painting.

His big goal was to transition out of the field. After years of growth serving property and facility managers, he had 10-12 painters and was able to make the transition.

That is what Major Painting was built on: maintenance painting, coatings, and solutions for property and facility managers. We do very little new construction.


MAJOR

EH: How did you get started in the business?

CD: I'm the oldest of four boys, and following in my dad's footsteps, I ran a lawn care business while I was in college. At the time, I thought I wanted to pursue a career in finance, but most of the opportunities being promoted were with large corporations. That didn't feel like the right fit—I've always been independent and entrepreneurial.

During that time, I had a mentor I met through my lawn business who got to know both my family and me. He helped me see my dad's company for what it truly was: a strong business with real potential. He's one of my best friends, and I would have never gotten into this business if he hadn't said that.

It makes me a little emotional the older I get because I realize that my dad didn't want the boys in the company. He felt like he went the blue-collar route so that we could go be doctors and lawyers. But he was so successful.

When I joined the business in 2015, I didn't know anything about it. I never worked there during summers or anytime. Year one, I did OK, but in year two I started to pick it up.

Something I was able to bring to the business was introducing processes and systems that made it easier to scale. Until then, much of the operation lived in my dad's head.

We started by documenting systems and processes. That allowed Major Painting to evolve. My dad was not resistant to my ideas. He really gave me freedom to come in and learn the business and structure it in a way that made sense to me. That's another thing that makes me a little emotional: he's always been so great to work with.

Plus, the company was debt-free. That meant we had cash flow to play with. In 2015, our revenue was about $2 million, and this year we will push $15 million plus.

EH: You mentioned the company was founded as Major Painting—how has the business evolved in recent years?

CD: When I joined, Major Painting was focused on maintenance painting for property and facility managers. We built great relationships with our clients, and it led to them asking for our help in other things. We wanted to help, so we expanded our services under a separate brand, MAJOR, creating greater convenience for clients while driving growth for our business.

We now have painters, carpenters, and laborers in-house who complete about 75% of the work; the rest we sub out.

Right now, our projected billings are $8 to $10 million on the coatings side, $3 to $4 million in the general construction work, and $2 million in concrete repair.

Members of the Major Painting team powerwash a building in advance of paintng.

PHOTO: ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF MAJOR PAINTING

Major Painting removing and installing new sealants to vertical expansion joints.

EH: How did you scale the labor on the general contracting side?

CD: Mostly through industry networking and existing contacts. Also, we have strong relationships with our subs because we bring specialized trade knowledge and we make it a point to treat them well. That means setting realistic schedules, pricing work fairly, and paying on time. It's a simple approach, but one that's often overlooked—many general contractors act as labor brokers and don't fully understand the realities on the other side.

EH: Tell me what drove your choice to pursue concrete repair.

CD: That's a newer service we offer that was born out of failing to be successful at floor coatings.

I brought a paint rep in specifically to get into the market. We had great synergy, but we learned quickly that opportunities were limited with our core client base.

So, we shifted our focus to mastering concrete preparation ahead of floor coatings, which led to a new capability—precision concrete repair within our clients' facilities.

The traditional concrete guy wants to remove and replace the whole thing, but if everything is structurally sound, we can remove and repair damaged areas.

It's a specialized service, but the need is widespread, and the impact is substantial.

EH: As a business owner, how did you internally manage the growth you've experienced?

CD: The internal structure of the company has been the most critical part of our growth.

The first move we made was promoting from within. We elevated one of our top foremen into an operations manager role, with a clear focus: support the field and act as the go-to problem-solver for anything that comes up. That increased our capacity immediately.

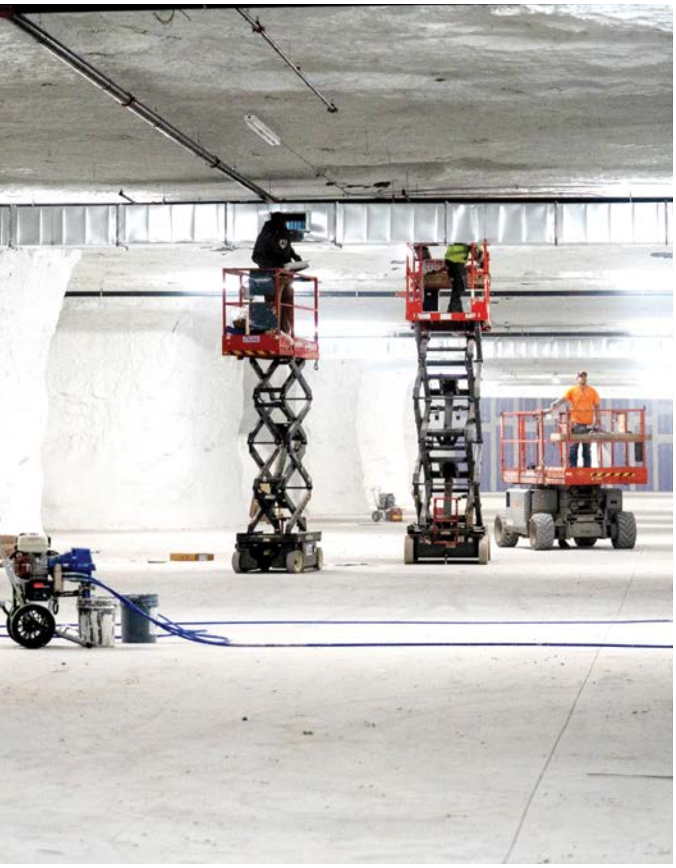
That's a big word for me: capacity. We're all humans, and while we each have a different bandwidth, everyone eventually hits capacity. With every person you add, you hope to add capacity.

Next, we turned our attention to sales. We went through two or three hires without seeing results, which was a challenge. Eventually, we brought in someone who helped launch our floor coatings division. He performed well, but even then, it took a year or two to gain traction.

From there, things took off. We moved the operations manager into a sales role and backfilled his position with another internal promotion. Then we wanted to make sure everyone had enough leads, so we brought in a business development manager, and she's been excellent. After two years, she moved into sales, and I backfilled her role to maintain momentum.

As our GC work expanded and reached capacity, we brought in a dedicated leader for that division. This year, we added a project manager to support that growth.

Removing loose rock and debris as part of the prep work on a large-scale industrial underground project.



This underground 3-million square foot industrial project involved, prepping the substrate with compressed air and painting. The project was completed in 12 months.

More recently, I hired my first family member—my brother, who came from commercial real estate. The plan is for him to take over many of my sales responsibilities so I can focus on leading the organization, supporting the team, and ensuring everything is running as it should.

At this point, we've built a team where people can truly own their roles, and I need to get out of their way and let them do their thing—just like my dad did for me.

EH: That's interesting. Watching your dad step back and entrust you with leadership created a model to follow in your own approach.

CD: Exactly, and I appreciated it because I subscribe to the idea of getting highly competent people in the right spot and letting them do their thing. And I think that's what he did with me, and that's what I'm trying to do with my team.

EH: Do you recall your revenue brackets when you added different roles and how each hire affected revenue?

Major Painting crew member performing a commercial exterior repaint.

CD: We were around $3 million when the ops guy came in and around $4 million when the first sales guy joined.

It was interesting because we've had great growth every year but one. Two years ago, we dropped by maybe 5%, but the following year we were up 100%.

We stayed at $7 to $8 million for two or three years because we were investing in the new hires who hadn't hit their stride yet.

The big increase happened when those people hit their third year. Everything clicked. Everyone had clients, everyone had jobs, and it was clear they'd solidified their spot in the market.

Even at 100% growth last year, we didn't feel it on the production side. The years spent building up to it helped us prepare for what we were about to experience. It's hard to scale small service businesses. It's all about investing in the people and knowing that the return is coming down the road.

EH: How did you manage the feeling of wanting to grow faster when the team was still learning?

CD: I'm not a very patient person, and you've got to be patient. For me, I have to work out, go to bed early, and forget about it.

I've been guilty of being frustrated with people after 30 days. But if you respect the person, and they are the right person for the job, you must trust the process and invest in them. For me, that means hiring someone at a higher pay grade than I ideally want but doing it anyway because I respect their experience and skill. Experience has taught me that I work much better with a seasoned person versus someone green.

Our first salespeople were salaried in the $60,000 to $75,000 range, but the first truly successful salesperson came in at $150,000. I had a tremendous amount of respect for him, and he went on to do $4 million last year, so the approach paid off many times over.

EH: Do you think the fact that both you and your father had finance-related training helped you to build the company?

CD: Schooling taught us that financials are important, but I think what really helped us is that we both enjoy numbers. You can't grow and scale a business efficiently without being interested in data, especially financial data points.

One of the first things I focused on was understanding how much money we were making. That meant getting the knowledge out of my dad's head and turning it into measurable data. I began building KPIs, and over time, those systems continued to evolve.

As we've grown, the importance of financial visibility has only become even more apparent. Having a strong handle on the numbers allows us to see how each new role impacts the bottom line.

MAJOR team members completing crack repair at an industrial facility.

I'd like to say college prepared me for that, but I learned corporate finance—and that's very different from small businesses finance.

EH: How did those KPIs evolve as you grew?

CD: They started very simply: revenue, cost of goods, and labor. We had to figure out that breakdown.

From there, we began to get more granular—tracking where we should be on each type of project and, more importantly, understanding why those numbers change. That insight made us more competitive in our bidding. It's really where I add the most value: analyzing, observing, and tracking the details that keep us sharp.

Today, we focus on two primary macro KPIs: man-days and material usage. On a day-to-day basis, the most important metric I track is budgeted versus actual man-days, which gives us a clear read on field efficiency.

It does take extra effort to track this level of detail, and it doesn't directly generate revenue. But over time, it strengthens performance, improves decision-making, and ultimately drives more profitable growth.

EH: Are there any challenges that you're navigating in 2026?

CD: My biggest challenge is also my biggest insecurity. That is the amount of growth we had last year. I regularly ask myself if we can do it again. That level of growth can mess with your head a little.

I'm also still learning what it means to be a business owner—understanding tax implications, cash flow, and how the money really moves through the business.

Plus, the passing of the baton from my dad to me has its challenges. He's been doing this for so long that a lot of it is automatic to him, and that can make it tough as I'm trying to learn what I don't know.

We brought in a third-party firm, ProfitWorks, to help us through it. They're asking questions I wouldn't have thought to ask and probably questions my dad wouldn't have known he needed to answer. We're all figuring it out together.

EH: What are some of your favorite projects over the years?

CD: There are so many examples, but a recent one stands out: underground painting work on a 3 million-square-foot industrial building for Grainger, completed in less than 12 months. We really hit it out of the park. I'm incredibly proud of how they worked through challenges, found solutions, and delivered the project successfully.

What I'm most proud of overall, though, is our ability to identify clients who are a strong fit for us and serve them for a long time. We have relationships that go back 10, 15, 20 years. That's a big part of what makes us so successful. We've built a culture around solving problems for clients. Those solutions create trust, and trust leads to lasting relationships, especially when we're willing to handle the issues no one else wants to stick their nose into.

EH: How long have you been a member of the CPIA, and how has it helped you navigate the changes in the business and in your role?

CD: I joined CPIA last fall, attended the Leadership Conference in Arizona, and became part of a peer group. I think peer groups are priceless. As an entrepreneur, it can feel like you're alone, but being in a peer group with others in the same industry—people you don't compete with—creates incredible reciprocity.

It helps you see what you're doing well, where you can improve, and how to implement new ideas in a way that saves you from mistakes and setbacks. It's remarkable how many people go through very similar challenges. When you're stuck in the middle of something difficult, and it feels like there's no way through, talking to someone who has already been there and come out the other side is incredibly valuable.

Over their 38 years of business in Kansas City, Major Painting has earned a reputation for outstanding service and quality craftsmanship.

Leveling the Playing Field

CAN AI TIP THE SCALES IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS?

BY EMILY HOWARD

Contract review and negotiation—love it or hate it—can make or break a project.

While many things make contract review and negotiation difficult, signing a contract that solely protects your customer can disrupt schedules, strain operations, and eat into profits.

Many commercial painting contractors are turning to AI as an effective tool for faster review, better understanding, and securing more favorable contract terms—without incurring hefty legal fees. As Andy Roe of Roe Painting says, "AI is the great equalizer."

To keep readers on the cutting edge of AI—without losing sight of real-world application—we're featuring AI use cases and member experiences in every 2026 issue of ***Commercial Painting Magazine****. Have a story to share? Email* ***ehoward@thecpia.com****.*

Negotiating Favorable Terms

Roe notes that many of the problems his team has faced on projects could have been avoided by having stronger contracts. "It's not just litigation; it's the jobs that didn't make any money because the contract didn't protect us."

Recognizing this as a weakness, Roe has taken a more proactive approach, with AI playing a central role. Like many contractors, he doesn't send every agreement to an attorney. Instead, his team relies on standard redlines—now strengthened by AI.

"We use Claude, and we've trained it on what we always say yes to and what we always say no to," Roe explains. The tool flags areas of concern, clarifies complex clauses, and summarizes revisions to help them better think through concerns.

Now nearly six months into their adoption, Roe says his team is refining how the system is trained; making AI an increasingly valuable part of their contract review process.

Reducing Legal Fees

Ian Seigner, president of Seigner and Company Painting, is also using AI to support contract review.

Like Roe, Seigner doesn't send every agreement to an attorney. Instead, he relies on experience—including lessons learned from past missteps—to guide his redlines, now supplemented by Microsoft Copilot. "I upload the proposal and the contract and start asking questions to identify problems," he says.

He begins by checking for inconsistencies between the proposal and contract, then works through a standard list of concerns, including payment terms, lien rights, and claims for additional work.

For contractors new to AI, Seigner recommends documenting recurring issues. "If you've been in contracting for any length of time, you likely know your state laws and the clauses that have burned you before," he says. Input from an attorney can also help shape that framework.

After addressing standard risks, Seigner focuses on job-specific concerns. On larger projects, for example, he scrutinizes billing terms to avoid cash flow disruptions. "I ask what I need to do to ensure my billings are accepted each month—I don't want delays," he says.

AI also helps him move faster. He uses Copilot to compare revisions, identify differences between versions, and think through potential issues. The result: reduced legal spend, stronger contract knowledge, and a more efficient review process.

PHOTO: PHONLAMAIPHOTO/ADOBE STOCK

Purpose-Built AI

At Magnum Drywall, estimators redline incoming bids—verifying pricing, plan dates, and referenced drawings, while confirming that inclusions and exclusions are clearly defined and no unapproved terms have been introduced.

"In this line of business, it's not uncommon for items to slip into a contract that you didn't agree to," says Jann Maxwell, vice president of the company's paint and wallcoverings division. "It's the estimator's job to make sure nothing slips through."

To support that process, Magnum adopted Document Crunch, an AI platform built specifically for contract analysis. In addition to allowing users to upload their own list of contract items, the software includes a list of standard checks developed by industry experts and attorneys.

"You drag and drop the contract, check the items you want it to search for, and within minutes you have a list of issues to review," says Maxwell. Each flagged item links directly to the relevant section of the contract, making it easy to investigate details such as E-Verify requirements or payment terms.

The platform also allows estimators to ask questions and have conversations, similar to ChatGPT or Claude. "Contract review is time-consuming," says Maxwell, "but with Document Crunch, standard exclusions and qualifications are automatically checked, and estimators can ask their own questions." Maxwell is also quick to note that it "is not a substitute for human review—it's an aid."

PHOTO: PHONLAMAIPHOTO/ADOBE STOCK

Better Understanding

Across the board, contractors agree that AI helps them better understand the contracts being signed.

"Indemnification clauses are a great example," says Seigner. "If you don't fully understand them, you can ask AI to break them down into plain language."

Roe adds that AI excels at translating complex terms into layman's terms—without the hourly cost of asking an attorney.

Recognizing the Need for Human Input

Just because AI can strengthen your position doesn't mean you should push every advantage. Its ability to generate polished language can make it tempting to draft overly one-sided terms—but that can backfire.

"We've used AI on a few things and sent them to a customer, and they were like, 'No, I'm not signing that,'" says Roe. Even small changes, he notes, can strain relationships. "That's one of the places you need humans making decisions."

Seigner agrees. While AI can reveal ways to negotiate more aggressively, it's not a replacement for sound judgment. "You are not going to throw demands over email and expect the client to accept everything you want," he says. "Life's not like that."

Matching Risk with Review

AI can strengthen contract review, but it is not a substitute for legal counsel. Seigner says his team evaluates the risk before deciding whether to involve an attorney. "We've always sent contracts with first-time customers—and anything high-risk or outside the norm—to legal for review," he says.

Both Seigner and Roe note that AI has made those conversations more productive, helping them ask better questions and address concerns more effectively.

Useful Tool or Shiny Object?

As AI creates opportunities, it's important to distinguish what is necessary and what is not. Service Contracting Solutions explored BlackBoiler for contract review but found it unnecessary for their business model.

Vice President of Operations Jason Fike says, "We get a lot of standard contracts from repeat customers, so we don't do a lot of additional contract reviews. That's why we don't use it anymore. For us, it wasn't worth the time to teach it what we needed."

An Aid, Not a Shortcut

AI has limitations. It can be wrong, lacks context understanding, and has no jobsite experience.

"Your existing experience is so important because AI, no matter what you are using, is not going to swoop in and save the day," says Seigner.

Maxwell emphasizes that estimators remain fully responsible for vetting every document. "We don't want to hear, 'I ran it through Document Crunch,'" he says. AI is just one step in a broader review process—not a substitute for accountability. "The real risk is becoming too reliant on it."

Final Thoughts

AI is a powerful tool—but only when used thoughtfully and implemented well. Contractors emphasize the need to invest time in both training the software and developing internal expertise, while staying mindful of its limitations.

"You get out of it what you put into it," says Seigner. "If you have experience, know what you're looking for, and understand how to prompt it effectively, it can be very powerful."

As with any AI application, getting started is only the first step. Test, learn, and refine. To accelerate the process, connect with CPIA members and your peer group to see how others are putting AI to work.

Don't forget to join us at the CPIA Leadership Conference September 27-30 in Nashville, where experts and contractors will share the latest and greatest on AI in commercial paint contracting.

Save the Date:

CPIA Executive Retreat

MARCH 7–9, 2027 | CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Join fellow commercial painting industry leaders for the CPIA Executive Retreat, March 7–9, 2027, at the beautiful Ballantyne Hotel in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Designed exclusively for owners, executives, and senior leaders, the CPIA Executive Retreat offers a rare opportunity to step away from daily demands and focus on what matters most—your business's long-term vision and growth.

Set in Charlotte during its vibrant spring season, the retreat pairs inspiring surroundings—blooming landscapes, mild weather, and renowned hospitality—with high-level business dialogue, meaningful peer connections, and thoughtfully curated experiences. The result is an environment that sparks fresh perspective, strategic thinking, and actionable ideas you can bring back to your organization.

Unlike traditional conferences, the CPIA Executive Retreat is intentionally small and highly curated, fostering an environment where candid, meaningful conversations come naturally. Attendees engage directly with some of the most accomplished contractors and industry leaders across North America—opening the door to fresh perspectives, practical insights, and breakthrough ideas. Just as important, these connections often evolve into lasting professional relationships that extend well beyond the retreat.

One of the highlights of this year's event will be an exclusive NASCAR Driving Experience at the legendary Charlotte Motor Speedway, home of the iconic Coca-Cola 600.

PHOTO: DIGIDREAMGRAFIX/ADOBE STOCK

PHOTO COURTESY OF BALLANTYNE HOTEL

Participants can experience the excitement, precision, and adrenaline of one of America's most celebrated motorsports venues. Whether you're a lifelong racing fan or simply looking for a once-in-a-lifetime experience, this activity promises to be an unforgettable part of the retreat.

Beyond the unique venue and activities, the true value of the Executive Retreat lies in the caliber of its attendees. The event brings together high-performing contractors who openly share best practices, lessons learned, growth strategies, operational improvements, and leadership insights. Consistently, participants report that the relationships formed and conversations held during the retreat deliver a return on investment that far exceeds the cost of attendance.

The retreat also provides dedicated time to reconnect with members of your CPIA Peer Group and strengthen relationships with colleagues facing many of the same opportunities and challenges. It's your chance to discover practical solutions to real-world business issues that can improve profitability, develop stronger teams, and prepare your company for future growth.

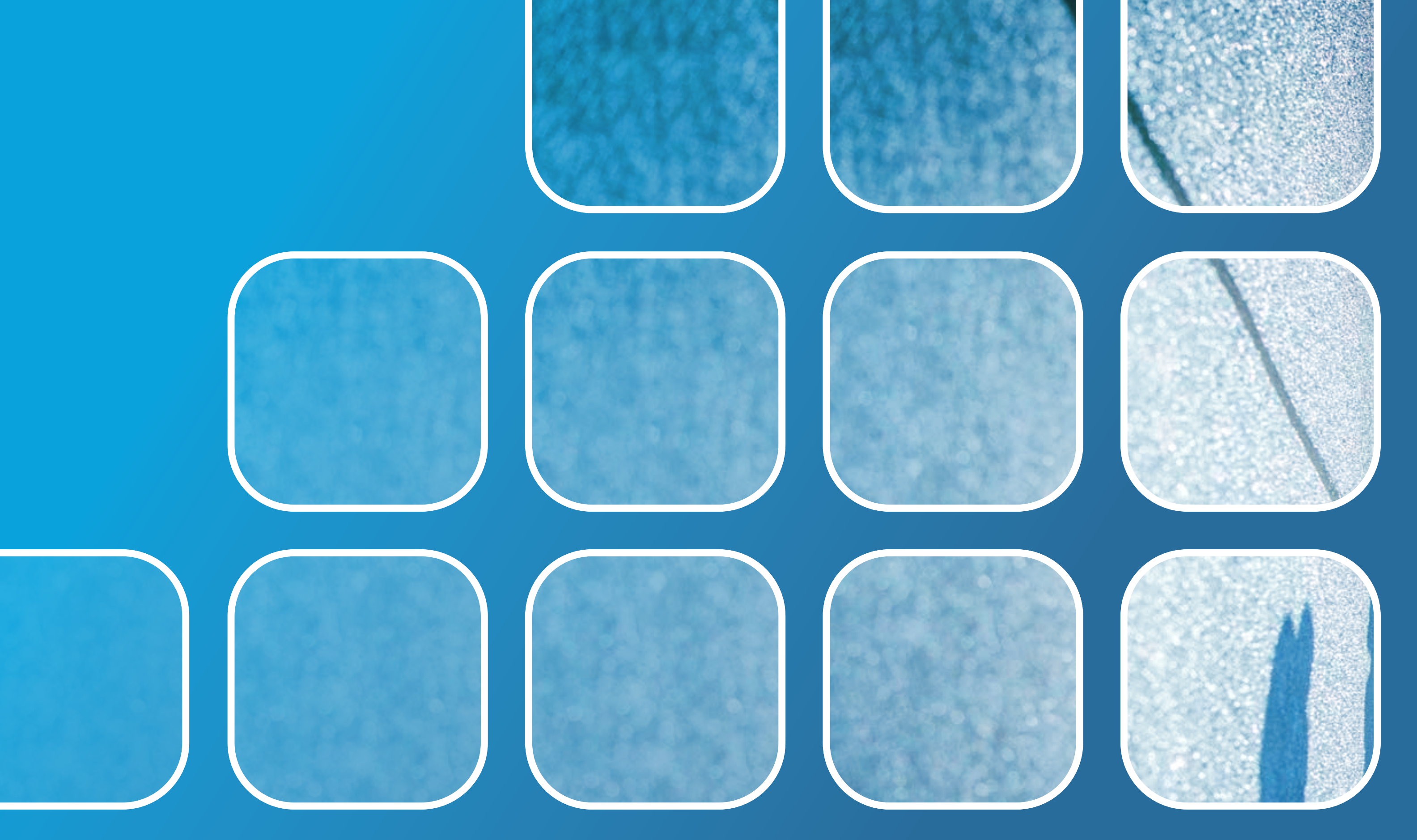
As we look ahead to what promises to be a busy and competitive year, the CPIA Executive Retreat offers the perfect opportunity to recharge your batteries, gain fresh perspective, and return home with actionable ideas to help your business thrive in 2027 and beyond.

WHY ATTEND?

- Connect with top commercial painting contractors from across North America
- Strengthen relationships with your CPIA Peer Group
- Participate in executive-level discussions focused on growth, leadership, and profitability
- Learn best practices and innovative strategies from industry peers
- Gain a fresh perspective away from the daily demands of your business
- Experience the thrill of driving at Charlotte Motor Speedway
- Build meaningful relationships in a relaxed, highly collaborative environment
- Return home energized, inspired, and equipped with practical ideas to implement immediately

Mark your calendar now and plan to join us in Charlotte for what promises to be another exceptional CPIA Executive Retreat.

We look forward to seeing you March 7–9, 2027.



Preparedness

THE NEXT JOBSITE INNOVATION

TYLER STERNER, SENIOR GLOBAL CATEGORY MARKETING MANAGER, GRACO

Today's commercial jobsite is more demanding than ever. Tighter schedules, aggressive bidding, and a growing mix of specialized coatings have narrowed the margin for error. One equipment issue—or the dreaded mid-day run back to the paint store—can quickly turn a profitable job into a loss.

Across commercial and high-end finishing work, customers expect higher quality at higher speeds. There is a wider variety of coatings across more applications than ever before, and contractors are expected to complete more projects in a single shift. That acceleration changes how contractors schedule labor, manage work, and schedule follow-on trades, or the work that comes after painting.

Preparedness is no longer a nice-to-have. It's a critical competitive advantage. Success depends less on working harder and more on showing up ready—with the right equipment, the right setup, and a clear plan to execute efficiently.

Innovations for the Evolving Jobsite

Rising material and labor costs mean customers are paying more, and because they are paying more, they are paying closer attention. Finish quality, consistency, and durability are baseline expectations, even on smaller jobs. That shift is driving demand for more versatile, job-ready equipment.

For example, fluctuations in spray pressure translate directly into visible defects, rework, and overspray, all of which show up

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRACO

as hits on the balance sheet. Technologies that maintain steady, consistent pressure deliver more uniform finishes and increase efficiency, especially when switching between coatings and applications.

Contractors are also looking to improve finish quality at lower pressures without sacrificing speed. One way to achieve this is with a single piece of equipment that can handle both production and fine-finish jobs.

Switching equipment takes time. Having equipment that can take on a broad range of jobs simplifies planning, reduces capital investment, lowers maintenance costs, and allows crews to adapt quickly. Predictable equipment delivers predictable performance, and predictability is what keeps jobs on schedule, crews productive, and profitability on target.

It's What's Inside that Counts

Overspray remains one of the costliest problems on jobsites. Historically, many spraying systems relied on high-speed motors designed for other applications, such as garage doors and washing machines. While they're great for those uses, which often require higher operating pressures, that extra speed can increase overspray and reduce control.

> Overspray remains one of the costliest problems on jobsites.

Newer systems are designed specifically for airless spraying and use motor configurations that deliver consistent pressure at lower speeds. By directly connecting the motor to the fluid section, these systems allow for more precise pressure control and a more consistent spray pattern. That repeatability allows painters to deliver quality results without unnecessary rework and keep production on track.

> Preparedness doesn't eliminate problems, but it does limit their impact on overall cost and job schedule.

Minimizing Downtime, Maximizing Margins

Any contractor knows that the biggest time losses don't come from catastrophic failures, but from frequent small disruptions. Worn parts, clogged or missing tips, and the need for minor maintenance can bring work to a halt and eat into profitability.

Still, too many contractors approach equipment maintenance reactively. A component fails. The job stops. The component is replaced.

Part replacement, however, is the predictable result of normal wear and tear. Airless sprayer fluid sections, for example, are like brake pads on a vehicle. Eventually, they wear out, often at the worst possible time.

Systems designed for quick, on-site component swaps significantly reduce downtime. Swapping a worn component in minutes—rather than sending a unit out for repair—keeps crews working and projects moving. Stocking critical parts on-site further reduces risk, but requires planning and the right systems in place.

Preparedness doesn't eliminate problems, but it does limit their impact on overall cost and job schedule.

Accounting for Labor and Demand Volatility

Labor challenges continue to be an issue for the industry. Even in markets where hiring has stabilized, skilled, reliable painters remain difficult to find and retain.

At the same time, the amount of work on the books remains uneven, and generally lower than most painters would like to see. Many contractors are competing for a smaller pool of work, leading to aggressive pricing and tight margins. These types of market conditions demand efficiency.

Systems that support consistency, including standardized setups and simplified controls, increase capacity and improve profitability. Plus, standardized systems make it much easier to train less experienced painters, and in a world of fixed timelines, every minute saved directly improves profitability and allows contractors to take on more jobs.

Preparedness as a Business Strategy

As jobsite complexity continues to increase, preparedness is becoming the defining factor between contractors who protect profitability—and those who give it away.

Equipment that adapts to multiple applications, systems that minimize downtime, and workflows that maximize labor, efficiency translate to smoother workflow, more consistent results, and better margins.

GENERATIONS OF INNOVATION

SINCE 1851, generations of employees at The Wooster Brush Company have built upon a proud tradition of quality, craftsmanship, and integrity. We celebrate this milestone by honoring our heritage and looking ahead, with the same passion for innovation that has defined us for 175 years.

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Meet the Speakers

CPIA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE GOES ALL-IN ON AI

The 2026 CPIA Leadership Conference will deliver one of the most practical, forward-looking AI programs ever designed for the commercial painting industry. This isn't a high-level conversation about emerging technology—it's hands-on, contractor-focused education built to help companies streamline operations, boost efficiency, strengthen profitability, and gain a measurable competitive edge.

Throughout the conference, attendees will engage with AI-driven keynotes, contractor-led case studies, operational deep dives, and peer-to-peer discussions—all focused on how AI is actively transforming commercial painting businesses today.

PHOTO: 4KCLIPS/ADOBE STOCK

AI Hands-On Workshop

Susan Frew

Led by Susan Frew—a dynamic entrepreneur, business strategist, and AI innovator known for helping companies bridge the gap between emerging technology and real-world execution—this two-hour workshop is designed for practical application and measurable results. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies, proven tools, and a clear understanding of how AI can help their businesses operate smarter, not just faster.

Frew specializes in helping businesses eliminate operational inefficiencies, improve internal communication, automate repetitive tasks, and create scalable systems using practical AI tools. Her presentation is specifically designed for business owners and operational leaders who want to understand how AI can immediately impact estimating, scheduling, project management, communication, recruiting, documentation, workflow systems, and overall company productivity.

The Economic Flip: What AI Means for the Future of the Trades (And Why You Are Now a Software Engineer)

Ryan A. Moore

Ryan A. Moore—applied economist, operational strategist, and AI innovator—will present a session focused on how contractors can use AI to optimize back-office margins.

As labor rates continue to rise, successful contractors are working to find cost savings and efficiencies everywhere in their business. For decades, contractors have paid a "token tax" to Silicon Valley software vendors for every bid or schedule written.

In this session, Moore will explain how AI has completely upended the "make vs. buy" equation for business software. You will learn how the same structured thinking that drives a successful commercial contracting business can be applied to engineering software solutions, empowering you to use AI to build custom internal tools and workflows without relying on expensive software vendors or development teams.

Primed for the Future: Leadership Habits for the Age of AI

Marcy Brajkovic

Marcy Brajkovic, president and owner of Chatfield Global LLC, will explore how leaders need to show up to succeed in the AI world. Whether your company is actively experimenting with AI or has yet to begin, this session explores a leadership approach that can keep your company moving forward as technology evolves.

A key starting point is building an environment where people feel safe raising half-formed ideas, admitting uncertainty, or challenging the obvious. From there, we'll explore how finite and infinite mindsets shape leaders' responses to AI opportunities and how those habits influence culture, adaptability, and long-term success.

In addition to its AI-focused programming, the 2026 Leadership Conference will feature expert- and contractor-led panels covering a wide range of topics impacting commercial painting businesses. New sessions, speakers, and panels are being announced each week, offering fresh insights and perspectives.

To explore the full 2026 CPIA Leadership Conference agenda, visit thecpia.com.

Stop Guessing, Start Benchmarking

GET ACCESS TO THE DATA THAT COULD CHANGE YOUR BUSINESS

Every year, painting contractors make decisions that shape profitability, growth, and long-term success.

- What should we charge?
- How much overhead is too much?
- Are our labor costs competitive?
- Do we have the right staffing structure?
- Are our margins healthy?
- Are we growing at the right pace?

For many companies, the answers to these questions are based on experience, intuition and assumptions.

But assumptions can only take a business so far.

The companies that will lead the commercial painting industry over the next decade won't necessarily be the best painters. They will be the ones making smarter decisions because they have better data.

That's why the Commercial Painting Industry Association (CPIA) is conducting its Second Annual CPIA Benchmark Survey.

Why benchmarking matters

Benchmarking is one of the most effective tools for running a stronger business. It highlights where you're outperforming, where you're falling behind, and where new opportunities exist.

It helps validate decisions, uncover inefficiencies, and build confidence in investments across people, technology, and growth.

Most importantly, it provides perspective. Many contractors operate without a clear view of how they truly compare. This survey changes that.

What you'll learn

Built on meaningful, anonymous industry data, the CPIA Benchmark Survey replaces guesswork with insight.

Participants receive benchmarks on:

- Revenue performance and growth trends
- Profitability and margin comparisons
- Labor efficiency and productivity
- Staffing structures and organizational design
- Compensation trends
- Key operational performance indicators

The result: a clear understanding of where you stand—and what top-performing contractors are doing differently.

What's involved

Participation is free and takes only 20 to 30 minutes to complete. The findings can have an impact on your business for years.

Survey findings will be presented at the CPIA Fall Leadership Conference in September (see p. 6 for more information). This session goes beyond numbers, offering context, identifying emerging trends, and giving you practical takeaways you can apply to your business.

Only contractors who complete the survey will receive the results and be invited to the exclusive session.

Take the survey at thecpia.com by clicking the Benchmark Survey link at the top of the homepage.

Survey participants will receive a Golden Ticket at the conference registration, providing access to the exclusive survey presentation and reception.

The Commercial Painting Industry Association is grateful for the ongoing participation of its Industry Partners—leading manufacturers, suppliers, service providers and educators who believe in the value of the CPIA to the commercial painting community worldwide. With the support of these partners, the association is able to provide the essential events, meetings, networking, and educational opportunities that enrich our members and their businesses.

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