

Press release from Jan de Beer, cell 082 456 3677:

TRAINED PAINT SALES STAFF HOLD KEY TO HARDWARE PROFITS

Inadequately or totally untrained paint sales personnel are depriving hardware outlets of tens of thousands of rand in ancillary sales every year, says Deryck Spence, executive director of the SA Paint Manufacturing Association (SAPMA).

Spence says paint consumers – particularly from the DIY fraternity – are invariably prepared to purchase products that would make their painting tasks easier and more professional if only hardware stores' staff had suggested products such as undercoats, crack fillers, rollers and brushes, extender sticks, brush cleaners, and even plastic sheeting.

“But, through lack of training, many sales staff merely provide the tin of paint requested and send the customer on his or her way. This is not only unfair to the consumer but also to the smaller hardware store owner who, in this country, works on a narrow profit margin,” Spence contends.

He says the large hardware supermarkets have commoditised paint. Their collective buying power facilitates complete pricing but smaller paint hardware stores are suffering and complaining that they cannot compete with the buying power and pricing structures of the large conglomerates.

“But they can rectify the situation. Smaller retailers in the U.S.A. realised that to regain their share of the paint market they needed to do more than sell. They had to become paint specialists. They needed to become paint and application experts to help their consumers. They needed to guide them, advise which products to use, and how to use them. They needed to ask the customer why he or she was buying that can of paint. They then needed to give a quick run-through of what the job calls for.

“In short, paint sellers in the USA needed to be transformed into paint specialists. The results are well documented. Not only did the American smaller paint stores regain their share of the market, but also increased their turnovers in the paint sections by up to 50% and boosted store profits overall. Paint, after all, is among the priciest commodities in a hardware store.”

South African paint retailers, however, have not learnt this lesson. “Training means time off the job. Can't afford to have salespersons out of the store for a day at a time. Time is money. Training is expensive', are invariably the excuses we hear.”

Spence says by taking advantage of the SAPMA Retail Video Training Programme, paint sales personnel can train while in the store, after hours or even at home. After 10 video modules and assessment, he or she can be transformed from seller to specialist. The retailer's paint expert – and the store - will be armed with a SAPMA-backed Certificate of Competence to keep customers happy and retain them.”

For more information about SAPMA's Retail Video Training Programme, visit www.sapma.org.za.

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