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You Will Probably Never Meet Donald Kaufman or Benjamin Moore Why Service is the New Luxury in Paint

June 7, 2007— When is the last time the owner of a design company helped you pick out something for your home? With the exception of a few publicity stunts every now and then, or a promotion targeted at celebrities or the media, many of us would never receive such an “invested” service. And would we really want to, with many of today’s CEOs so infamously disconnected from the day-to-day operations? Most would settle for a warm-blooded human being. But when it comes to design, we need an expert. Which leads to the question: Hello, is anybody out there?

In an age of teleprompting, 34-minute hold times set to terrible music and exasperating searches down empty, cavernous aisles for “anyone who actually works here”, welcome to the new face of quality service: C2 Paint.

Before 1998, C2 Paint owners also felt the sting of disappointment in the limitations of their service offerings. “We wanted to have an answer to why the paint swatches weren’t made from real paint or why people’s walls didn’t end up near the color indicated on the swatch. The implicit promise that the color would match immediately became our problem to solve,” said Robin Daly, a C2 Paint partner, owner of Daly’s Paint & Decorating in Seattle and design writer: (<http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/athome/>) and (www.tintedperspective.blogspot.com.)

They felt, for the sake of the increasingly sophisticated design community and their businesses, they had to evolve to meet the demands of the marketplace and take innovation into their own hands.

The Birth of a Better Paint

Enter an opportunity with Tom Hill, former Chief Chemist for Pratt & Lambert. Together they created a new business model, combining Hill’s expertise with local dealer’s. This gave independent stores much-needed ownership and control over the paint brand. Hill and the retailers instilled a 16-colorant European tinting system, which contained more colorants and pigments than any other tinting system used in North America. The system resulted in complex hues with subtle undertones, enhancing daylight, shadow and evening lighting.

The paint had to perform: C2 would deliver the best hiding power in the industry, require less painting, be exceptionally light fast and fade-resistant, look better longer and provide a harder finish for washability and scrub resistance. C2 performed in all areas that were previously lacking, now also excelled with service through the resurgence of small, localized full-service businesses with industry experts already behind the counter.

“When C2 Paint came along, it was so attractive, not only because we were owning something larger than our boutique paint stores themselves, but because we could service our customer base better and exceed every other paint brand’s performance that we’d experienced in terms of both product and service,” said Daly.

Their customers are their focus groups and they take every bit of feedback to the boardroom...in fact, they *are* the boardroom. All 55 paint dealers, in over 70 retail locations in North America, are actual owners of C2 Paint through a dealer-owned cooperative. So in addition to sharing the varied tasks of creating and naming the colors to hammering gallons shut, above all, they share the passion of assuring their customers enjoy a gratifying experience.

"It's somewhat like a group of wine purveyors who couldn't find the perfect wine for their clients," said Harry Adler, a C2 partner and owner of Adler's Hardware in Rhode Island. "So as passionate lovers of wine and storeowners, they banded together to create a wine with complexity and sophistication that satisfies their most discerning clients. C2 was that wine- no paint company that was delivering what C2 can deliver. They were fine but they weren't great."

Preserving Quality and Independence

For years prior to the launch of C2 Paint in 1998, there was a rapid consolidation of paint manufacturers and suppliers. Once a major brand would buy out smaller, localized paint suppliers, to economize, it would change the paint formulas. Since the brand name wouldn't change, customers would be left to discover negative changes in coverage, durability and application only after they had opened the can and started a project.

"We joined C2 Paint in 2003 to preserve our independence," said Steve Miller, another C2 Paint partner and owner of Colortown with his wife Sarah in Ontario, Canada. "Our main supplier was abandoning the true spirit of independent paint dealers in favor of 'cookie cutter' corporate concept stores. We felt a move like that would destroy our identity and erode our unique profile in the marketplace."

"At the same time, consolidation was threatening our industry, prices were increasing and quality was decreasing. When a multi-national purchased our second largest supplier in the spring of 2003, the time had come for Color Town to get involved with its own paint brand and take back control of our business and our future. Less than four months later we were selling C2 Paint and have never looked back. C2 Paint was and continues to be our greatest opportunity, short of starting the business itself."

For Consumers, Proper Paint Education Equals More Time and Money

The threat of decreasing paint quality can destroy more than a small business' identity- it can destroy customer's walls. When choosing something to cover one of the largest surface areas of your home, new homeowner Rachel Halonen of Chicago warns: you should be selective when choosing a paint brand, as wrong turns can prove costly and time-consuming.

"I went to big-box store and picked out a 'texturized' paint, not knowing any better, in a trendy deep mustard color. It ended up being a total nightmare, as the supposed 'suede texture' ended up looking more like bad baby diaper smeared on my walls," said the now-laughing Halonen.

"It took me three trips, and many more gallons of paint...not to mention a week of scraping my walls and a lot more money before it even looked decent. Looking back, I'd never take a chance like that. If I had received service and some sort of direction, the whole debacle could have been avoided. "

Best in the Industry: Unsurpassed Sampling and Service

Meg Governo, an artist, designer and long time fan of C2 Paint, looked to her local C2 Paint color expert, Harry Adler, with her unique vision. A brand-new mother of four-month-old daughter Margot, Governo presented Adler with her favorite black and pink polka dot purse, inspired by the pink in the polka dots and thinking it would be the perfect wall color for her baby girl's new nursery. Delighted and enthused, Harry quickly got to work and by "eye-ing" it, produced the perfect match.

"I didn't stop there," said Adler. "I gave Meg a 16-ounce sampler so that she could be sure it was the right pink and additionally painted the same pink on a large-surface Ultimate Paint Chip; a 18" x 24" chip we make with C2's actual paint.



I wasn't sure that Meg would want a color as dark as the pink turned out to be. So I produced a 75% a 50% and a 25% lighter version of the color."

When presented with the 50% lighter and 75% lighter paint chips, Governo asked if she could go halfway between the two. "So we ended up with a 62.5% lightened, customized from a polka dot, beautiful, baby-girl pink which we named 'Margot Pink,' " Harry said proudly. Governo adds, "I was so delighted. Harry's expertise was obvious and now I use him for all of my design projects; he's my paint expert and friend."

About C2 Paint

C2 paint is one of the most innovative, high quality paints in the marketplace today, forever changing the way designers and homeowners specify, sample, buy and experience color. Handcrafted by an alliance of passionate paint boutique owners across the U.S. and Canada, C2 Paint is the first paint company to employ a 16-colorant European tinting system rather than the 12-colorant systems known in North America today.

C2 Paint's European colorants are made of super finely ground artist-grade pigments that create an unmatched luminosity and depth. These tiny particles of pigment are suspended in a superior paint base, which results in a higher solid content when applied on the wall. The weightier paint creates richer, more saturated colors, most walls being fully covered after only 1-2 coats of paint. C2 Paint's marriage of science with their passion for color has created a devoted following for lovers of its ease, dependability, gorgeously unique colors and innovative sampling program.

C2 Paint created the industry's first "Ultimate Paint Chip"; an 18"x 24" surface painted with the actual C2 eggshell paint, instead of printer's ink or laquer, which is most of the paint industry's "norm." If a larger surface area is needed in order to make a color decision, C2 Paint offers the new 16oz. pint-sized Color Sampler, which allows enough paint for 50 square feet of coverage, or a 5'x10' wall. All of these specialized services are provided by C2 Paint owners in over 70 storefronts throughout North America, ranging from generations-old hardware stores to hip, new paint boutiques in urban areas. For more information, please visit www.C2Paint.com/locations.

****High-Res images available upon request****