



Name: **Mark Savino**

Company: Mark's Painting

Location: Tampa, Fla.

No. of Employees: 3

Primary Focus: Residential

No. of years in the painting industry: 20

What project(s) are you currently working on?

We are working on a new six-unit residential townhome project called "Hemingway." As the name indicates, they are Key West-style with bright colors.

We just completed a new office build-out that included painting and drywall for Ren Scott Productions. This was challenging, as we were doubling its office space while working during normal business hours.

Also we are waiting on approval from the home office to repaint the exteriors of 17 local branches of Wachovia Bank.

Has the slowing economy and resulting slowdown this summer in painting jobs affected your business? If so, how are you addressing it?

Our business is down over last year, but as a smaller contractor I am less affected by it than are the larger contractors. Also, new construction was only a small part of our business, and now that type of work is almost nonexistent in Tampa.

I am using a direct-mail campaign to target customers in upper-income areas. We also rely on a good satisfied customer base. I believe in tougher times in

increasing rather than decreasing the advertising budget.

What tools/products do you insist your company/crew use?

- Sherwin Williams Superpaint and Pro Mar 200 line
- Dyco 6200 interior semi-gloss
- Glidden Gripper Primer
- Cabot deck and fence stains
- Flood Penetrol
- Corona Chinex brushes
- Purdy brushes
- Whizz 9-inch roller covers
- MH Redi Patch
- Graco sprayers and spray tips

What's your least favorite painting task and why?

My least favorite task would be sanding or scraping. I tend to be a perfectionist and spend too much time on this aspect of the job. My employees do a good job with this type of prep in half the time. Does anybody really like sanding or scraping?

Is there a project or job in your career of which you are most proud?

We restored the interior and exterior of a historic building on Davis Island in Tampa called Hudson Manor. It had been neglected for several years. A good

customer of mine, Gaspar Properties, purchased the building and brought us in to do the interior and exterior painting. They own a lot of historical buildings, so they wanted it brought back to its original glory. It's a nice feeling to bring an old building back to its original condition.

If you could go back to the beginning of your career, what would you do differently?

The first two to three years after opening up my company, I worked alone. I wanted to keep it simple. I didn't realize how important good employees were to my company.

Second, when I did hire employees, I would be more aggressive in my exposure on the Internet. I now have my Web designer, Joe Manzo, constantly refining my profile with Google and Yahoo to keep me near the top of their search engines. Every year more people are using search engines rather than traditional methods to find local companies.

With the general public using the Web and e-mail services, it has made it easier for me to follow up with customers periodically to help them address their painting needs.

APC