



Powder Coating Commentary

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Rules to Live By in the Powder World: From Different Perspectives

After traveling and interviewing many members of the finishing community during the past year, it is clear that if you are a powder supplier ... or an equipment supplier ... or the end user ... there are different rules for fulfilling the needs of the market. Here are a few this month from the powder supplier's perspective (with just a touch of vendor rhetoric).

Rule #1:

When in doubt, lower the price. *(Or, if Company A isn't going to get XYZ business anyway, lower the price.)* This is great strategy to impact the competitor's profitability, help the client lower his costs, and ensure that XYZ will never pay a fair price per pound. Fortunately, XYZ is a value-driven business and doesn't apologize for making a profit either, so they decline the price reduction and instead select the service support they require. (Of course, Company A didn't get the business—Company B did, and now has a great account.)

Rule #2:

Play with passion. *(Or, if Company A has XYZ's business, how best to keep it.)* Let's face it: The equipment suppliers are long gone. They're on their way to the next new pending order. It's between the pretreatment and powder supplier to keep XYZ happy. Work together, jointly holding training sessions, and ensure system optimization. Act like the pretreatment and the powder are on the same part, as well as the same team.

"Playing with passion" means doing whatever it takes to never let XYZ run out of powder, as well as making sure the mechanisms are in place to ensure order dates are met

and that there aren't any excuses. Oh yes, and avoid Rule #4.

Rule #3:

If you can't win over XYZ's management, who can help? *(I'm losing this new account—who can tell management we're not so bad?)* A prime source is the equipment vendor XYZ is planning to use. They have the "ear" of management, and could cover for the mistakes we've made so far. Unfortunately, XYZ management is more clever than anticipated. They understand that a powder supplier is only as good as the commitment behind its product, and servicing that account. What the equipment vendor says about ol' Joe shouldn't carry any weight. Joe has other powder users within 50 miles—what do they say, and how is Joe's technical and service support? When he can't deliver, how did Joe's company support him?

Rule #4:

Don't lose good business. *(We've got XYZ's business. How can we mess it up?)* There are several ways, for sure, but none more quickly than breaking rules #5, 6 and 7.

Rule #5:

Blame the equipment. *(If the powder isn't spraying well, blame the equipment or the lack of maintenance.)* Sound strategy? You bet. This works for the first few months—heck, it's even possible to get away with this for a year. Everyone knows that the equipment is fickle ... that the temperature and humidity in the booth are always changing ... that the parts are not well-grounded ... and that the powder doesn't like too much electrostatic

field in the hard-to-reach places. The conveyor and parts swing a lot, and if those guys could just apply the powder uniformly, the parts would look better. Oops—looks like we didn't follow Rule #2.

Rule #6:

Blame the cure process. *(If the color isn't right, it's always the oven's fault.)* Boy, if XYZ management had just listened when we told them about that curing equipment. (Didn't they give us a good recommendation when management wasn't sure they wanted us? Oh well.) The production requirements are all over the board now, heavy parts are racked with light ones, the conveyor line is running 20-percent faster than the original design, and the line personnel keep turning up the heat. How can color problems be blamed on me?

Rule #7:

Blame those production guys. *(It's more important to make it right than to ship it on time, right?)* That's the problem with the world today. If the raw material suppliers and the manufacturer are all ISO-certified, and the production personnel are always in training classes learning how to do it the right way (That was the reason last time for missing a delivery, right?), then how can this be happening? XYZ is striving to be ISO-certified too, so how can they accept a late delivery? **They can't.** And that is why powder vendor A will be out, and so will B and C and so on, until some vendor can fulfill Rule #2.

Okay, so there are more rules. Next time we'll look at them from another perspective. Say, did you hear about the one that says ... **P&SF**