# Powder Coating Commentary



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## Rules to Live By in the Powder World: A Final Perspective

ast month, we took a look at "Rules to Live By in the Powder World" from the equipment supplier's perspective, and in April we discussed the powder supplier's view. In the last of this series, let's look at it from the end-user or buyer's perspective (with just a touch of buyer rhetoric).

#### Rule #1

When in doubt, lower the price. (Or, if I get the suppliers to lower the price, I justify the position that I am getting more for less money ... right?) Because we have started each of the columns in this series with the same rule, you would think the powder supplier, the equipment supplier, and now, the end-user or buyer would figure it out. Capital is not everything. (See Rule #7 last month.) When you break down the cost of any capital technology, most vendors for items such as fans, blowers, steel, etc., supply the components to the various system builders at approximately the same price. One supplier's powder system, therefore, should be similar in price to another system provider's. Why similar but not the same? Because labor to design, engineer and fabricate the system (with a reasonable amount of profit) varies. So, Mr. Buyer, if you want to lower the price of the system, work with the various suppliers to lower the *cost* of the system. Help the supplier by working through the proposal in detail. Note the sizes and brands of key components. Compare them with the other proposals. Is something missing? Are the sizes different, or the quantity? Take this position, and you will be well on your way to keeping Rule #2.

#### Rule #2

Want a poor system? Insulate the equipment and key component suppliers from your decision-makers.

(Or, I don't have time and they might influence me somehow.) We'll go back to last month and Rule #7 again. The foundation of this argument is that there are two types of buyers, and two types of sellers: A buyer who does not insulate the salesperson and supplier's company from all the facts necessary to make a complete proposal and presentation, and the buyer who does. The two types of sellers (the company that is selling, not just the person) are the ones who don't mind being insulated or are too naive to know; and the ones who do and who, after trying to correct the situation to improve their chances, will decrease their involvement with this prospect and move on to a buying situation where this isn't happening. Which buyer or decision-making type are you? And which type of company/ salesperson is waiting in the lobby? Or worst ... isn't waiting anymore.

## Rule #3

Take the perspective that "It's just the painting process." (Or, as long as the parts look good, that's all that matters.) This rule goes back to the very basic issue of why you have, or are considering, powder in the first place. Several months ago I wrote a message to suppliers: Let's not oversell powder! Why? Because companies that I meet with, or that call to ask me questions frequently, state that the system is not working the way they thought it would. Or, the material supplier can't seem to consistently make the powder work the same from batch to batch. The fact is, seldom is paint used just for the sake of painting. A coated part should offer either a form of protection to the part or a cosmetic improvement, or both. In addition, if your components are integrated into something elseby you or your customer—then the finish may fulfill either or both roles

for the integrator. One of the best examples of powder's advantages is a casting. Sure, a dip or simple spray process "paints" the part, and makes it look good as it goes into the bin or box for shipment. But castings have high and low points and are usually subjected to rough handling or assembled to something that is exposed to a tough environment (i.e., motors, housing, supports, manifolds). Seldom does the buyer or engineer on a potential project follow the life cycle of the product far enough to realize that a powder coating usually wears better in the shipment process, and normally remains unaffected by the assembly process upstream. In addition, grinding or drilling into a powder-coated part saves tremendous tooling costs over time, because a thin film of "plastic" covers a clean part. When assembled, it also doesn't contribute any rust that can spread to other surfaces nearby, such as engine block, manifolds, etc.

## Rule #4

Buy with passion. (Or, pretend that all your competitors are looking at the same process changes, equipment possibilities and material considerations. At the end of the day, which of you will have been more cost-conscious and positioned *for the future?*) The answer is very simple: It will be those companies that considered the perspectives of the various players involved—the equipment manufacturers (or integrators), the application and recovery suppliers, the powder or coating suppliers, the end-users and market trends, etc., as well as those companies that allowed into their decisionmaking process the various companies or individuals who could help ... not sell, but educate. And remember some of the earlier rules: Capital is not everything. Test, test, test. PESF