

# Painting Contractor Business — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into the numbers, systems, and documents your own painting company will run on. Work through each section with your real figures: your wages, your crew, your paint costs, and your market. By the end you will have a defensible estimate, a man-hour rate, a job-cost habit, a crew game plan, and a customer-acquisition system you can deploy on your next job.

## Estimating Jobs That Make Money

Build a takeoff habit, convert area to gallons and hours, and produce a finished bid that carries a real margin.

### Worksheet: Build Your Man-Hour Rate

Fill in your own numbers to calculate the man-hour rate every bid will use. Pull wage and burden from payroll, and overhead from your last 12 months divided by your realistic billable hours per painter.

Base hourly wage paid to a painter

---

Labor burden percent (payroll tax, workers comp, liability, benefits)

---

True labor cost per hour (wage x (1 + burden))

---

Total annual overhead (van, fuel, insurance, software, advertising, owner salary)

---

Billable hours per painter per year (after travel, weather, slow weeks)

---

Overhead per billable hour (annual overhead / billable hours)

---

Cost per man-hour (true labor + overhead per hour)

---

Target net margin percent (15 to 25)

---

Man-hour rate (cost per man-hour / (1 - margin))

---

### Exercise: Do a Full Takeoff on One Real Room

Pick a real room in your home or a current job. Measure it and complete a takeoff exactly as you would on an estimate, then convert it to gallons and man-hours.

- Record gross wall area (perimeter x ceiling height) and ceiling area in square feet, and count doors, windows, and closets.
-

- List the conditions that add labor: repairs, primer needs, dark-to-light color change, glossy surfaces, number of coats.
- 
- Using a coverage rate you choose for the surface, calculate gallons for walls, ceiling, and trim for the planned number of coats.
- 
- Apply a production rate (square feet per man-hour) to each surface to estimate total man-hours, then multiply by your man-hour rate.
- 

### Worksheet: Assemble a Finished Bid

Combine your takeoff, material quantities, and man-hour rate into a complete, defensible bid for one job. Add a contingency for the conditions you noted.

Total man-hours from production rates

---

Man-hour rate

---

Labor total (man-hours x rate)

---

Material total (paint by color and sheen, primer, sundries)

---

Contingency percent for prep and unknowns

---

Subtotal (labor + materials + contingency)

---

Final bid price presented to customer

---

Implied margin check against your target

---

### Checklist: Estimating Readiness Checklist

- I measure gross wall and ceiling area and count openings the same way every job
- I record surface, substrate, prep, primer, and coat count on every walkthrough
- I use realistic coverage rates by surface, not the optimistic label number
- I have a man-hour rate that covers wage, burden, overhead, and target margin
- I have production rates (square feet per man-hour) for my crew and tasks
- I add a contingency sized to the conditions I actually saw on the walkthrough

## Crew Management and Production

Define roles, set daily production targets and a quality standard, and choose a pay model that rewards finished work.

### Worksheet: Write Your Crew Roles and Morning Huddle

Define who does what on your crew and script the 10-minute morning huddle the lead will run every day. Crew lead name and responsibilities (plan, quality, customer, hours tracking)

---

Production painter responsibilities (cut, roll, spray, finish to standard)

---

Prep and helper responsibilities (masking, sanding, patching, cleanup)

---

Today's finish goal stated in completed terms

---

Surface assignments by person

---

Products, colors, and sheens confirmed by room

---

Hazards, slowdowns, and the noon checkpoint location

---

### Exercise: Run a Punch-List Quality Inspection

Inspect a finished room (yours or a job's) the way a crew lead should, with a bright work light, then list what you find.

- Check cut lines, coverage, drips, and tape removal under raking light and note every defect.
  - Mark each touch-up with low-tack tape and describe the fix.
  - Write the punch list you would walk through with the customer before final payment.
  - Identify any recurring defect that should become a crew training point rather than a callback.
- 

### Worksheet: Choose a Pay Model and Plan a Hire

Decide how you will pay for production and outline your next hire and how you will trial them.

Pay model chosen (hourly, per square foot, per room, percent of labor, hourly plus bonus)

---

How the model rewards finishing on the estimated hours at full quality

---

Subcontractor versus employee decision and the reason

---

Role scope, expected production, and quality standard for the next hire

---

Sourcing plan (referrals, paint-store board, trade groups)

---

Paid working-interview job and what you will watch for (speed, cleanliness, attitude)

---

### Checklist: Crew and Production Checklist

- Every job starts with a 10-minute morning huddle led by the crew lead
- Each job has a daily production target tied to the estimated hours
- The crew works to a written quality standard checked on site, not after
- The lead self-inspects under a work light before declaring a space finished
- I track actual hours against the estimate on every job and feed back what I learn
- My pay model rewards finishing the job right and on the estimated hours

## Material Purchasing and Job Costing

Specify the right paint and sheen, set up contractor pricing, buy from the takeoff, and job-cost every project.

### Worksheet: Build Your Paint and Sheen Spec Sheet

Create a default spec your crew can follow, mapping product tier and sheen to each surface so nobody has to guess on site.

Ceilings: product line and sheen

---

---

Living areas and bedrooms: product line and sheen

---

---

Kitchens, baths, and hallways: product line and sheen

---

---

Trim, doors, and cabinets: product line and sheen

---

---

Problem-surface primers (stain-blocking, bonding, masonry) and where each is used

---

---

Default coats by surface and color-change rule (when a third coat or tinted primer is needed)

---

---

### Exercise: Turn a Takeoff Into a Purchase Order

Using the takeoff from Section 1, build the exact order you would place with your paint store, including sundries.

- List gallons by color, sheen, and primer pulled straight from the takeoff quantities.
  - Add the sundries the job consumes: tape, plastic, paper, caulk, spackle, rollers, brushes, sandpaper, sprayer tips.
  - Apply a waste and touch-up allowance (about 5 percent on paint) and round to purchasable units.
  - Note your real per-gallon contractor price and how this order moves you up a discount tier.
- 
- 

### Worksheet: Job-Cost a Completed Project

Reconcile one finished job. Compare what you charged against true labor, materials, and allocated overhead to find the real margin.

Price charged to customer

---

---

Actual man-hours logged

---

---

True labor cost (man-hours x true labor cost per hour)

---

---

Actual material cost (paint plus sundries)

---

---

Allocated overhead (man-hours x overhead per billable hour)

---

---

Total cost (labor + materials + overhead)

---

---

---

Profit dollars and profit percent

---

---

Variance versus the bid and the reason (prep, extra coat, short crew)

---

### Checklist: Purchasing and Costing Checklist

- I specify paint tier and sheen by surface, not by the cheapest shelf price
- I have commercial accounts and have asked directly for contractor pricing
- I consolidate spend with one or two stores to climb the discount tier
- I order from the takeoff quantities and carry a per-job sundry allowance
- I reconcile paint bought versus used after every job
- I job-cost every project the week it closes and act on the patterns

## Customer Acquisition and Steady Schedule

Engineer referrals and reviews, set up online lead channels, and run a sales process that closes at full margin.

### Worksheet: Design Your Referral and Review Engine

Build the system that turns every finished job into reviews and referrals instead of leaving it to chance. The exact ask script for the final walkthrough (review and referral)

---

Direct Google review link and how you will send it (text the same day)

---

---

Leave-behind and yard-sign plan for every job

---

---

Referral reward or thank-you offer

---

---

Process for responding to every review, positive and negative

---

---

Neighborhood saturation plan (door hangers, nearest homes, follow-up window)

---

### Exercise: Audit and Plan Your Online Presence

Review your current online footprint and write the plan to make you the obvious local choice when a homeowner searches.

- Audit your Google Business Profile: which fields, photos, and categories are missing or stale.
  - Plan how you will build reviews steadily and keep the profile visibly active.
  - Choose one paid channel to test (Google Local Services Ads or a marketplace) and set a small controlled budget.
  - Define how you will track cost per lead and cost per booked job for each channel separately.
-

## Worksheet: Script Your Estimate-to-Close Process

Standardize the estimate appointment and the close so you win on trust and value instead of discounting your margin away.

Arrival and first-impression standard (on time, clean branded vehicle)

---

Discovery questions to ask before measuring

---

What you will explain about prep, products, schedule, and crew scope

---

Written proposal contents (scope, products, sheens, price, terms, deposit)

---

Option ladder to offer instead of discounts (tier, scope, phasing)

---

Follow-up timing and method for undecided customers

---

## Checklist: Customer Acquisition Checklist

- I ask for a review and a referral at the moment of delight on every job
- I put out a yard sign and door-hang the nearest homes on every street I work
- My Google Business Profile is complete, photo-rich, and active
- I track cost per booked job for every lead channel and cut the losers
- I present every estimate as a written proposal, not a number on a card
- I defend my price with options instead of discounts and always ask for the job

## Your Action Plan

1. Calculate your man-hour rate using your real wage, burden, overhead, and target margin, and write it where every bid will use it.
2. Measure your crew's production rates (square feet per man-hour by task) on the next two jobs and record them.
3. Adopt a standard takeoff sheet and use it on every walkthrough, capturing area, openings, and conditions the same way each time.
4. Build your paint and sheen spec sheet so the crew never guesses product or sheen on site.
5. Open or upgrade contractor accounts at one or two paint stores and negotiate your pricing tier and net-30 terms.
6. Install the morning huddle and a written quality standard, and have the lead self-inspect under a work light before declaring a space done.
7. Job-cost every completed project the week it closes and review which job types actually clear your margin target.
8. Set up the referral ask, the direct review link, and a yard-sign-plus-door-hanger routine for every job.
9. Complete and activate your Google Business Profile, then test one paid lead channel at a small, tracked budget.
10. Standardize your estimate-to-close process with a written proposal and an option ladder, and review your close rate monthly.











