

The Lancaster News

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Renovating on a budget

Painting steady during tough times

Christopher Sardelli

csardelli@thelancasternews.com

With many companies either downsizing or losing customers this fall, one business is giving a slow economy the brush off.

Home interior painting company Fresh Coat, based out of Ohio with a franchise in Lancaster, has seen its numbers remain fairly steady.



PHOTO SUPPLIED

The souring economy has caused some homeowners to rethink major painting projects. Todd Day, owner of the Lancaster franchise of Fresh Coat, said his business offers affordable prices for room painting.

Todd Day, who has owned the Lancaster franchise of Fresh Coat since March, said that as people have begun cutting back on expensive vacations or eating out at restaurants, they have turned their attention toward their homes.

"People are not going out as much, not eating out as much. They're spending more time at home," Day said. "There has been a shift in the clientele, from people trying to get things prepped for resale, to now we have people recommitting to their homes."

While many of his customers used to be sellers, Day said that has changed as the housing market started to decline this year. He noticed that his customers are more interested in saving their money, avoiding the hassle and cost of building new homes and selling their old ones.

"Before we were getting work through Realtor references and doing whole floors," Day said. "Now it's more smaller bids, with people doing a few rooms."

Through conversations with

his clients, he's discovered that many are deciding to settle into their current home for at least another year or two. They have turned their attention toward sprucing up their homes, and that often begins with a new coat of paint.

"We're offering a product that can change something significant in your house. It gives you a better sense of home and makes people a lot more comfortable," he said. "We want people to have a good quality of life and this kind of project makes them feel good about themselves."

Fresh Coat, a member of the South Piedmont Better Business Bureau, provides a professional team of indoor painters who can customize a home according to the client's preferences.

The reason customers are drawn to his business, Day said, is because people can do one room at a time at an affordable price.

The price for a standard 12-by-12 room is \$199 for one coat of paint, and \$249 for two coats. For larger rooms, the price will go up accordingly. They only use Sherwin Williams paint and all paint is included in the price.

The first visit to a customer's home includes a free estimate, usually by Day himself.

He meets with the client, finds out more about how they learned about Fresh Coat and what kind of changes they are looking to make inside their home. Then he develops his estimate based on the extent of work and size and quantity of rooms.

The most common trend among Day's customers is the application of neutral colors in homes that are on the market.

He said his customers have taken their cue from home builders, who paint walls and ceilings in hues of cream, tan or beige to create a sense of openness.

Day said those colors are some

of the most requested. He has also seen an increase in the number of homeowners who want their ceilings painted, usually in bold colors that can make a room seem more intimate.

Day predicts the market for his business will continue to expand, regardless of the condition of the economy.

His company has generally only worked on residential projects, but they have gradually begun working on some commercial properties as well.

He hopes this will increase the number of interior painting opportunities, but still looks forward to a day when people will begin selling their homes again.

"I hope the housing market loosens up a bit," he said. "But I think it will all depend on the new (presidential) administration."

For information, call (803) 547-6371 or visit www.freshcoat-painters.com/tday.