

Improving the Great Outdoors

What's ahead for the exterior maintenance and staining market

Ah, spring! A time when a homeowner's fancy turns to ... decks. Let's hope so, anyway. Let's also hope that homeowners' attention turns to fences, gazebos, siding and other exterior wood surfaces that need protection and beautification.

As we head toward warm temperatures, many in the exterior wood coatings business are hopeful for a fairly good season as homeowners gravitate toward the idea of improving their outdoor living space.

"The exterior side of the business continues to grow, especially with homeowners staying in their homes longer," said Lisa Skrdlant, director of marketing for Rust-Oleum Wood Care. "Instead of selling their homes, they're saying 'let's freshen up what we have.'"

This trend toward "freshening up" extends to outdoor living spaces, which Skrdlant explained has led to increased

use of wood coatings. "People are not only giving a facelift to decks, fences and siding but they're also updating planters and outdoor furniture, such as weathered or worn Adirondack chairs."

The outdoor living trend has translated into growth for both semi-transparent and solid-color stains, but Skrdlant sees semi-transparent as having the most appeal for consumers who love outdoor living. "Homeowners want to add a bit of color to their exterior surfaces, but they also want the natural beauty of wood to show through. There's a desire to have their backyard deck blend in with outdoors and provide a warm and relaxing atmosphere."

Russell Neale, marketing director for Cabot Woodcare, sees the economy as continuing to have an impact. "In an election year, the adage remains true, 'It's the economy.' Consumers are watching budgets, but this doesn't mean

they aren't in the category. Maintaining decks and outdoor living spaces is a big theme, and consumers want to use products that will deliver lasting value. Having dinner on the deck is like taking a mini-vacation—it shouldn't be marred by a stain that isn't holding up."

An advantage of an exterior wood project is that consumers are getting bang for their buck. "Replacement of siding and decking remains among the top 10 home improvement projects, mainly because they are among the least expensive improvements that give great curb appeal," said Michele Margotta Neary, public relations director for United Gilsonite Laboratories. Because of the fact that a well-maintained deck adds to the appeal of a home, Margotta Neary contended that this makes homeowners more inclined to give these surfaces a facelift with a sealer or a semi-transparent or solid-color deck stain.



● New from Duckback Products Inc. is Superdeck Deck & Dock.

Duckback Products Inc. recognized the importance of the outdoor living trend and has rebranded its line accordingly. “We’re in the second year of our rebranding campaign, which has the theme ‘Live the Outdoors,’ ” reported Steve McGarr, VP of sales and marketing. “We’re pushing the idea of getting into the whole backyard, appealing to the consumer’s emotional side.”

McGarr explained that the entire program centers around the “Three P’s” to connect with consumers: (1) Personal satisfaction; (2) Peace of mind; and (3) Pride in a job well done.

Armstrong-Clark has had success by using a word that makes deck maintenance sound more like an exciting adventure than a chore: makeover. “The word ‘makeover,’ has become very popular on television,” explained Jake Clark, company president. “So, rather than tell consumers to redo their deck, we recommend that they do a backyard makeover.”

The company has promoted this idea to consumers in *Extreme How-To* magazine, with photos and text that describe the appeal of spending evenings on an outdoor deck, grilling a marvelous meal and relaxing with a cold beverage. However, Armstrong-Clark makes the point that decks must be cleaned and protected with a quality



● This deck features Cabot® Australian Timber Oil in Jarrah Brown. The railings are in white solid color stain.

wood stain—in other words “made over”—in order to achieve this nirvana.

Additional Trends

There are several trends of interest that are driving sales in the exterior wood care market. Margotta Neary noted that fiber-cement siding has been rising in popularity. “In most recent years, newer homes have been leaning toward solid colors even on new construction,” she said. “That may be a direct correlation with fiber-cement’s popularity being on the rise.”

Sjoerd Bos, VP of Sansin Corp., reported a trend toward lighter, more natural transparent tones on wood. “However, builders, architects and

homeowners often decide against light or natural tones for an exterior wood finish since they traditionally do not provide as much protection against UV degradation as darker, more opaque finishes,” he said. “Some have tried to strengthen UV absorbency in wood stains or add white pigment to lighten finishes, but that comes at the cost of the clarity and beauty of the final finish.”

To overcome this challenge while also meeting market demand, Sansin recently launched “ready-to-use” Foundation™. “This water-borne primer for both interior and exterior wood surfaces applies invisibly, yet creates UV protection deep within the wood, allowing for the lightest of topcoat finishes to bring out the natural beauty and distinctiveness of wood while maintaining clarity,”

Bos explained.

Tracy Pease, Brand Manager, Residential Repaint Segment for PPG Architectural Coatings, stressed the importance of conveying that pigment equals protection to help consumers choose an opacity level. “One way is to have them think of toners and stains as they would sunscreen. Toners have the least pigment and offer the least protection, similar to an

SPF of 4. Tinted semi-transparent and semi-opaque color stains offer more protection, in line with SPF 15 and 30. Solid color stains offer more UV and weather protection like an SPF of 50+.”

Mike Kozlowski, director of marketing for Thompson’s Water Seal Brand, identified a trend toward more urban living. “That doesn’t mean that decks won’t be important to people,” he said. “They still want a nice outdoor space to enjoy with family and friends, but they want maintenance to be as easy and convenient as possible. Some people may not have room for a deck, but they’ll have a patio with room for a couple of Adirondack chairs or a swing, so small projects will grow as an opportunity.”

The Thompson's Company has introduced several products to take advantage of this opportunity. "The Thompson's® Water Seal® Wood Stain, a 12-ounce aerosol wood stain for small projects, came out in 2011, and drew rave reviews from consumers for both performance and convenience," Kozlowski reported. "For 2012, we're introducing Thompson's® Water Seal® Easy Stain™, the first exterior stain to come in a convenient eight-ounce tube."

These products join the already comprehensive selection of the Thompson's® Water Seal® brand, which also encompasses a wide range of cleaners, clear and tinted waterproofers, and up to 117 colors of stain, each in oil-based or latex formulas.

Many in the industry point to the continuing trend toward water-based coatings. "The market continues to drive towards more water-based finishes," said Christina Rowe, Brand Manager, Woodcare, for AkzoNobel Paints LLC. "While traditional wood stains have been oil-based, new technologies in waterborne formulas have made them equal to or better than oils."

Regulations have played a role in the water-based revolution and will continue to do so. "As more specific VOC regulations have been enacted across areas of the U.S. and Canada National AIM is now in force, manufacturers have moved to water-based formulations that are easy to use, offer better durability than previous generations and provide hassle-free cleanup without the worry of solvent disposal," said Pease.

Because of regulatory changes, Neale observed that some products from five years ago are no longer available. "Each manufacturer has had to answer this challenge. Cabot® has maintained our commitment to true, deep penetrating oils that deliver classic performance."

Dave Barnes, president of SaverSystems, observed that the acceptance of water-based products has "simply exploded" in the past few years. "Many of the performance issues associated with water-based products of the past have disappeared as technologies have



● **ARBORCOAT from Benjamin Moore is the next generation of superior waterborne exterior stains.**

improved, resulting in water-based penetrating wood stains that can now easily outperform their solvent-based counterparts in durability and performance."

Andrew Meyer, president of Vermont Coatings, observed that changing regulations have provided challenges for manufacturers. "The challenge is finding products that have been improved through new technology and innovation and not compromised by replacing toxic ingredients with fillers. The green building market trend will continue to grow to meet the consumer's desire for quality, value and safety. With its patented whey technology, Vermont Natural Coatings is well positioned to build premium products that have easy application features, strong adhesion and most importantly, durable weather-resistant properties."

Adam Newman, national sales manager for Sunnyside Corporation, remarked that there has been an evolution of products in the deck care market. "You're certainly seeing more water-based coatings. Our wood protectant and waterproofer are clear coatings, which is what is typically used when it comes to these types of products."

Newman added that the more attractive woods, such as Western red cedar, may be durable, but they are also

quick to weather. "Preservative treatment and sealing are highly recommended," he advised.

Products Diversity

The diversity of products in the exterior wood care market ensures that consumers can get whatever look they want. Cabot® offers a complete line of premium woodcare stains, finishes, oils, waterproofers and preservatives.

Each product has its advantages, Neale reported. "Cabot® Wood Toned, Semi-Transparent or Semi-Solid stains are true oils that deeply penetrate wood fibers. Our

Solid Stains are specially formulated for specific application—Decking Stain for surfaces that must withstand foot traffic and Siding Stain for vertical sources that must stand up to weather. Preservative Wood Finish goes above and beyond to kill mold, mildew and fungus. Australian Timber Oil penetrates and protects dense hardwoods. And Express Deck penetrates damp wood, so you can clean and stain in one day."

There are more than 80 colors to choose from, and Neale added that Cabot® makes the right product for the job at hand with no compromise. "We put all our products through years of punishing tests to make sure they look better longer."

From AkzoNobel come two complementary lines of stains for decks and homes: Sikkens and Flood brands. "Sikkens offers premium products for every wood surface, from log homes to backyard playsets with a unique, furniture-like finish that stands above the competition," Rowe said. "Recommended by pros, Sikkens is the ultimate in woodcare protection."

With regard to Flood, Rowe explained that the products in this brand have exclusive Flood technology such as Penetrol® and Emulsa-bond® that make them outperform the competi-

tion. “These additives have been the backbone of good paint performance for decades; having them in our own woodcare products is much like the ‘intel inside’ advertisements we’ve seen for years,” she said.

The diversity of products in the Rust-Oleum Wood Care line covers every aspect of an exterior wood maintenance project. “We have two very strong brands,” Skrdlant said. “Our Wolman brand has done very well with professionals for 20 years. It includes a full range of products for prepping and protecting exterior wood surfaces. It is our most comprehensive line of products, offering everything you need to complete an exterior wood project from start to finish.”

Among the products in the Wolman brand are cleaners, brighteners and strippers as well as a broad selection of finishes—from RainCoat water repellents (both clear and toned) to the EPA-registered F&P Finish & Preservative oil-based wood finish (which is formulated to protect against mold, mildew, rot and decay) to DuraStain semi-transparent and solid-color stains (which offer advanced urethane technologies to deliver durable finishes with long-lasting color). The Wolman brand also addresses the trend toward exotic hardwoods with Wolman EHT, a product that is formulated to prolong color, resist fading while providing long-term water repellency.

In addition to the Wolman brand, the company recently launched the first Rust-Oleum branded line of exterior wood stains and sealers with unique performance characteristics. Rust-Oleum has made it easy to shop for specific needs by identifying products by application, such as Rust-Oleum House and Siding, and by color options including clear, semi-transparent and solid. Incorporating innovative pigment technologies, the Rust-Oleum exterior stain program offers new Cool Touch Technology.

“It will reduce the temperature of the surface by as much as 20 degrees,” Skrdlant said. “Anyone who has ever



● Rust-Oleum Deck and Fence.

walked across a hot deck in bare feet or sat down on a hot picnic bench will understand the appeal of Cool Touch Technology.”

Both the Wolman and Rust-Oleum brands are primarily composed of water-based products. “We’ve been moving in that direction due to VOC regulations and consumer preferences,” Skrdlant explained. “We’ll see water-based technologies continue to advance. While a perception exists that oil is better, water-based technologies have actually advanced significantly in functionality. There are still situations where an oil might be preferred, however, such as in the case of penetrating oils for exotic hardwoods.”

From Sansin comes a line of Enviro Stains, exterior wood coatings—Sansin DEC™, Sansin Classic™ and Sansin SDF™. The unique waterborne formula protects wood with no harsh or flammable solvents, allowing wood to “breathe” naturally to inhibit decay and increase durability and performance.

“Sansin pioneered this unique, waterborne alkyd formula combining the benefits of oil- and water-based coatings,” Bos said. “Using water as the vehicle to allow oil to penetrate deep into the wood, our formula leads to long-lasting durability, easier maintenance and outstanding performance without the toxicity found in conventional stains.”

SaverSystems manufactures a broad line of water-based penetrating wood

stains under the Defy brand name. The line includes several products formulated for use on decks, such as Defy Epoxy Fortified Wood Stain, designed for maximum durability and wear; Defy Deck Stain for Hardwoods, which penetrates easily into some of the hardest species of woods, such as mahogany, composites and even ironwoods; and Defy Extreme Wood Stain, formulated with zinc nano-particles to provide superior UV resistance in the toughest of environments.

PPG offers water-borne and alkyd/oil formulas for decks, fences and siding in both its PPG PITTSBURGH PAINTS® SUN PROOF® and PPG PORTER PAINTS® ACRI-SHIELD® stain lines. “Each line has a complete offering of toners, semi-transparent, semi-opaque and solid color stains depending on how much wood grain the customer wants to see, providing beauty and protection in a variety of ready-mix colors and hundreds of tintable popular colors,” said Pease.

Sun Proof and Aciri-Shield acrylic/oil stains are uniquely formulated so the oil will penetrate deep into the wood because the alkyd oil is encapsulated in an acrylic resin. “This acrylic/oil also enables the user to apply it to a damp deck soon after cleaning instead of waiting for the deck to dry completely—all of which makes our Deck-In-A-Day program possible,” said Pease. “While composites have been available for some time (claiming less maintenance



● PolyWhey® Exterior Wood Finish.

and no staining required) and the use of PVC is newer in the market, there's something to be said for the beauty of natural wood and that's why transparent stains remain so popular."

Specialty deck care products are offered under the PPG brand. They include Deck Cleaner, Stain Stripper and MILDEW CHECK® Multi-Purpose Wash, along with a Premium Deck Care Sprayer for easy application.

Gemini Coatings has made its name with TWP®, an exterior penetrating wood preservative that is formulated to protect wood from rot, water absorption, UV light and mildew.

TWP® 100 is Gemini's most popular stain line and comes in eight popular colors. New from the company is TWP® 1500 series, featuring a formula designed to penetrate better and dry faster. TWP® 1500 is designed for states that require low-VOC exterior wood coatings on LEED projects. The line includes nine popular colors.

An exciting development from Benjamin Moore is the development of ARBORCOAT, which Lara Toomin, stain market manager, described as "the next generation of superior waterborne exterior stains." As she explained, "All ARBORCOAT finishes outperform conventional alkyds and are available in a wide variety of opacities and colors. There is an ARBORCOAT finish to give the look each consumer is looking for with no sacrifice in long-term protection."

Toomin added trends vary by region but it depends on the customer's preference. "There appears to be a tendency for consumers to want the stain to last longer and therefore they lean toward semi solid and solid stains, which are gaining popularity."

California Paints® has a broad selection of products in the Storm Stain line. One of the most successful products in the line is ENDURADECK® Alkyd Modified Acrylic Latex Solid Stain, which performs exceptionally well on decks, fences, siding and other exterior wood surfaces. "We introduced it about eight or nine years ago, and



● California Paints' ENDURADECK for hardwood surfaces.

it's grown every year since," stated Ron Boyajian, VP, Product Development/Technical Sales of California Paints. "It's a complaint-free product. There's an additive that helps it penetrate and bond to the wood, called appropriately enough Penebond. That has made a world of difference regarding durability. The product also has a rust-inhibitive resin that holds back screw and nail-head rusting."

Other products in the Storm Stain lineup include a semi-transparent available in both oil and latex, a semi-opaque oil-based line as well as a series of clears and toners. "We also have Storm Stain 100% Solid Siding, an acrylic matte finish that replaces another acrylic we had with a sheen," Boyajian said. "It comes in six colors and four blending bases. You can tint to any color by matching it to any color or using California Paints' Perfect Palette."

The semi-transparent and ENDURADECK also have blending bases that allow retailers to match to any color. In addition, the Storm Stain line includes a solid color linseed oil product, which has four blending bases as well. "We also show a selection of colors using competitors' color system," Boyajian reported.

California Paints has addressed the exotic hardwoods line with ENDURADECK Hardwood Oil Deck Finish, which offers protection from water, UV

rays and other outdoor degradation for such dense hardwoods as mahogany, ipe, teak and others. "This is a very successful line for us with great performance," Boyajian said. "Other products have serious drying issues and mildew issues, but ENDURADECK does not."

Another major part of the Storm Stain line is the Trouble Shooter primer line, which blocks tannin bleed and helps Storm Stain finishes grip the surface. "Trouble Shooter also comes in bases that allow you to tint the neutral base to almost the exact color as the topcoat, so you only need to apply one topcoat," said Boyajian. The Trouble Shooter line is very successful, he



● ZAR Deck and Siding Stain from UGL.

added, accounting for about 25 percent of total Storm Stain sales.

California Paints has been progressing its line more and more to finishes that are compliant with the strictest VOC regulations in the nation. For the future, Boyajian is looking forward to the new alkyd dispersion technology expanding to the exterior wood finishes market. "Up until now, alkyds were water-reducible. There are less problems with alkyd dispersion technology. They don't have all these additives to hold it together. The first launch is NexTech, an interior product. It may be a year or so, but we will eventually bring it to

the Storm Stain line. It has all the benefits of an oil—hardness, durability, quick dry—but it is under 50 VOC while having the look of an oil.”

Duckback has great depth and breadth in its Superdeck product line, according to McGarr. “We cover the entire color continuum, starting with our clear wood finish and then moving on to our transparent stains, which add just a bit of color to beautify and protect the wood.”

The progression continues with Duckback’s semi-transparent, which have more UV protection and a longer service life than the transparents. McGarr reported that the semi-transparent come in three packaged colors that also act as a base so that tinted colors never need more than 3 ounces of colorant.

“We also have our solid color deck and siding stain, a hybrid product that combines a tannin-blocking alkyd primer with an acrylic latex to provide the best of both worlds,” McGarr said. “It is backed by a five-year guarantee on decks and a 15-year guarantee on siding.”

The transparent stain, also known as the 1900 series, is the most popular choice of consumers. In addition, Duckback offers ancillary products, such as Log Home Oil Finish and Exotic Hardwood Stain. The Exotic Hardwood Stain offers three times the transparent iron oxide pigments, providing a denser ratio per square foot of penetration than the 1900 series. “It’s an upsell,” said McGarr, “but it’s the easiest upsell in the world because the consumer already upsold themselves with dense hardwood. It’s a truly oil-based penetrating product.”

New to the Superdeck line this year is Deck & Dock Elastomeric, a super solid finish that will revitalize even the most worn deck. “It’s an elastomeric, so it has tremendous flexibility,” McGarr stated. “You can use it with our anti-skid additive, made of ground walnut shells, making it great for decks, docks and pools where water could



● A deck finished with *kathy ireland* Wood Stain.

cause a slippery surface. It comes in four colors that can be used as bases to provide 50 more colors.”

Duckback also recently added 32 more colors to its solid color stain line, giving it a total of 85 colors. That’s a lot of variety but the packaged colors acting as a base keep the SKU count relatively low. “You don’t have to use a lot of inventory and space,” McGarr said. “The retailer gets more turns, more money per linear foot.”

The UGL exterior stain and deck care line, meanwhile, includes a complete line of deck and siding products under the ZAR brand. Products include ZAR Solid Color Deck & Siding Stain, ZAR Semi-Transparent Deck & Siding Stain, ZAR Clear Wood Sealer & Natural Toner Base, ZAR Clear Wood Sealer and ZAR Deck Cleaner.

ZAR’s exterior solid color stain features a self-priming formula utilizing dual-resin technology to provide excellent ultraviolet resistance, breathability and superior adhesion. “This product is ideal for homeowners who want to show the natural texture of wood but would like to change the color like a painted surface and also ideal for older decks that need a complete facelift,” Margotta Neary stated.

The semi-transparent, meanwhile, is an oil-base formula that still allows for

water cleanup. “It is a wonderful product to impart a slight color while still showing the grain and the natural beauty of the wood,” said Margotta Neary.

From Vermont Natural Coatings comes an easy-to-use product—PolyWhey® Exterior Wood Finish. “By using the strength of natural whey proteins and the latest in water-based resin technology, PolyWhey® Exterior creates a waterproof barrier between a wood surface and the elements, extending the life of the wood,” Meyer explained.

“PolyWhey® Exterior whey-based formula is proving to be a favorable alternative for consumers who desire safety without compromising quality.”

Meyer added that PolyWhey® Exterior offers protection, safety and durability. Regarding protection, he noted, “Competing stain products penetrate the wood surface but don’t offer the protective coating provided by PolyWhey® Exterior. Other polyurethanes may offer waterproofing or UV resistance or low VOC, but unlike PolyWhey® they are unable to offer all three.”

In terms of safety, Meyer reported that VOC content is only part of the story. “The ingredients creating those VOCs are what are important. PolyWhey® uses renewable sources, while other products include known carcinogens and mutagens in their product, which create health hazards unrelated to their airborne impact.”



● Armstrong’s Mahogany on an Ipe deck.

Ease of use comes from the fact that PolyWhey® is a one-component product that cleans up with soap and water, which also ties back to safety.

Armstrong-Clark offers a quality line of wood stains that are easy to apply, easy to maintain and long-lasting. "Armstrong's is the only line of oil-based wood coatings that can be applied in direct sunlight and heat of the day," said Clark. "Also, it can rain just 30 minutes after application so that a forecast for precipitation later in the

day will not cause a delay. In addition, we have formulated Armstrong's Wood Stains to meet the most stringent VOC regulations in the country."

Another plus: Armstrong's Wood Stains has virtually eliminated the problem of "shiners."

Armstrong-Clark addresses the challenges of such surfaces as ipe and mahogany with a new product that is especially formulated for the challenges of exotic woods. "The challenge is trying to get the coating to last,"

Clark said. "We've succeeded in doing that. It's the best product we make."

The product comes in two colors: Mahogany and Amber. "Our Mahogany on an ipe deck is really beautiful," Clark enthused.

Touting the ability to offer long-term solutions for decks and fences is *kathy ireland* Design Surfaces™ by GG Innovative Products Inc. The products in this line include *kathy ireland* Wood Stain and *kathy ireland* Wood Sealer.

Matteson explained that *kathy ireland* Wood Stain is not an oil-based nor an acrylic stain, meaning it doesn't have the drawbacks of either. "It is a unique stain that is able to penetrate into the pores of the concrete for the longest possible life without preventing the sealer from penetrating into the pores," he said. "It is not flammable, it does not require hazardous shipping, and it comes in concentrate form to make shipping more cost-effective and takes up far less shelf space than the typical products on the market."

And because the stain is not an acrylic, Matteson explained that it is not subject to delaminating or peeling.

Also offering superior performance is *kathy ireland* Wood Sealer, which has an excellent ability to bond and penetrate while also offering superior hardness and abrasion resistance. "The stain and sealer provide for the same rich look that the oil-based products were providing without creating an opacity that hides the beauty of the wood as do the acrylic stains," Matteson said. "The products are not flammable and have extremely low-VOC content, so the dealers are getting what they need as well."

Education materials help retailers to learn the line. "There are nice flyers from which to choose colors, there are instructional videos and even free online training for their sales reps or their consumers," Matteson reported.

Promotional Advice

Promoting your exterior products takes creativity, and this starts even before customers walk in the store.



**Richard's Paint Offers
a Complete Line of
Quality Stains & Finishes**

Wood Stain is not a paint, and is generally applied in only one coat. Therefore, it is important to use a quality product so you get it right the first time!

RichWood not only presents a beautiful finish, it has excellent mildew resistance and is a water repellent to protect the wood from harsh elements.

Whether you need a water base or oil base, solid hide or a semi-transparent coating, we have the right stain for your project!

Call today and we will send you our Exterior Stain Color Card that displays our beautiful selection of colors in both solid hide wood stains and semi-transparent wood stains.

EXTERIOR STAIN
CONCENTRATE

Distributor Opportunities Now Available! Call Today!

200 Paint Street • Rockledge FL 32955
800-432-0983 • www.richardspaint.com

Manufacturing quality paints and coatings for over 55 years

PPG PITTSBURGH PAINTS® - Multiple Locations
\$10 for \$20 Worth of SUN PROOF® Stain Products

\$10 Buy!

Value	Discount	You Save
\$20	50%	\$10

Buy it for a friend!

Time Left To Buy
2 days
13 hours
19 minutes

275 bought

The deal is on!
Tipped at 6:45AM with 75 bought



The Fine Print

Limit 1 per person. Limit 1 per visit. Valid only for option purchased. In-store only. Valid for SUN PROOF® stains. Valid only at listed locations. Not valid with other offers.

Highlights

- Large stain selection
- Stain supplies and more
- Industry-recognized products
- Design center with helpful staff

● A screen shot shows a Groupon offer for PPG PITTSBURGH PAINTS® SUN PROOF® Stains. (Please note: This coupon shown for example purposes only.)

Pease advocated using Groupon®, the online purchase promotion provider, as a means of attracting customers. Currently in more than 200 markets in the U.S. and Canada, Groupon is a “deal-of-the-day” website that features discount

offers to its members.

“You can use Groupon to target specific demographics,” Pease said. “It’s a very effective means of increasing traffic to your store and creating awareness for your business and prod-

ucts. PPG has helped several dealers use the service with very good results.”

Pease explained that a well-timed Groupon promotion—say, around to Memorial Day or the Fourth of July—could boost stain sales during these peak DIY times. “Once you get customers in-store, then promoting the Deck-In-A-Day program is great tool to help give customers the confidence that they can complete a job that may seem challenging. It also provides a built-in cross-sell opportunity with deck cleaning and sundry products as the program lists everything the customer will need for successful completion.”

Barnes, likewise sees the importance of using new media, citing the success of Defy dealers who have integrated a web strategy into their marketing. “We have seen dealers grow from a few thousand dollars in purchases to six-figures in a matter of a couple of years by simply focusing their marketing energy on an e-commerce strategy.

Want to Avoid Deck Complaints From Customers About Deck Stains That Just Don't Last?

Then Look to DEFY Extreme Wood Stain



For more information about becoming a DEFY dealer, call (800) 860-6327.

- Fortified with Nano Particles for Extreme UV Protection
- Includes Zinc Particles that Resist Mildew and Mold Growth
- Supported by a Powerful E-Commerce Program that Delivers High Profit Customers to Your Store
- Eco Friendly Formula - 250 VOC Compliant

Transparent
"Nano PARTICLES"
Provide Durable
Sunscreen
Protection By Blocking The
Sun's Harmful UV Rays

SPECIAL OFFER:

50% OFF Extreme Wood Stain Stocking Package*
(a savings of nearly \$500)

*Limit 1 Per Company - Offer Expires April 30, 2012. Offer available to qualifying dealers only. Some restrictions apply. To find out more, go to saversystems.com/pdr2 or call our customer service at (800) 860-6327.

Improving the Great Outdoors

Everyone should be doing it to some degree," he said.

Duckback, meanwhile, is emphasizing newer media with QR codes on all of its packaging as well as making the most of YouTube videos, Facebook and a vastly improved website. The "Live the Outdoor" theme continues to be a big part of the company's strategy with brochures, color cards, shelf-talkers and other collateral materials.

"People are responding to our campaign," said McGarr. "There was a feeling that the category had gotten a bit stale. With our POP, we're taking it to the next level."

Kozlowski agreed that today's technology offers more opportunities for promoting deck care products. "The Thompson's® Water Seal® brand has a Facebook page with one tab that takes you to a selection of more than a dozen short videos," he said. "If your customer or your employee has a Smart Phone or a tablet, they can access these videos right

at the point of purchase. These are high-quality videos, presented by our spokesperson, Jeff Wilson, who can be seen regularly on DIY Network and HGTV. The videos cover our products and how to use them, as well as great project ideas. We have also begun developing MS tags for our newer products, including our Thompson's® Water Seal® Easy Stain™, and we'll be rolling them out for brochures and POP in the future."

In-store strategies are also important for selling the category. "During the peak season, a few common-sense tips will absolutely increase wood care business," Rowe stated. "Cross-merchandise wood care products near decking materials; put signs on



● Sunnyside Clear Wood Protectant.

outdoor furniture and/or sheds reminding customers that it's the season for wood care. Be creative—grills and decks go hand-in-hand, so advertise these products together. Of course, highlighting the prep process is critical; most DIYers are unaware of the importance of the right prep and the prep process."

Skrdlant stressed that merchandising for exterior wood care products should simplify the shopping experience for the consumers. "We feel strongly about the need for retailers to have some kind of merchandising center to showcase the products," she said. "Our advice is to show color on actual samples. That way, consumers can look at a sample and say, 'This is

Every customer is different.
Offer them a stain and finish line tailored to their individual needs.

Offer them
Old Masters®

Stains.Finishes.Sundries.And more.

Learn more at
www.myoldmasters.com

Or Call us
toll free
at)
800.747.3436



Rebecca
Using Gel Stain to stain my new fiberglass door.
😊



Daniel
Only Old Masters Wiping Stain will do for my wood floors!!



Isabelle
Flea market find... wanted that hand-rubbed finish. Gel Poly every time!

exactly what I want my deck to look like.’ ”

Rust-Oleum offers brochures and shelf strips that not only highlight color but also provide information on how to complete an exterior wood care project. “It’s important to have tools that can walk the consumer through the entire process,” Skrdlant said. “Due to the economy, there are more DIYers in the marketplace right now. There is a need to instill them with confidence so they will have a positive experience. To further encourage that experience, it’s important that companies like ours move forward with new innovations that enhance performance and offer better application properties.”

To help independent paint retailers increase sales, Armstrong-Clark offers helpful POP, including a countertop display that has an efficient footprint



● **Thompson's Easy Stain comes in four popular wood tones: Redwood, Cherry, Chestnut and Cedar.**

equal to that of a one-gallon can. The display space for a selection of four-ounce sample cans, as well as fan decks and product literature.

Clark observed that the big boxes have taken a substantial amount of deck business away from independent retailers, who need to work to reclaim this. “It starts when a customer comes into your store to buy a gallon of paint.

While the paint is shaking and you are helping the customer pick out sundry items to go along with the sale, ask if they have a deck or fence that needs freshening. If they say yes, this is when you go into action. Pull out the literature from the display and discuss the many benefits of Armstrong's Wood Stains. Tell them about the long-lasting finish. Explain how the product is easy to apply.”

The key is to get customers to try the stain so that they can see that it is better than the alternatives offered by the home centers. “Let them know that you can provide them with a four-ounce sample can that they can try on their fence or deck absolutely free,” Clark said. “The lure of receiving something for free has a lot of appeal. If your customer goes home, tries

Continued on Page 79

Are you sick of hearing quality complaints?

EBCO
wiping cloths
are
MADE IN USA
and always
100% cotton



Consistent quality
doesn't have to
come at a
high price.
Free Private
Labeling!



The Absorbent Company
EBCO

Call today! 1-800-884-7247 www.TheAbsorbentCompany.com

Continued from Page 42

the sample and likes it, they will have to go back to your paint store to purchase enough wood stain to complete the project.”

California Paints offers promotional materials that help set up retailers for success. “We’ve spent a lot of time and money on POP,” said Boyajian. “We want to provide the most up-to-date materials and color cards possible. However, it’s up to the dealer to push the products when Mr. and Mrs. Jones come into the store. Staining a house is not an impulse thing. It’s important to emphasize the value of your product.”

Toomin suggested focusing on exterior stains with a special area devoted to the category, which helps portray the retailer as a knowledgeable source on the subject. “Benjamin Moore has a color display as well as a project display to help retailers sell our stains,” she said. “We also have different brochures that are a great tool.”

Newman concurred that a section dedicated to exterior wood stains and deck restoration is a good idea. “Especially in the spring when homeowners are getting ready to restore their decks, it would help let customers know what product they should be using. If a customer has to search for a product, chances are they may never find it.”

It’s also key for retailers to explain to consumers the need to take care of their decks, whether they stain them, waterproof them or add a wood protectant to enhance the natural wood appearance while preventing water damage. Newman suggested that retailers tell customers the following: “You spent a lot of money on your deck. Why not spend a little more to take care of it? Using our products can provide many years of necessary protection to your deck.”

Neale advised retailers to be prepared when consumers are ready to move forward with their project. “The DIY consumer thinks about stain only when it’s time to redo the deck. But when it’s time, they want to go from zero to done as



● Sansin’s Deck Display showcases the products.

quickly as possible. We saw last year that the wet spring delayed many outdoor projects, but once Memorial Day came and the weather turned, the consumers were ready to buy. Winning retailers had the right products on hand and were ready to get consumers from confused to confident with simple service.”

For consumers who need more information, Neale advised directing them to the Cabot website (www.cabotstain.com), which is filled with helpful, downloadable product and project ideas and information. “We also are on Facebook and YouTube



● From AkzoNoel’s Sikkens brand, Cetol® SRD in a Translucent Finish.

with tips and how-to videos,” he added.

Bos recommended that retailers use the Sansin products firsthand in order to gain knowledge about the product. “When customers are going to spend big money on stain or finish, they need a dealer who knows more about the product than just the literature,” he said.

Sansin also has gotten feedback from dealers regarding the best way to sell the line. For example, Bjorn Hanson of Burnell’s Décor in Wisconsin, sets decking and siding samples outside his store to expose them to the elements. “We intentionally don’t do maintenance on them, so people can see how well Sansin holds up,” he explained.

Another dealer, Doug Janzen of Janzen’s Paint & Decorating in Manitoba, offers customers the chance to brush Sansin onto wood right in the store, providing firsthand experience with the product before purchasing.

Margotta Neary urged the use of shelf talkers that take the consumer through an entire project, starting with a discussion of whether the deck needs to be cleaned and sealed and step-by-step instructions for accomplishing that.

“Most people know that they need to protect exterior wood, such as decks, but the time of year to do it is another story,” she said. “Headers, shelf edges and brochures on an end cap during the appropriate time of the year will remind your customers that they need to purchase the deck prep products and undertake the project.”

Meyer stressed the need to listen to customers and respond to their needs. “It is critical to become a resource for information as well having a reputation for selling value. Are the exterior products on your shelf connecting with the green consumer and representing the most advanced system for quality and performance? Consider carrying products that don’t just coat the deck or fence, but connect with the customer’s beliefs, standards and expectation for quality.” ■

Turn Page for Sales Outlook

Sales Outlook: 2012

What will 2012 be like from a sales perspective in the exterior wood stain market? Here are some predictions:

Russell Neale, Cabot: “2012 will be better than 2011—we saw things picking up at the end of last year and mild weather for the first part of this year got us off to a good start. Consumers want to maintain their homes, and they want to use products that will last. As the nation continues its slow recovery from the housing crisis, there will be more opportunities for the category.”

Tracy Pease, PPG Architectural Coatings: “We expect sales to increase as the maintenance cycle is coming around again. We think homeowners are more mindful of performing ongoing maintenance to protect existing decks since they represent a large capital expense if wholesale replacement is required due to long-term neglect. The costs of maintenance are minimal in comparison.”

Steve McGarr, Duckback Products Inc.: “We look for 2012 to be a big year. We feel people let their exterior projects go for a while. Some may think they let it go to the point of no return, but with us introducing Deck & Dock, we believe people will be motivated when they see they can return it to a serviceable life. It’s priced aggressively. We believe the combination of quality and proper pricing will make it a big seller for us.”

Lara Toomin, Benjamin Moore: “We are optimistic for a strong year in 2012 but the reality is that the stain business is tied to the economy and housing market. If people aren’t getting loans to build new decks or redo their houses it impacts our sales. The exterior stain business is also very dependent on the weather. Lots of rain hurts the season, dry season helps. In

spite of some of these odds, we are experiencing a measure of success thanks to a robust product portfolio and focused selling efforts.”

Sjoerd Bos, VP of Sansin: “We’re optimistic for 2012. We’re expanding relationships with new dealers and wood is experiencing a resurgence as a preferred green building material. We see the use of wood growing in 2012, and Sansin is ready to help dealers educate customers on how to have success with wood in new builds or remodels.”

Dave Barnes, SaverSystems Inc.: “There certainly appears to be a move by consumers to higher-performing, higher-priced premium wood stain products, and 2012 should continue to see good growth in this area. The last two seasons have been challenging for our industry, yet they have been record years for our company. Offering premium-performing products and delivering that message to the consumer has been the key. We fully expect double-digit growth with the category again in 2012.

Mike Kozlowski, Thompson’s Water Seal Brand: “We have a positive outlook for 2012, in part because of pent-up demand from 2011. If you thought weather patterns were abnormal last year, you are right, and much of it kept consumers from undertaking outdoor projects. The Thompson’s® Water Seal® brand will deliver unequalled marketing support throughout the season to drive projects, from our Niagara Falls commercial on national television to very generous rebates on the majority of our product line, and a consumer sweepstakes with a prize valued at \$15,000.”

Ned Matteson, kathy ireland Design Surfaces™ by GG Innovative Products Inc.: “Although our economy may be slowed, it doesn’t mean that wood stains and wood sealers will

be slow in 2012. Remodel-type projects are doing very well, and the maintenance of existing decks or fences is still necessary. Consumers recognize that they don’t want to let their existing decks and fences deteriorate under the power of the sun, so they will still be purchasing fence and deck care products.”

Ron Boyajian, California Products: “Over the past four years, we have grown our stain business about 25 percent. To stay even would have been good. To grow defies logic. We’re opening new dealers, spreading out geographically. We’re in a really, really good position. Mike Gramke, the new president of Storm Stain and California Performance Brand, is going to be responsible for spreading Storm Stain throughout the country. The company is very interested in moving forward and growing aggressively. There will be a commitment from everyone, from the top on down.”

Michele Margotta Neary, United Gilsonite Laboratories: “The sales outlook for the exterior wood stains and deck care products is very strong for 2012. Curb appeal is everything, if you are selling your house or just looking for a little improvement, decks and siding will remain on the top of the to do list. The ZAR Exterior Stain line has been gradually gaining market share over other competitors and will continue to be a strong player in the category.”

Andrew Meyer, Vermont Coatings: “We expect to see sales growth in the coming year for exterior finishes and stains which give the homeowner or builder the sense of adding value to an investment, project or home, while meeting the consumer’s desire for safety. Overall we are seeing consumers and builders more engaged in doing research about the products they are buying. We are also seeing more and more contractors embracing the new developments in the finish market and trying innovative alternatives, in response to their customers’ desire for safety, and in an effort to diversify their own businesses.” ■