

# RISE

*to the*

# OCCASION

*Florida paint firm bucks down cycle by emphasizing customer relationships, quality, expertise*

Asked to pose for a portrait, Jim Brown was adamant that a staff photo be used instead. “They’re the key to our success,” says the owner and CEO of J.B. Painting & Waterproofing. “I’m just the guy steering the boat.”

The fishing metaphor will come as no surprise to Brown’s customers. Though he grew up in the farm country of Indiana, Brown moved to southern Florida in 1979 so he could pursue his livelihood (exterior painting) and his favorite after-work diversion (fishing) all year long. His first Florida job was painting a high-rise by himself from a one-man cage.



*“J.B. Painting is successful not because of individuals, but because we’re a team,” says owner Jim Brown (center row, light blue shirt). He plans to set up an ESOP so the company will be employee-owned when he retires.*



**J.B. Painting &  
Waterproofing,  
Inc.**

Deerfield Park, Fla.  
Founded 1965  
About 100 employees

**BUSINESS MIX:**  
70% residential repaint  
20% commercial  
10% industrial

**WEBSITE:**  
[www.jbpaint.com](http://www.jbpaint.com)

  
*Nine Island  
Avenue*



Soon after, he took a position with a painter named Don Gagnon and eventually took over the company when Gagnon retired in 1992.

Today, J.B. is one of the Southeast's largest painting and waterproofing companies, employing more than 100 painters. With its headquarters in Deerfield Beach, and offices in Vero Beach, Tampa/St. Petersburg, and Atlanta, the firm bids on jobs all over the state of Florida and has done work in 17 other states.

High-rise and mid-rise condominium repaint work accounts for around 70 percent of sales. About 20 percent is in commercial work – hotels, hospitals, office buildings and shopping centers. The mix is no accident. Though the company did its share of new residential construction while Boca Raton was building up, Brown decided early on a different focus for his company.

"In new construction, you're always the last one paid and hoping there's enough money left to pay you fairly," he explains. "Plus, this segment really fluctuates with the economy." Condo repaints are less susceptible to these cycles, though even that market is facing challenges these days.

"This is the first time I have seen it this bad in 30 years," Brown says. "We face a 'downtime' economy

where people are afraid to spend money to maintain their properties. It's tough for everybody, but we try to work with our customers to accommodate their needs because proper maintenance is critical."

Companies like J.B. are getting competition from new res painters entering the market. Brown's first line of defense is his sales force, which now more than ever must remind customers of the quality, experience and peace of mind that his company provides.

"You just have to work harder and make sure that you have face-to-face communication with customers on a regular basis," he says. "In tough times, customers want to know they can trust you. They also need to know that you are licensed and insured, especially for Workers' Compensation. Many people fall victim to the 'low bid' temptation during times like these, then find out everyone on the job is subcontracted, maybe lacks the necessary experience, and are either uninsured or so under-licensed that if an incident or problems occur, they have no recourse."



*To ensure a long-lasting finish at the Nine Island Avenue high-rise condominium (above center and page 25), J.B. Painting chose a two-coat system of Loxon Masonry Primer and Coating. A final topcoat of SuperPaint Exterior Latex Satin provided the sheen the client wanted. Commercial projects include the Acapulco Hotel and Resort (above left) and the Plaza Resort and Spa (above right), both in Daytona Beach.*



Quality work requires quality coatings, Brown says. “We insist on top-of-the-line products to give superior service and establish a customer base that you can rely on for years to come.” That’s one reason he chooses Sherwin-Williams. Customer service and an extensive store network are two others.

“Sherwin-Williams is everywhere,” he says. “No matter where our jobs are, they know us, and our pricing structure is the same everywhere we go. They bring us leads on jobs, and we do the same for them. Sherwin-Williams is part of our successful team.” **PPC**

## Painter to Painter

CEO James Brown and COO Randy Pierce answer our questions about managing their business.

### What’s the best business advice you have received over the years?

That it’s important to do whatever you can to make the customer happy. Word of mouth means everything to a company. I have always stressed to my employees that you get more work with satisfied customers – not only do they want you back when it’s time to repaint, but they tell their colleagues and friends about their positive experience working with you.

### Word-of-mouth referrals are key for J.B., but do you do anything else to market your company?

We advertise in Condo Management magazine and the Florida Journal Community Association Magazine. We pay for bold listings in the Yellow Pages. Display booths at trade shows for condos, hospitals, shopping centers and office buildings keep our name out there. Our company supports golf tournaments and

contributes to a number of charitable causes sponsored by or involving our customers. We started a company website 10 years ago and recently revamped it.

