



# Writing *his own* Ticket

**“WE WROTE THE BOOK ON HOUSE PAINTING!” MANY MAY MAKE THAT CLAIM, BUT IN THIS CASE, YOU CAN TAKE THE MEANING LITERALLY.**

Fresh out of high school in 1978, Terry Begue started a residential painting company in the village of Hartville, near Akron, Ohio. Three decades later he is relaying what he has learned in a book called *The Wealthy House Painter's Guide To Having It All*. He's also started a consulting business ([yourhousepaintingbusiness.com](http://yourhousepaintingbusiness.com)) to help other "success-driven painters lead better lives." He shares some insights from a lifetime of painting.

**You credit your success to your "house-a-day" system, in which you work in the field just seven months a year with a small crew of two to three painters. How did you settle on those numbers?** Because of my system, two or three people are all that's needed to start and finish most of the homes we paint in one day. We only work

on exteriors, and seven months is about all the time the weather here in Northeast Ohio allows for painting outdoors.

**Why not do other kinds of painting in the winter?** We stay focused on the type of painting that provides our highest margins and best cash flow. After years of trial and error, I've discovered



Terry Degue and his crew prefer Duration for aluminum siding and WoodScapes for cedar siding.



exterior residential repaints works best for my business. We concentrate on refinishing aluminum and cedar-sided homes, working directly for the homeowner. I've built my entire business around using an airless sprayer every day. Those two types of siding spray the best. I've found the Titan 440 to be the best pump on the market for the money. No other sprayer holds up to our demanding schedule day after day. We're able to maintain the highest quality standards while still turning jobs over very quickly.

We work almost exclusively for homeowners because they're quick to pay after they see how great their home looks. My crew looks forward to taking off in the winter months. After all, we push pretty hard during the summer. Plus, I enjoy writing and spending the off-season helping others with their painting businesses.

**How do you manage to paint a house a day?** The key is spraying. Next, it's about having proven systems in place and specialized roles and routines for each crew

member. The same two to three people handle scraping, priming, masking and covering day in and day out. The supervisor is the most experienced person on the job. He oversees everything, as well as handling all the spraying and helps with covering and cleanup. When the same people do the same thing over and over each day, you get pretty good at it, and pretty fast, too.

Another big part of my success has been aligning with a paint supplier who shares my passion for success. Not knowing who to turn to when I started my business, I asked the people at my Sherwin-Williams store for advice. They answered my questions, and if they didn't know, they found out and got back to me. My rep answers the tough questions for me and has even come out to job sites to help me calculate how much paint I needed. Even better, he offered expert advice on applying it. So I never worry about costly bidding errors. It's like having a personal team of experts on my side.

It's important for customers to know that you use the best

paint available. I've found satin finish Duration for aluminum and WoodScapes for cedar siding works best. No one else offers a better warranty and stands behind it like Sherwin-Williams.

**Is it hard to find enough jobs to keep your crew working at that pace?**

Actually, the only trouble I truly have is finding enough nice, dry days to accommodate all the people who want their home painted. If you subtract Sundays and rainy days, we're left with about 120 days each season to paint here in Ohio. And, we paint about 120 homes each season. My biggest challenge is finding a way to work on only the easiest, highest paying jobs and avoiding ones that don't pay as well without offending homeowners. Some people might not agree with me, but occasionally you need to sidestep some jobs.

**Which jobs do you avoid?** We stay away from houses that slow us down. Since our nice weather days are numbered, we want to

make the most of each one. Older homes not only require a lot of TLC, but there are many new EPA regulations to follow, so we stay away from homes built before 1978. We also avoid homes that require extreme preparation or brush trimming. For these more labor-intensive jobs, I recommend colleagues who are more suited for that type of work.

**What advice do you have for other contractors?**

For starters, don't operate your business with an "I'll let my work speak for itself" attitude. Second, stay upbeat. Enthusiasm is contagious. Third, don't be afraid to tell your prospects why they should hire you and why you're the best choice to paint their home. Finally, work to hone your people skills. It will speed your success faster than improving your painting skills. Remember, when your customer is the homeowner your relationship with them is more personal than business-like. Bottom line: Be nice. People work with people they like and trust - period. **PPC**