

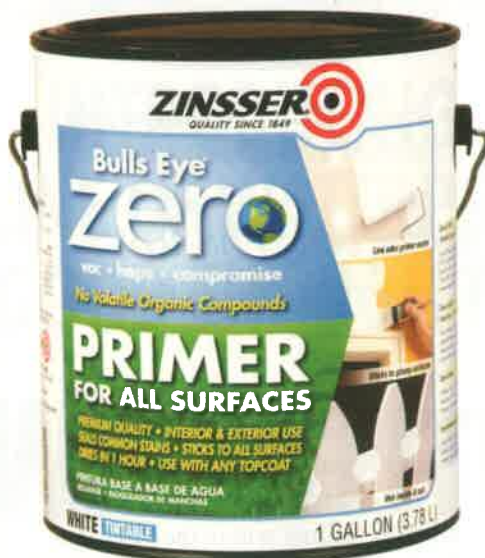
Green From Top to Bottom

Though your customers may not specifically ask for “green” primers, a new study suggests they will purchase green products if available.

The 2009 National Green Buying Research Study from Green Seal revealed that four out of five people are still buying green products, even in the midst of the recession. Half of the 1,000 consumers surveyed said they are buying just as many green products as before the economic downturn, and 19 percent reported they are buying more. Consumers reported that they aren’t really swayed by green claims: Only 9 percent said green advertising is their primary influencer. Instead, they do their homework by reading the packaging (24 percent) and conducting their own research, usually online (17 percent).

It’s a trend that coatings manufacturers have noticed for some time: Consumers are getting savvier about green products and demanding them, even as low- and no-VOC primers are hitting their stride.

“Paints and coatings have been trending green for a couple of decades now,” said Tim O’Reilly, business manager for Zinsser Primer Brands, and Angela Cunningham, category manager of primers, both under the



● **New from Rust-Oleum’s Zinsser brand is Bulls Eye Zero™.**

Rust-Oleum Corp. umbrella. “Initially these efforts were driven by air-quality regulations; however, in recent years other factors have been driving green formulations.

New environmentally friendly primers meet consumer demand

“The creation of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) credits by the Green Building Council, with monetary benefits back to general contractors, has spiked the interest and use of green coatings. Additionally, consumer awareness of air quality and avoidance of harmful

chemicals has given rise to the ‘consumerization’ of green coating formulas,” they said.

Rust-Oleum offers several primers that meet green-building standards under the Zinsser label, including Bulls Eye 1-2-3®, Bulls Eye Water-Base®, Cover Stain Water-Base® and Gardz®.

Consumer awareness and appreciation for green primers wasn’t always a slam-dunk. Decades ago, as coatings manufacturers first started lowering VOCs, consumer confidence in the resulting primers also was low.

The earliest low-VOC primers were a compromise from their higher VOC counterparts, said Ron Boyajian, product marketing manager for California Paints. Yes, they were better for the environment, but their performance in many aspects wasn’t on par with that of conventional products.

As the technology has improved, however, the pendulum has swung the other way. R&D advances in resins and raw materials in general as well as entire colorant systems have led to primers that not only are low- or even

no-VOC but also have excellent hide, durability, adhesion and moisture resistance.

"The coatings are superior even to conventional products," Boyajian said. What's more, consumers have proven green primers for themselves, which has buoyed demand. "Consumer awareness is growing—absolutely," he added.

Jeff Spillane, senior marketing manager for Benjamin Moore & Co., agreed that yesteryear's primers were not the same quality as those today. For instance, low-VOC products took a longer time to cure. But as new and improved primers moved into the market, consumers proved for themselves



● The low-VOC ELEMENTS line from California Paints includes primers.

"We made a commitment to go as low as we could on VOCs, everywhere we could."

that the products worked, and demand picked up.

Spillane said the auto industry is going through the same demand cycle even now. "Look at the Toyota Prius. Many consumers think it's not as good as a Camry. It may be better for the environment, but does it have the get up and go? Will the battery work? These are questions people ask," Spillane said, suggesting that these products, too, will have to be tested and proven by consumers.

Primers are further ahead in the cycle, to the point that some are popular specifically for their green properties.

Pittsburgh Paints has an entire line of Seal Grip primers with two products that feature VOCs of less than 100 grams per liter. They include the company's best-selling interior/exterior Seal Grip 100% Acrylic Universal Primer/Sealer and the latex interior Seal Grip Enamel Undercoater. Certain green features contribute to the first product's popularity, such as its low odor, and "make it an ideal whole house primer for residential and commercial applications," said Lauren

Moore, product manager for the Residential Repaint Segment.

The company additionally has a no-VOC primer within the PPG Pure Performance line, which has been a category leader since it was introduced in 2001.

"With Pure Performance, you don't have to sacrifice quality for being green, as the paint also features superior adhesion, excellent enamel hold-out, low spatter, moisture resistance and a fast drying time," Moore said. "Using Pure Performance lets you paint today and occupy the room tonight."

The demand for green primers also is growing with professional customers—especially those who in sensitive settings such as hospitals and schools. As a result, one system that is gaining for Insl-X is NO4000 Odorless Alkyd Stain Killer. The product uses a special resin technology that allows for solvents that are virtually stripped of objectionable odors.

According to Insl-X, as every year goes by, more painting professionals are gravitating toward "go-to" prod-

ucts like NO4000 that they can trust and that meet their expectations.

How Low Can You Go?

Producing top-performing green primers is no easy feat, although their proliferation on the market would make you think otherwise.

Among the newer primers are two from XIM Products Inc. Dick Hardy, president, said one challenge primer manufacturers faced, as VOC limits went lower and lower, was maintaining the product's stability in extreme temperatures without adding traditional levels of propylene glycol. XIM answered the challenge with Peel Bond®, a high-build water-based bonding primer-sealer, and Trim Magic™, introduced last year.

Peel Bond has a VOC content of less than 100 grams per liter and is designed to bond to and fill in rough, profiled surfaces. Trim Magic is an extension of the Peel Bond family of products and has an even thicker, 50-percent higher solids content. Both products "use newer technology to allow the latex polymer to have freeze-thaw stability while still being low in VOCs," Hardy said.

California Paints, meanwhile, has several new green products, including



● Pittsburgh Paints offers SealGrip 100% Acrylic Universal Primer/Sealer.

a new zero-VOC tinting system. The company worked with its colorant supplier in Europe to produce the system, which was launching at press time with



● **Smart Prime is the next generation in primer technology from Zinsser.**

a full range of colors. “When you add conventional colorants to a can of no-VOC paint, it’s no longer no-VOC,” said Boyajian, noting that the tinting system solves this problem.

California Paints additionally has launched two zero-VOC product lines with complementary primers: ELE-

MENTS, a high-end line of premium-performance coatings that includes everything from basecoats to ceiling paint; and ENVIROTECH, a more competitive line with the same broad product offering. According to Boyajian, primers in the two lines are durable, don’t compromise on adhesion and offer better scrubability and moisture resistance than their more conventional counterparts. “They’re almost bullet-proof,” he said.

California Paints has pulled out the stops in merchandising the environmental friendliness of the lines. ELEMENTS, for example, features a green-driven slogan—“The greener alternative in paint for your homes”—as well as an image of a tropical tree frog that Boyajian has nicknamed “Rebate,” as a play on words for “rib-bit.”

ELEMENTS already is doing well, said Boyajian who gives credit to his independent dealers in guiding customers through the initial sales. “We

have a dealer who actually took Rebate and had a decal made that he put on the front and back of his delivery vehicle. This is a guy who took the product line and was so sold on it ... he was raving about it,” he said.

Boyajian noted that with these three introductions, California Paints jumped



● **Masterchem offers KILZ Clean Start™ with zero VOCs.**

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