

Paint Primers: Providing a Solid Foundation

Any successful project—from constructing a building to painting one—starts with a solid foundation. That’s what paint primers offer: a solid foundation. A good primer will do a number of things: promote adhesion, enhance the hiding power of the topcoat and, in some instances, prevent stains or odors from making their way back to the surface.

While there are already many paint primers on the market, new ones continue to be introduced, which prompts the question: Does the world really need all of these paint primers? Of course, the manufacturers introducing them would say, “Yes.” There are many different paint applications requiring many different types of primers. There also are universal primers that meet varying conditions on a given project.

Cindy J. Mansfield, brand manager for ICI’s Devoc Paint line, reported that more and more people are beginning to understand the importance of primers. “We’ve seen them grow in market share,” she reported. “I think people have become much more savvy about their painting products and know that primers help make the project look better and last longer.”

Nonetheless, there is still a need to spread the word about the importance of priming, according to Jason Long, brand manager for Masterchem. “On the consumer side, and to a lesser extent with pro painters, the big challenge is education



● Zinsser offers a complete line of paint primers.

on why and when to prime,” he said. According to Long, Masterchem recognizes that the majority of consumers aren’t priming before they paint. Because of this, the company has planned a major marketing communication effort for 2007 that will focus on building the need and desire to prime before painting.

Masterchem also is pursuing the goal of increasing the use of primers with the introduction of the Kilz Premium All-in-One Primer & Applicator. The product comes in a small tube with a built-in applicator, thus eliminating the need for a brush or a roller and making it ideal for covering small stains or water markers. The product is merchandised on clip-strips for easy cross-

● Kilz All-In-One Primer and Applicator makes priming easy and convenient.



merchandising opportunities in the paint department, the patch and repair aisle, etc., helping to expose the product to customers who might otherwise not be in the market for primers.

Water-Based Demand

One of the major trends driving the introduction of new paint primers is the growing demand for water-based formulations. “Trends are toward water-based products due to convenience and continued VOC regulations,” said Long.

“Water-base technology as a replacement for oil-base technology continues to be a focus, particularly in performance primers,” concurred Tim O’Reilly, Business Manager for Primers and Clear Finishes at Zinsser Co. “Quick-curing adhesion and stain sealing in disaster restoration environments—even sealing soot from candles in the home—has traditionally been the territory of oil and shellac-base primers. Our expertise in understanding why oil



● **The high-build characteristics of Peel Bond helped fill and level the uneven surface of this redwood shingle home.**

and shellac-base primers perform in severe circumstances has helped us to advance water-base primer technology to address these challenges. We will be demonstrating these advancements within the next year.”

O’Reilly added that Zinsser has devoted considerable resources to improving its water-based technology so that it will meet the performance standards associated with traditional solvent-based coatings. “We have spent a great deal of time over the last year working with air quality regulators to ensure we can continue to offer specialty products with unique performance to support professional trades and DIY enthusiasts,” he said, noting that the company is working toward preserving access to its solvent-base primers for specialty applications as well as the availability of B-I-N, the company’s unique shellac-based primer-sealer.

In addition, O’Reilly reported that Zinsser is moving its Bulls Eye Odorless to a single national 350-VOC formula. “This is a premium product with a unique formula where we use pure odorless solvent, and professionals can tell,” he said. “Sales have been climbing nicely since it was introduced.”

According to O’Reilly, Zinsser is the first to launch a 350-VOC odorless solvent formula, which has an advantage over traditional 450-VOC formulas in that it is truly sprayable. “Some products could be made sprayable by adding hotter solvents, but adding solvents that smell eliminates the value of an odorless primer,” O’Reilly pointed out.

The rising demand for low-VOC

products is one of the driving forces behind the introduction of a new paint primer from XIM Products Inc.—a specialty bonding primer called Peel Bond™, which has become the primer of choice for repainting the interior block and cement walls at Alcatraz.

“Peel Bond is a low-VOC (less than 100 g/l) water-based primer that dries to a hazy clear,” said XIM President Richard Hardy. “One of its main attributes is that it is very high-building and can bridge and fill rough surfaces. It is used by contractors to reduce their labor and improve the appearance of the painted surface by filling and leveling the surface before painting.”

According to Hardy, Peel Bond can be applied up to 30 mils wet in one application without sagging. “It is white during application and dries to a hazy clear. Therefore, it tells the painter when it is ready to paint.”

Peel Bond has a variety of uses, including old home restoration, multi-family housing units, repaint, commercial repaint, government housing repainting and more. “Al-

though still a niche product, the XIM Peel Bond is a primer that can really help the painter save time, save labor, turn the job quicker and improve his profits,” Hardy said.

Concurring with other manufacturers, Hardy observed that primer formulations continue to evolve largely because of continuing governmental pressure to lower the solvent content of paints and coatings. “At one time, it was thought that water-based coatings would be the answer to lower VOC requirements. However, the VOC rule limits are now pushing so low that paint manufacturers are forced to consider reducing or removing the anti-freeze solvent added to water-based coatings to stabilize the coatings in freeze/thaw situations. This is forcing paint manufacturers to look at non-traditional ways to stabilize the latex polymers. These efforts affect those manufacturers of water-based primers as well.”

Tom Dougherty, marketing manager for Pittsburgh Paints, noted that environmental regulations are having just as much impact on paint primers as they are on other paints and coatings. “The key is to offer a product line with the kind of performance that consumers are used to under these increasingly restrictive VOC regulations,” he said.

Pittsburgh Paints’ already has introduced stain-blocking and universal primers under its Seal Grip brand that meet the most stringent regulations as set forth by the Ozone Transport Commission (OTC) in the Northeast, the South



● From Devco Paint: Kilstain-WB primer.