

Increasing Sales for DIY and Residential Re-Paint Customers through Colour-Experts at Sherwin-Williams

for
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Abstract

Sherwin-Williams is a multi-billion-dollar company that specializes in paints and finishes. Four years ago, the company introduced the Colour-Expert position to Canada to provide colour consultations to customers. Since implementation, the service has not gained enough recognition. This service can increase sales for DIY and residential repaint customers. This report explores areas for improvement in order to increase sales for these two target markets. Opinions from store managers, sales reps and Colour-Experts were collected through surveys. Comparison between the American and Canadian positions was conducted along with a comparison with Sherwin-Williams' top competitor, Benjamin Moore. With the data collected from surveys conducted, five recommendations have been suggested. The results from the four surveys conducted suggest the main areas for improvement are training, availability and advertising.

The five recommendations are:

1. Improve training for the Colour-Experts
2. Set hours for Colour-Experts to work
3. Increase media advertisements
4. Website refresh
5. Offer incentives to customers

Introduction

Sherwin-Williams is a Fortune 500 company that was founded in 1866 in Ohio. It has grown immensely since its founding and is a leader in the paint and building industry. They develop paints and finishes for small household projects all the way to aviation. Over the years, Sherwin-Williams has acquired many companies including; Purdy, Valspar and Minwax. They have grown from a small company into one that has over 60,000 employees and over 4900 stores in 100 countries. Sherwin-Williams introduced the Colour-Expert position into Canada in 2015 yet not many people know about the colour consultation service they provide. The problem boils down to three main areas; advertising, training and availability.

What is the present problem?

Colour Experts have been in Canadian Sherwin-Williams stores for four years now. The service is wildly popular in the United States of America however, is not utilized to its fullest potential in Canada. The problem is that Sherwin-Williams needs this position in order to remain competitive with its top competitor, Benjamin-Moore. Currently, not enough customers are using the service and the employees in this position are not being used to their fullest potential.

What is the purpose of this report?

This report aims to propose suggestions that will increase sales for DIY and Residential Repaint customers through the Colour-Expert position. This report targets these two target markets because they are the only two who will use the service. Additionally, the Colour-Expert position can make Sherwin-Williams more competitive with Benjamin-Moore by implementing these suggestions.

What data sources are used in this report?

This report has primary and secondary data. Primary data includes surveys from Colour-Experts, sales reps and managers. Secondary data includes research on competing companies such as Benjamin Moore.

Scope of this inquiry

The scope of this inquiry will be to assess the possibility of finding solutions to increase sales through the Colour-Expert position.

Data Section

Surveys Conducted

In order to get a better understanding of the position, four surveys were conducted:

- Survey for Store Managers
- Survey for Sales Reps
- Survey for Colour-Experts
- Survey for American Colour-Experts

Survey Results from Store Managers

This is a survey to collect primary data from all the lower mainland managers who have a Colour-Expert in their store to receive their feedback on the service. In order to make insightful recommendations to increase sales, managers were asked questions on:

- Number of consultations per week
- Training by Sherwin-Williams
- Sales after consultations
- Incentives to buy paint
- Advertising
- Strengths and weaknesses of the position

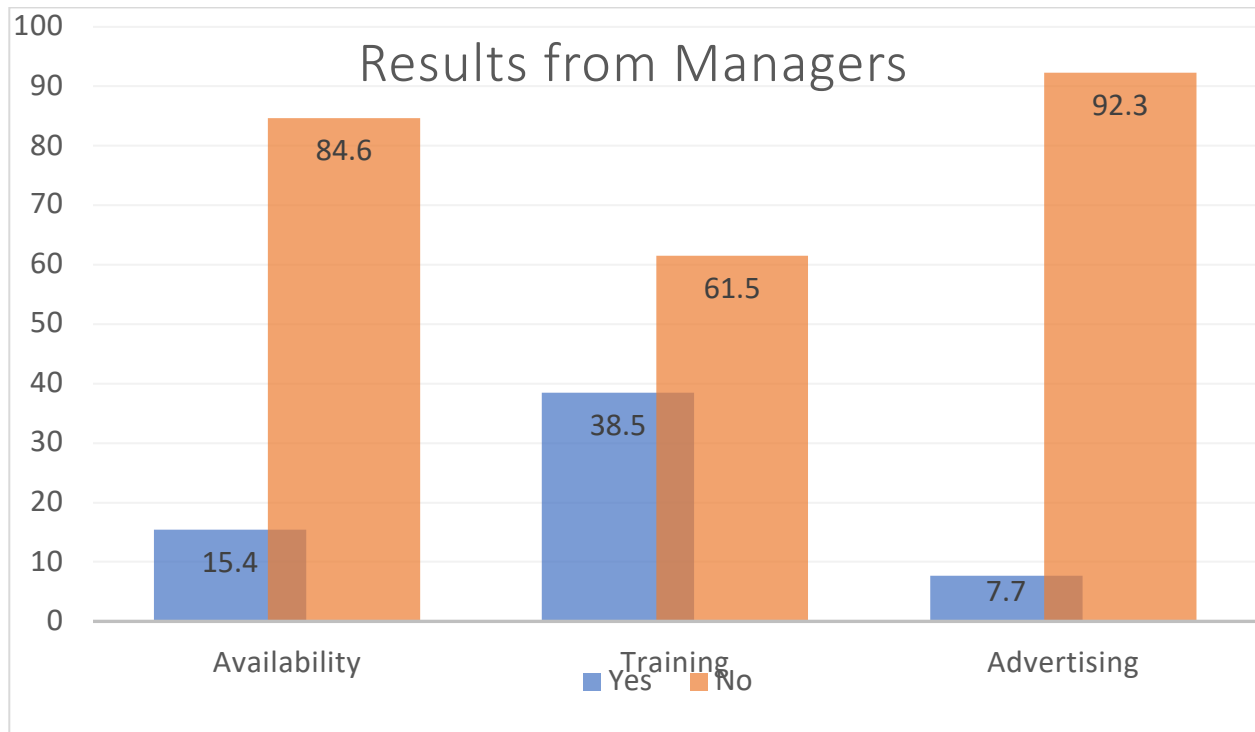


Figure 1. Managers opinions on whether or not there is enough availability, training and advertising for the service.

According to the survey results, the majority of managers (84.6%) believe that there is not enough availability for Colour-Experts to help customers since they are part-time. Additionally, fig. 1 shows that only 38.5% of managers think Colour-Experts have the appropriate training to fulfill their role. Lastly, 92.3% of managers say there is not enough advertising for the service.

Survey Results from Sales Reps

This is a survey to collect primary data from all the sales reps in the lower mainland to incorporate the service into their business. Reps work directly with residential repaint contractors which gives them a good idea how the service is used. Participants were asked:

- If they have ever recommended the service
- If the service is beneficial for themselves (reps)
- Feedback on the position/their opinion
- If a consultation has contributed to a client's choice to go with SW paints
- The effectiveness of the service

After analyzing the results of the surveys, the common results are that the Colour-Experts are a good idea, but the execution of the position could be better.

Advantages of the position from sales reps' perspective. Sales reps at Sherwin-Williams say that Colour-Experts are beneficial to the client. Having a trained expert can help clients reach a decision and make them feel more confident about that decision. Moreover, in some instances, offering the free colour consultation helps to close the sale. Other brands, like Benjamin Moore, have design consultants who charge over \$100 for the same service. Since Sherwin-Williams' service is free, sales reps believe it helps the company remain competitive with other brands.

Drawbacks of the position from sales reps' perspective. Colour-Experts are part-time, arranging times to meet with clients can be challenging. Canadian Colour-Experts are store employees, clients want someone who visits sites directly. Eighty-one percent of reps believe they are confident enough in their own abilities when recommending colours to clients therefore they do not see a purpose to the position. While 57% of the surveyed Colour-Experts have attended a design program, more training with Sherwin-Williams will benefit the service as recommending paint is a different skillset. Lastly, only 6% of surveyed sales reps have seen advertising for the service which means most clients know about the service through word of mouth.

Survey Results from Colour-Experts

These are surveys to collect primary data to understand the Colour-Experts' perspective. Again, the three main areas for improvement are advertising, training and availability. Questions in the survey ask about:

- Number of consultations per week
- Previous design experience
- Training by Sherwin-Williams
- Sales after consultations
- Incentives to buy paint
- Confidence in the position
- Advertising
- Opportunity to fulfill role

- Strengths and weaknesses of the position

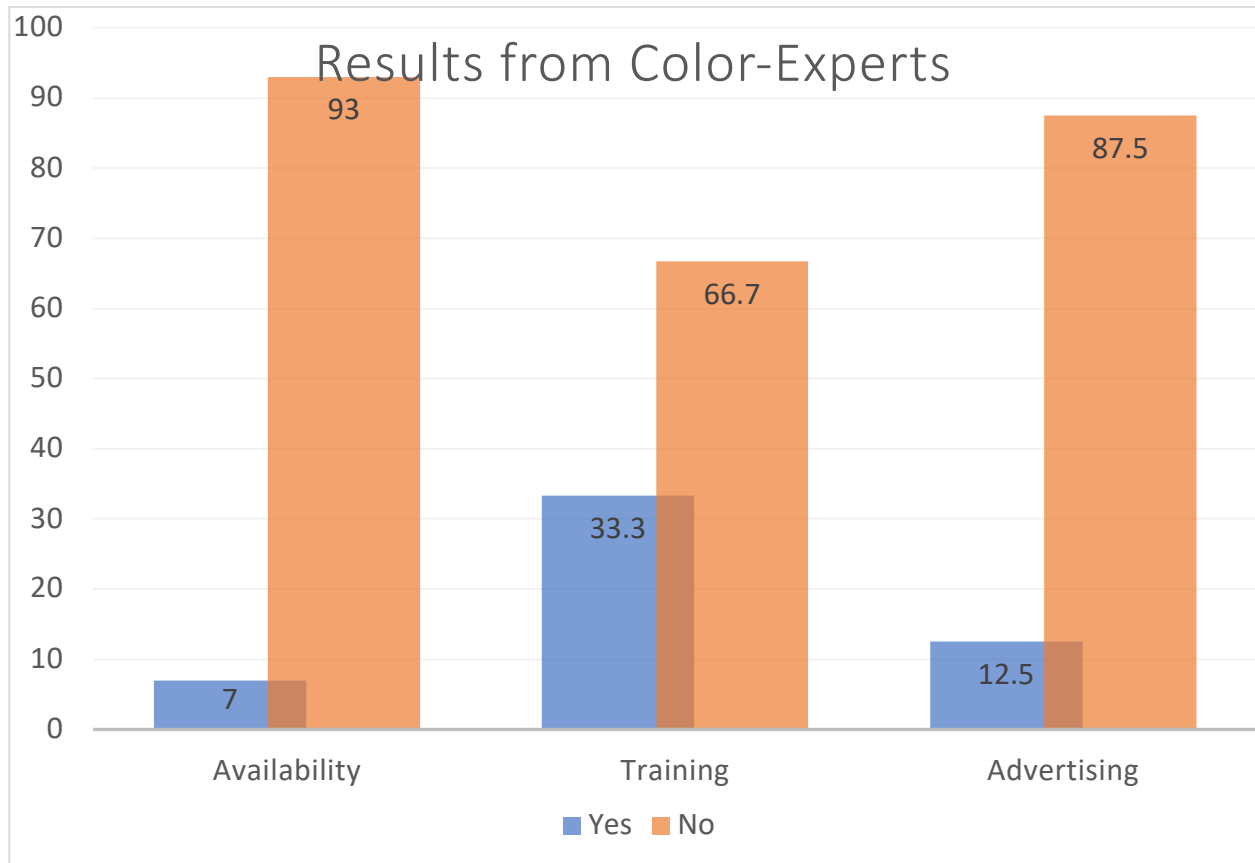


Figure 2. Colour-Experts answers to whether or not there is enough availability, training and advertising for the service.

Figure 2 shows that 93% of colour experts do not think there is enough availability for the service. On average, each expert performs 4 colour consultations per week. Secondly, 66.7% of Colour-Experts desire more training prior to going into their roles. Lastly, 87.5% see an opportunity for advertising to be increased for the service.

Canadian Colour-Experts vs American Colour-Experts

American Colour-Expert position is very successful, but Canada is falling behind. After asking American colour-experts the same questions as the Canadians, the main differences are:

Canadian	American
Part-time	Part-time
Work in store	Work remotely
Prioritize sales associate duties	Colour-Expert duties only
No incentives for customers	Offer coupons and samples after consultation
Little awareness/advertising	High awareness and advertising

Figure 3. Differences and similarities between American and Canadian Colour-Experts

Figure 3. shows that Sherwin-Williams has different requirements for the positions in Canada and the states. Americans have success because they work remotely and go to jobsites, they are only required to fulfill Colour-Expert duties, incentives are offered after consultation and there is advertising for the service.

Benjamin Moore vs Sherwin-Williams

Sherwin-Williams offers a free colour consultation service. Benjamin Moore offers a similar service for \$150+ (Benjamin Moore Vancouver, 2019). The cost of BM’s service gives the impression of professionalism. Both companies hire professional designers. Booking is accessible for everyone as booking can be done online, SW does not have these capabilities yet.

Vancouver Colour Consultant K COLOUR

www.kcolour.com/ ▼

Vancouver **colour consultant**, Kora Sevier, specializes in interior and exterior **colour consultations** for residential and commercial clients as well as strata ...

Benjamin Moore Vancouver | Studio -Design & Colour Experts

www.benjaminmoorevan.com/studio/ ▼

Paint And Design Studio. Our designers & consultants are highly skilled and professionally trained in **colour** and design. ... With a degree in interior design and fine arts background, Lea joined Studio Design 7 years ago.

Heritage House Colours Consultation for Vancouver Homes

<https://www.warlinepainting.ca> > Services ▼

When you hire us, we will provide you with a complimentary heritage **colour consultation** to help with your interior decorating and painting project.

17 Things Color Consultants Want You to Know - Houzz

<https://www.houzz.com/ideabooks/.../17-things-color-consultants-want-you-to-know> ▼

Jan 30, 2013 - Debra Kling **Colour Consultant**. You'll be participating. "Color consulting with my clients is always a very collaborative process," says color ...

Colour Consultation - Stages of Life Design

<https://stagesoflifedesign.ca/services/colour-consultation/> ▼

Figure 4. Search results for “colour consultation” on google.

Benjamin Moore is the second search result when “colour consultation” is searched on google while Sherwin-Williams is not in the top five search results. There is no internet presence of the service.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

Increasing sales for DIY and Residential Repaint Customers through the Colour-Expert positions requires increased availability, improved training and increased advertising. This service has great potential to increase sales for Sherwin-Williams. Managers, Colour-Experts and Sales Reps all agree that the position is a good idea, but improvements are required in order for the company to benefit as a whole.

Surprisingly, the Canadian and American Colour-Experts have different roles and responsibilities. Implementing the American strategies to the Canadian side could increase sales. Benjamin Moore provides the same service at a cost.

Interpretation of Findings

The Colour-Expert position offers great opportunity for Sherwin-Williams to increase Sales for DIY and residential repaint customers. In order to remain competitive with Benjamin Moore, Sherwin-Williams needs to add improvements to these three areas:

- Colour-Expert availability
- Colour-Expert training
- Advertisements for the service

Recommendations

If increasing sales through the Colour-Expert position for residential repaint and DIY customers is desired, consider these suggestions:

1. Improve training for the Colour-Experts
 - a. Complete training in colour psychology and hire a professional interior designer to outline training standards for the position. Increasing training will make the service more professional which encourage customers to come to SW.
2. Set hours for Colour-Experts to work
 - a. Having designated times that colour experts work will create consistency and allow customers to book consultations far in advance. Booking consultations in advance will increase the number of consultations, therefore increasing sales.
3. Increase media advertisements

- a. Recently, Sherwin-Williams has invested more into advertisement but no advertisements for this service have been made. Advertisements can be done through; email, commercials, displays in stores, etc. Mentioning the free colour consultation service will drive more business to the store.
4. Website refresh
 - a. Add colour consultation to the website. Creating a page where customers can find which is the closest store that has a Colour-Expert will give the service an online presence and make it easier for customers to book a consultation.
5. Incentives
 - a. Provide customers with incentives to purchase paint after a consultation. American Colour-Experts offer coupons to customers after a consultation to increase sales. Adding incentives will encourage customers to buy paint from Sherwin-Williams rather than competitors

Works Cited

“Interior Designers & Colour Consultants: Benjamin Moore Vancouver.” *Interior Designers & Colour Consultants | Benjamin Moore Vancouver*, <https://www.benjaminmoorevan.com/design-studio>.

Appendix – Survey Questions

Colour-Expert Manager Survey

I am an undergraduate student at UBC conducting a research project for my technical writing course. The purpose of this survey is to obtain primary data for an analysis and investigation that aims to provide recommendations to grow sales through the Colour-Expert position at Sherwin-Williams. The final formal report will be addressed to Laura Libetore, the Sherwin-Williams District Manager for Metro Vancouver. In addition to online research of competitors, the data collected in this survey will help provide suggestions on how Sherwin-Williams can increase sales through the colour expert position. The survey contains 9 multiple-choice and short answer questions, and it should take no more than 5 minutes. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. Thank you, I appreciate your time in participating in this survey.

1. How useful have colour experts been in your store?
 - a. Extremely Useful
 - b. Very useful
 - c. Somewhat useful
 - d. Not so useful
 - e. Not useful at all
2. Have sale increased since having a colour expert?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Is the training provided by Sherwin-Williams effective?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other:
4. Is their role significantly different from a regular sales associate? Please explain
5. On average, how many colour consultations do they do per week?
6. How much advertising is there for the service? Are customers aware of the service?

7. How often do customers buy paint after their consultation?
 - a. Always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Never
8. What are the pros and cons of the service?
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

American Colour Expert Survey

I am an undergraduate student at UBC conducting a research project for my technical writing course. The purpose of this survey is to obtain primary data for an analysis and investigation that aims to provide recommendations to grow sales through the Colour-Expert position at Sherwin-Williams. The final formal report will be addressed to Laura Libetore, the Sherwin-Williams District Manager for Metro Vancouver. In addition to online research of competitors, the data collected in this survey will help provide suggestions on how Sherwin-Williams can increase sales through the colour expert position. The survey contains 10 multiple-choice and short answer questions, and it should take no more than 5 minutes. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. Thank you, I appreciate your time in participating in this survey

1. Are you part time or full time?
 - a. Full time
 - b. Part time
2. How long have you been a colour expert?
3. On average, how many colour consultations do you do a week?
4. Have you attended a design program in the past? If yes, what type?
5. What kind of training did you receive from Sherwin-Williams for your role as a colour-expert?
6. How often do customers buy paint from SW after their consultation?
 - a. Always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Never
7. What incentives does Sherwin-Williams offer to customers?

8. In your roles as a Colour-Expert, what do you do on a day to day basis? (i.e. What's your daily schedule like)
9. What kind of advertising is there for colour consultations?
10. Please elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of the colour expert program. What is Sherwin-Williams doing well and what areas do they need to improve on?

Canadian Colour Expert Survey

I am an undergraduate student at UBC conducting a research project for my technical writing course. The purpose of this survey is to obtain primary data for an analysis and investigation that aims to provide recommendations to grow sales through the Colour-Expert position at Sherwin-Williams. The final formal report will be addressed to Laura Libetore, the Sherwin-Williams District Manager for Metro Vancouver. In addition to online research of competitors, the data collected in this survey will help provide suggestions on how Sherwin-Williams can increase sales through the colour expert position. The survey contains 10 multiple-choice and short answer questions, and it should take no more than 5 minutes. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. Thank you, I appreciate your time in participating in this survey

1. Are you part time or full time?
 - a. Full time
 - b. Part time
2. How long have you been a colour expert?
3. On average, how many colour consultations do you do a week?
4. Have you attended a design program in the past? If yes, what type?
5. What kind of training did you receive from Sherwin-Williams for your role as a colour-expert?
6. How often do customers buy paint from SW after their consultation?
 - a. Always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Never
7. What incentives does Sherwin-Williams offer to customers?

8. In your roles as a Colour-Expert, what do you do on a day to day basis? (i.e. What's your daily schedule like)
9. What kind of advertising is there for colour consultations?
10. Please elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of the colour expert program. What is Sherwin-Williams doing well and what areas do they need to improve on?

Sales Rep Survey

I am an undergraduate student at UBC conducting a research project for my technical writing course. The purpose of this survey is to obtain primary data for an analysis and investigation that aims to provide recommendations to grow sales through the Colour-Expert position at Sherwin-Williams. The final formal report will be addressed to Laura Libetore, the Sherwin-Williams District Manager for Metro Vancouver. In addition to online research of competitors, the data collected in this survey will help provide suggestions on how Sherwin-Williams can increase sales through the colour expert position. The survey contains 10 multiple-choice and short answer questions, and it should take no more than 5 minutes. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. Thank you, I appreciate your time in participating in this survey

1. Have you ever recommended a colour expert to any of your clients?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other:
2. How often do you require the assistance of a colour expert when meeting a client?
 - a. Every day
 - b. A few times a week
 - c. About once a week
 - d. A few times a month
 - e. Once a month
 - f. Less than once a month
 - g. Never
 - h. Other:
3. How often clients ask you for colour advice?

- a. Always
 - b. Often
 - c. Sometimes
 - d. Rarely
 - e. Never
4. How confident are you when giving colour advice to your clients?
- a. Extremely confident
 - b. Very confident
 - c. Somewhat confident
 - d. Not so confident
 - e. Not at all confident
5. Would your clients recommend the service to others?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other:
6. Have you recommended colour consultation with one of SW colour experts when meeting with a client?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Other:
7. To your knowledge? Has a client used Sherwin-Williams colour consultations but used another brand afterwards? If so, what was the reason?
8. How would you rate colour expert's ability to help clients?
9. What feedback have you received from clients regarding colour experts?
10. Please provide feedback on what you think colour experts could improve on and what they are doing well at