

We Painted a Baby

Yeah, that's right. This is a true story that actually happened. Let me give you a little background and then tell you about the time that we actually painted a baby!

Think about the last time you hired a company to do any kind of work for you. In doing so you probably saw, read and checked out one of their shiny marketing brochures. These brochures paint a picture of that company being 100% perfect. They do so by showing amazing customer feedback, stories, experiences and pictures. These materials are meant to build your confidence in the company so you will hire them. Have you ever read through one of these brochures and asked yourself: "Has any project ever gone wrong?" or "There has to be an unhappy customer somewhere!"

We believe that a phenomenal project is the expectation and it's very easy to take ownership, accountability and responsibility when the project goes exactly as planned. 5-star reviews and A+ ratings are great and show the best that anyone is capable of. What happens when a project doesn't go exactly as planned? We are all humans and make mistakes at times. We believe that a company truly shines and shows its moral fiber when things don't go as planned. Here at M&E Painting, we take just as much ownership, accountability and responsibility for our mistakes and imperfections as we do our excellent projects and fantastic reviews. Everybody has a "Painted Baby" story, but not everybody will take ownership of that story and use the story as an example of how they step up and serve their customers and their community.

A Bad Day at the Office

Before I begin, let me ask you a question: What is a bad day at the office in your business, profession or career? For example, maybe you deliver mail and a bad day might be you dropping mail in the wrong box, or maybe even losing some mail. If you are a dentist, a bad day for you might look like filling the wrong tooth, maybe even pulling the wrong tooth, ouch! Or maybe you are a loan officer and you find out that your documents are wrong and a loan does not go through on closing day, not good. Whatever it is that you do, there is always a bad day at the office. What is yours?

Now that you have thought about yours, let me share mine. In the painting profession, there is always the potential for things to go wrong, get messed up, and for me to have a less than perfect day. Ideally, we paint the right color on the right house, and do a phenomenal job while staying on schedule. There have been a few occasions that we paint the wrong color on the right house. This is never good, yet, can easily be fixed. There was also this one time where we actually painted the right color but it was on the wrong house. Yes, you read correctly, we actually painted the wrong house. That occurrence was actually my worst, most awful, super bad day at the office. At least until this happened...

Just Another Normal Day

I woke up early on a hot and sunny June morning to start my day. Little did I realize that when I came home that day, I would have a story to share that would leave listeners shocked, baffled, jaws on the floor, concerned, laughing, wondering, wanting to hear more and just plain unclear on how this event even transpired.

My day started normally: Wake up, go to the gym, make breakfast, review and organize my events for the day and leave the house by 7:00 am to go visit painting crews. This particular day, we were working in Windsor and happened to be painting a number of houses on the same street. I met my crew leader, Raul, to go over the daily agenda of what he would be painting with the team. We reviewed that he would be finalizing the trim and the doors of the home we were finishing. I made sure Raul had enough paint left to finish the trim and the doors. Three gallons of Navajo White, check! That is plenty for the trim. One gallon of black, check! That is more than enough for three doors. We were all set.

Raul, the Comedian

By time we finished getting ready for the day, and meeting with our customer, it was 8:15 a.m. I said goodbye to Raul and the painting crew, and before I left Raul approached me as I could see he had something to tell me. "Mateo," he said (Mateo is Matthew in Spanish), "Mateo, do you remember that house we finished up yesterday? Well, I spilled paint all over their new deck and their new patio furniture. I tried to clean it up, but it didn't come up!"

"WHAT," I exclaimed! My eyes got big, and a look of concern waved across my face. Raul could tell that he surprised me and not with the kind of surprise I wanted to hear. Before I could say another word, Raul fell down on the front lawn and let out the biggest, loudest laugh I had ever heard!

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA, gotcha Mateo. You should have seen the look on your face man!"

I almost forgot to mention what a joker and hilarious comedian Raul was. This was typical of him to approach me and, in a very serious face and tone, tell me something went wrong. He would do it in person, text message, over the phone and any way he could think of in order to mess with me. This time was no different than the once per week joke he normally pulled on me. After my heart started beating normally, I said goodbye to Raul and the crew, jumped in my car and headed to the rest of my day.

I had appointments in Fort Collins until the middle of the day, including a bank deposit. I stepped out of the bank and was about to jump in my car, when my phone rang. It was Raul.

Not Funny This Time

“Mateo, Mateo, Mateo, you need to get over here real quick man, things are bad. Mateo, we were painting the door and the customer was there, and the baby was there, and, and..... and..... Mateo, just get here quick man, I don’t know man, Oh man, things are bad, I mean the lady, the baby, the paint, BOOM!”

I could make no sense of what he was saying, but I did know one thing: He was not joking around. Something was very wrong. I asked him to calm down and explain again what happened.

“Mateo, we were painting the door and the customer was standing behind us with her baby watching us paint it and the paint sprayer exploded, and we painted the baby!”

I was speechless. Part of me wanted to ask him if he was joking, but I knew he wasn’t. He already used his joke for the day and never had more than one. Plus, I heard the baby crying in the background so I knew this was for real.

What had happened was this: We were painting for a couple with children in Windsor. The husband worked, and the wife stayed home with the children during the day. We got to know the wife more since she was around during the day when we were painting, and every day she would come and admire the paint job we were doing. On this particular Wednesday, we were painting trim and her doors. There was a door that entered through the back of the garage that Raul was getting ready to spray black. He loaded his paint sprayer with the black paint, stood about a foot away from the door and pulled the trigger. The first thing he didn’t know was that the homeowner was standing five or six feet behind him with her nine-month-old baby girl. The second thing he didn’t know was that the spray gun’s tip was jammed and slightly off-center which, as soon as he pulled the trigger, exploded and splattered paint everywhere except where it was supposed to go.

Moments after he pulled the trigger, everything was covered with black paint. The house, the concrete, the landscape, Raul, all his equipment and tools, as well as the baby!

When I arrived to the house the homeowner was already inside with the baby and cleaning her up in the bath tub. My first question to Raul and to the baby’s mom was, “Is the baby ok, is mom okay, are you and the painters okay?” Thankfully everybody was fine, and nobody was injured from the paint explosion.

Why Share this Story?

So that was a very bad day at the office for me and has by far been the worst I have experienced. Why do I share this story? Why would I want anybody to know about our most embarrassing, shocking and potentially reputation damaging event that has occurred in our many years of business? It’s the truth. Things do not always go

as planned. We make promises and set expectations in business and they do not always happen. This is not intentional. We set out every day as a company to not just meet, but to exceed our customer's expectations. We are passionate and dedicated to exceeding expectations on every project. We are also humans serving humans. We are not perfect; we mess up; get it wrong. Yes, we did it and we take ownership of it. We take ownership when we screw up, just as much as we do when we get it right.

It would not be fair or true to advertise, promote or sell to any potential customer, team member, vendor, or community member that working with us will be 100% perfect 100% of the time. That is setting an expectation that will never be met. We will however, share with you that if things go wrong, our team consists of people who believe in and follow our [M&E Painting Credo](#). If we mess up, whatever that means, we will make it right.

To close, no babies were harmed in the making of this story or the photos you see around town and in ads. The baby we painted is perfectly fine and the customers could not be more pleased with their house. We did end up having a big mess and got every single bit of black paint cleaned up. We also paid to replace all of the clothes that were permanently damaged from the paint as well as sent this nice family to dinner on us as a show of appreciation, understanding, and for their forgiveness of the incident. This mistake allowed M & E Painting to show our customer what we were truly made of, and how we reacted to a situation filled with high stress, emotion and things not going as planned. This mistake allowed us to show, not just what we say we value, but what we actually value and put that into action.

That is our "Painted Baby Story". We are honored to share it with you, and hope that you see the value of how we operate as a company and how we serve our customers, team and community in our successes as well as our mistakes.