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## Product Focus

### Build Your Business With Paints

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by Joel Goobich, i3 Marketing LLC

Of the many art materials that children use, paint is consumed and reordered in the highest frequency. Most schools, preschools, park and recreation centers purchase paints and paint supplies on multiple occasions throughout the year. The estimated annual volume of paints sold for use by children exceeds \$250 million per year. Painting activities are a mainstay of every early childhood education curriculum, and there is no reason to believe that this will not continue far into the future.

#### Teachers are buying

Historically, educational institutions and childcare providers purchased paint and art supplies directly from school supply catalogs or school supply retail establishments. Over the past decade though, as centralized purchasing of educational materials has diminished, more art products are being purchased by individual teachers, department heads and school administrators. The actual buying decision is very often at the classroom level. In fact, Congress enacted a tax credit specifically to reimburse educators for their personal out-of-pocket expenses related to the performance of their jobs.

Teachers spend an average of \$450 of their own money for educational supplies, and much of this is spent on craft projects. Teachers are looking not only for competitive pricing; they also want the convenience of immediate supply, product choice and the availability of additional art accessories. Craft, specialty toy and educational supply retailers, both large and small, are in an advantageous position to capture a larger share of this growing market.

#### It's not just paint

Chalk and wax crayons have been used for centuries. Crayons are a staple of every home and school. In the past two decades, felt-tip markers have also become a mainstay of children's art market. To some degree, markers are an offshoot of paints and inks. They allow the children to use a liquid medium without the mess and cleanup required when painting. Despite the growth of other art mediums, especially markers, there is still a tremendous marketplace for paints, both in educational and home environments.

Paints range from simple finger paints to sophisticated artists' grade acrylics and oils. All paints have one thing in common: the need for additional accessories. These may be as simple as paper or as complicated as special easels, brushes, lighting sources, pallets or pallet knives. The sale of paints therefore leads to the sale of many other auxiliary products. Many of these products are consumable in nature as well and lead to multiple sales throughout the year. Often, these products will generate more revenue and profits than the sale of the paints themselves.

#### Marketing ideas

Since paints are used in conjunction with other products and accessories, they can easily be used for promotional purposes, for example as a loss leader to lure a consumer into buying other higher-margined products that are associated with the paint. For example, a set of easel-ready plastic paint pots have a higher retail price and margin than standard tempera paint, but without the sale of the paint, there is no reason to purchase this item. Different marketing or sales programs could be developed to sell the two products together as a joint package. Alternatively, a distributor might sell paints at a lower margin and cost as a promotion for selling the higher margin non-consumable plastic item.

Another marketing method is to bundle paints with smaller trial-size bottles of another product or paint. This is a cost effective method for introducing new products to the market and educating existing consumers about other products. A different version of this is the tried and true buy-one-get-one-free approach. There are many other variations on this marketing technique. The important



constant is that paints are the staple that everyone needs, while the add-on is the higher value or newer item that is harder to sell as a stand-alone product.

Consumable products such as paints clearly have a huge marketing advantage over other products that are used on an occasional or one-time basis. Every time the paint bottles are used, the brand name and logo information is subliminally displayed. Studies have shown that this kind of repetitive marketing leads to familiarity and subconscious brand awareness. Retailers can take advantage of these multiple promotional "hits" in a number of ways. Affixing stickers or other markings with the retailer information onto existing branded products will facilitate an easier reorder process once the paint container is empty.

### Use color to your advantage

Because paints are essentially color in a bottle, they have a tremendous emotional pull. Over the past couple of decades, the smart use of color to facilitate buying habits has become a science. Using unique and clear packaging allows a product to stand out more prominently on a shelf. Bright and crisp colors are associated with quality. Products packaged in opaque or semi-opaque packaging generally (and especially with colored products like paint) convey a sense of lower value and benefit. Retailers should understand these concepts when planning the merchandising of art products.

In school supply catalogs, paints are often the leading item is used to grab the attention of the buyer. In the retail environment, if merchandised correctly, the bright colors of paints can draw the attention of consumers. The use of clear packaging as well as bright and colorful graphics can lure customers into buying things that they originally hadn't intended to purchase.

It is critical for distributors and manufacturers of child art-related products to establish a clear brand presence. These days it is increasingly difficult to stand out in a crowded field. Therefore, the establishment of a strong children's art materials category, including basic washable paints used in schools as well as at home, is a winning proposition.

*Joel Goobich is the president of i3 Marketing LLC a product development and marketing company that specializes in consumable products such as children's art materials. Over the past two decades, first as the founder and president of Colorations Inc. and now with i3 Marketing, Mr. Goobich has pioneered many of the advances in children's paints, art materials and packaging that are commonplace today. Mr. Goobich continues to develop and market new art material products for children in the educational, craft, specialty and mass markets. For more information, visit [www.i3marketing.com](http://www.i3marketing.com).*

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