

**LONG**  
PAINTING COMPANY



AS FEATURED IN *BUSINESS IN FOCUS*  
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*Finding a reputable painting company that completes projects in a timely manner from the planning stages to completion can be a difficult task. Yet Long Painting Company has over 45 years of history doing just that.*

**Written by Leon Bracey**

Since its humble beginnings in the Seattle garage of founder Ty Long in 1967, Long Painting Company has grown to become a force to be reckoned with throughout the Pacific Northwest. With a desire to become a first-class organization, Ty Long established a company with a reputation for quality and professionalism.

Initially starting out painting Safeway grocery stores throughout the Seattle area, Long Painting Company has since built up a broad portfolio of services to address the painting needs of its customers. The commercial division of Long Painting specializes in painting, special coatings, and wallcoverings for commercial building projects such as schools, hospitals, hotels, and office buildings; Long Painting also specializes in coating and lining services in the marine and industrial sectors, such as floor coating, surface preparation, concrete coatings, containment linings, tank coating and linings, and fireproofing. The company is also known for its lead abatement and toxic mold contamination services.

President John Fisher and Business Development Manager Jeff Engle spoke about Long Painting's ongoing success, its projects, and what challenges and triumphs the company has faced over the years.

"We are truly run as a business," Mr. Engle explains. "Lots of people get a pickup truck and start painting and don't understand the value of service or pricing. We're a for-profit company, so we're in the business of making money." When customers get an estimate from Long Painting, he says, "everything is covered; nothing is left to chance." »





**“Notable is Long Painting’s involvement with the teardown, rebuild and expansion of the University of Washington’s Husky Stadium.”**



► Long Painting has a sales, accounting, operations, and estimating department that helps it to maintain this high level of professionalism. “We respond when we’re called to do a job and we perform when we get there,” says Mr. Fisher. “We answer our calls, and when we arrive we go to work, so there’s no need to beg us to find out where we are. That makes it relatively easy to stand head and shoulders above our competitors.”



Indeed, an estimated 75 percent of the company’s work is attained through word of mouth or repeat business. “We’re not the cheapest company in town, but our customers are interested in more than just price,” shares Mr. Fisher. “Many of our customers do something for a living that is totally different from painting; some may manage water treatment plants, or own ships – basically assets that are extremely expensive. Our clients need to count on someone to paint their assets so they can get back to business as soon as possible. We cater to those who have serious needs to get back to business and have no flexibility in their schedules.”



The company has a long list of high-profile projects in its portfolio. Perhaps most notable is Long Painting’s involvement with the teardown, rebuild and expansion of the University of Washington’s Husky Stadium. The \$250 million project involved ripping out sections of the stadium that were 60 to 90 years old, replacing them with new seating that bring football fans closer to the action and building a new concourse for the fans to walk around.

**“Long Painting was involved in repainting the southern approach of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.”**

“We only had a few months to complete the project because it had to be finished before the new season started,” Mr. Engle says. “We were subcontractors for Turner Construction, and we managed to get the project finished on time and on budget.”

Long Painting was involved with the painting of the steel structure, and with deck coating. Due to the rainy weather in the Pacific Northwest, the painting could only be done in the summer. It was also one of the few times when Long’s Industrial and Commercial divisions were able to collaborate on a project due to its immensity and complexity. “It was definitely a marquis project for our company,” says Mr. Engle.

Long Painting was also involved in repainting the southern approach of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco after a seismic retrofit. The project took place between 2003 and 2005 and involved removing lead-based paint from sections of the bridge and repainting it with more environmentally friendly paint.

Another project of note was the construction of a five storey concrete parking structure at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport for its new consolidated car rental facility. The work included painting 1.8 million square feet of concrete ceilings and beams, applying over 12,000 gallons of concrete sealer onto the floor deck, and applying epoxy / urethane paint to the structural steel and canopies in the facility.

Completing these projects can be an arduous task and require a lot of people to perform them on time. Both Mr. Engle and Mr. Fisher credit Long’s employees for a job well done, but also discuss the challenges of having enough workers to cover their projects.

“Our number one concern is the availability of qualified workers in the field,” shares Mr. Engle. “We’re dealing with an aging workforce who are transitioning into supervisory or office work and we need to replace those workers. But since it’s physical work, there isn’t much interest from younger people; many in the area prefer working in the technology industry.” The company is addressing the challenge by working closely with the Painter’s Union to recruit talent and find new people to work in the industry.

To be sure, Long Painting has had to become more flexible and agile in order to adapt to this new reality. “We are responsible for ▶



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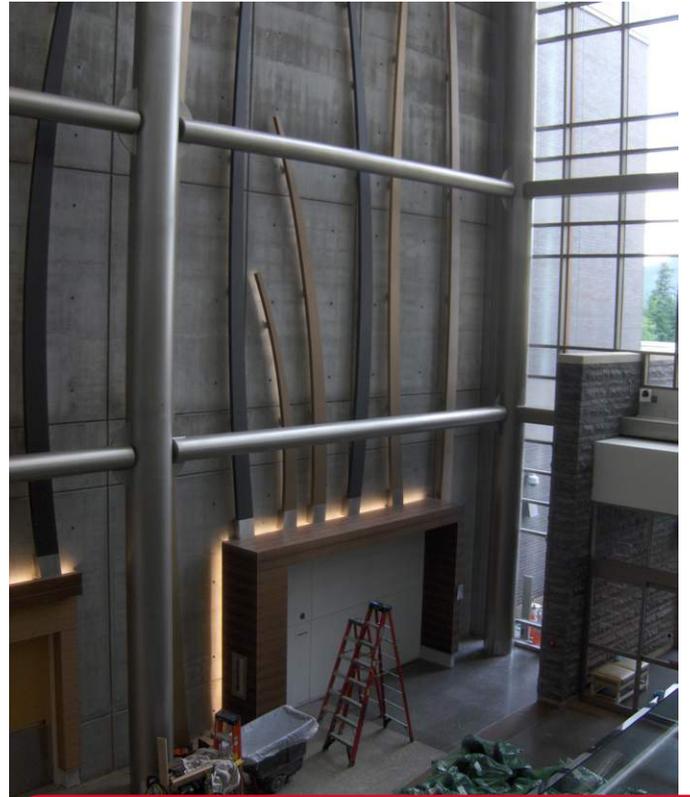


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**“We have lots of in-house training, giving workers the skills they need to be successful in this business.”**

▶ the workforce we employ,” Mr. Fisher says. “We may not always get trained people out of the union all the time, so we have lots of in-house training, giving workers the skills they need to be successful in this business, keeping them happy by giving them work.”

He emphasizes that as the industry changes, Long Painting’s workers will be up to speed. “We have to take care of our own; others still may be relying on newspaper ads to hire workers, but we have to be unconventional in our approach and swim upstream against how the industry normally works.”

“We want our workers to make a career out of this and work their way up,” agrees Mr. Engle. “We want to make sure our workers are the best qualified in the field and not just there for a paycheck.” He adds that internal training and keeping workers updated on the latest technology and procedures is another way to retain a skilled workforce. “We hold monthly meetings with our foremen, provide safety and hazmat training and updated equipment for our field workers as well as product training. We also have internal training done with them throughout the year; this separates us from our competitors because few people can reach all the certifications and qualifications that we require.”

Mr. Fisher asserts that new workers must understand the science of painting. "When products had lead paint, it was easier to apply. The problem is that many in the painting industry are still stuck in the 1960s/70s mentality," he explains. "The science of painting is more complicated now and there are more applicators to keep the paint applied to a building. Many people that remain still struggle with the science."

In spite of these challenges, Long Painting is planning for the future. Upcoming projects include painting a new tunnel in downtown Seattle, as well as the maintenance and ventilation facilities that support the tunnel. The company also has a comprehensive Five-Year Plan to address its needs.

"We wanted to go step-by-step on how to go forward in the next five years to reach our goals," shares Mr. Engle. "Most companies look barely past a year. We had input on every facet, A to Z in the company, and we are confident we will execute it."

"We want to continue our history of relationship-building," adds Mr. Fisher. "We want to reach customers outside of our current region struggling to find contractors and our five-year plan will help us grow if we know there is a market that needs our service. Reaching out further than the Pacific Northwest is definitely in our future, but we want to grow carefully."

With its eye on the future and continuing engagement with satisfied customers, Long Painting will surely have a bright future for years to come.

"Working in the contracting industry is extremely difficult," concludes Mr. Engle. "We are looking forward, but to do so, our business must be the best, and well-trained in order to weather potential shortages. We advise customers to do their homework when hiring general contractors to see if they're competent, have a safety program, and the financial strength to perform the work needed. Low prices may cost you more in the end if the contractor messes up a job with poor workmanship. When you have high criteria within your organization, you will provide better work for your clients." ■

**"Our five-year plan will help us grow... reaching out further than the Pacific Northwest is definitely in our future."**

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