



**Paint Stewardship Focus Groups  
May 2009**

**Introduction**

Two focus groups were conducted with general household paint consumers to test consumer understanding of and reaction to a paint stewardship message statement. A total of 20 people participated in the discussions. The specifications of the participants were as follows:

- Age 22-55
- Gender balanced
- Mix of ethnicities, education and household income
- Have purchased household paint in the last 12 months and intend to do so in the future
- Primary decision maker in purchasing paint or shares equally in that decision
- No employment history in painting, contracting, paint seller/hardware, marketing, advertising, environmental consulting
- No focus group participation in last six months; Never on the topic of paint or waste management.

The actual characteristics of the people who participated in the groups were:

Gender	Male	11
	Female	9
Age	Age 22-30	6
	Age 31-40	5
	Age 41-55	9
Education	High school graduate	2
	Some college	7
	College graduate	8
	Post graduate	3
Household Income	Under \$25K	1
	\$25-50K	4
	\$50-75K	7
	\$75-100K	3
	\$100K+	5
Ethnicity	African American	4
	Asian	2
	Caucasian	7
	Hispanic	5
	Native American	2

Own or rent home	Own	8
	Rent	12
Where purchased paint most recently	Home Depot	12
	Lowes	5
	Kmart	1
	Orchard Supply	1
Amount most recently purchased	Right amount, w/ a little for touch ups	4
	Too much	14
	Not enough	3
Measured area?	Measured accurately	6
	Estimated	6
	No	9
Had leftover paint?	Yes	19
	No	1
What did with leftover paint	Kept it	20

The groups were moderated by Lee Boylan, Manzanita Market Research, LLC.

### **Executive Summary**

This section of the report provides a summary of the findings. The next section is an in-depth analysis and includes many quotations from the participants.

- Participants' first reactions to the paint message piece were quite positive.
  - Many were surprised to learn about the magnitude of the problem.
  - Most had never thought about the cost to themselves and to the environment of excess paint.
  - They found the tools and tips very useful.
- A single reading of the piece results in a good, comprehensive understanding of the educational messages imparted in the text.
  - The most salient components of the piece are the message to buy the right amount and the calculator tools to accomplish that.
  - Proper disposal and ideas for donation are the secondary messages.
- Most would not read the paint stewardship flyer if it were one of many other flyers in the store.
  - Many suggested a large poster, with an attention-grabbing headline and prominently featuring the calculator.
  - The headline should emphasize what is in it for the consumer – Saving money for the paint purchaser (not for the government) being the most important; protecting the environment secondarily.
  - They suggested graphics to catch their attention, including making the calculator very prominent and charts showing how much paint is wasted.

- There was consensus that the current piece has too much text. Most participants indicated they would not take the time to read it, especially when they are on a mission at the store to buy paint.
  - The piece would be much more likely to be read if the text were in short, punchy bullets rather than dense paragraphs.
- Based on the focus groups, the best motivation for buying the right amount of paint is savings to the consumer's pocket book. Nearly as important is protecting the environment. Most indicated they try to "live green."
  - Saving money for local governments is not a motivator. Few made the connection between cost to the government and cost to them as taxpayers.
  - Bring it down to the personal level of the consumer – how much money they will save, how much less paint they will need to store or dispose of.
- Half the participants believed that disposing of paint in the trash is illegal and the other half didn't know.
- Everyone found the paint matrix easy to understand. The paint calculator is more difficult to understand and use for some people, but some prefer the precision it offers.
  - They wanted to include both the calculator and the matrix in the piece, but recommended placing the easier paint matrix above the calculator on the page.
  - The term "spread rate" was unfamiliar to most. "Coverage" or "coverage rate" was preferable.
  - Some found the five "spread rate" options confusing and too numerous. They recommended reducing the number of options and highlighting the most common option.
- The information in the rest of the piece regarding storage, reuse, donation and disposal is helpful, and many of the ideas were new and welcome to the participants.
  - All sections are too wordy and would be more likely to be read if presented in bullets.
  - Some of the terminology is unfamiliar: "Habitat Restores" and "reuse depot."
  - Additional information that would be useful includes:
    - Is it okay to store paint in high temperatures?
    - How long can you store paint before it goes bad?
- The fourth section is not as strong or as clear as other sections.
  - It lacks enough detail for people to know what to do and whom to call for more information.
  - Participants were confused by the last part which says it is okay to put dry, empty cans in the trash. They were concerned that this gave them permission "to be bad."
  - They also wanted clarity on whether it is legal to put paint in the garbage.
- Participants were asked for their definition of convenient disposal of paint. By far the most popular idea was dropping the paint off where they bought it.
  - Many suggested duplicating the process for recycling automobile oil.

- By far the most impactful place to deliver the paint message is at the paint store via an attention-grabbing poster and flyers.
  - Some endorsed the idea of a shelf-talker that points to a poster.
  - Most participants do not listen to radio ads or PSAs.
  - A few suggested advertising on the HGTV home remodeling channel or in home improvement magazines.
  
- Two print ad designs were tested.
  - The closet ad is confusing and lacks a call to action.
  - The Van Gogh ad is much stronger. The message is clear and it includes a call to action.
  
- Of the 20 participants, only one had heard of recycled paint.
  - Several were concerned that recycled paint might not be available in enough colors.
  - Some were doubtful about the quality of recycled paint.
  - Once assured that it is available in many colors, almost all indicated they would be open to purchasing recycled paint to help the environment, and some because they expected it to be less expensive.
  - Green Seal certification would help ease their concerns about quality.

## In-depth Findings

Following are findings from the focus groups. Illustrative quotations from participants are provided in italics. Participants completed a short written questionnaire about their most recent purchase. The results are provided in Appendix A. These “quantitative” results should be viewed with caution because of the small numbers involved and the fact that this was not a random sample of consumers.

### First Reaction to Paint Message Piece

In order to capture participants’ top-of-mind reactions to the paint message piece, everyone was asked to write down the main messages before any discussion occurred. A complete transcription is found in Appendix B.

Participants’ first reactions to the piece were quite positive.

- Many were surprised to learn about the magnitude of the problem. Most had never thought about the cost to themselves and the environment of excess paint.
- Most found the tips, calculators and other resources very helpful, although a few were intimidated by the math required for the first calculator.
- Interestingly, several commented positively on the “friendly” non-authoritarian tone of the piece.

Comments from Group 1:

*It’s surprising that so much paint gets wasted.*

*The thing that stood out was so many people store a lot of paint.*

*I was surprised. Most pamphlets want you to spend and buy more paint, not save. But they’re not in the business of making profit; they’re in the business of conserving.*

*I learned a lot from it.*

*It’s the most information I’ve ever seen on anything having to do with paint.*

*It came across as a useful tool.*

*It talked about saving money, protecting the environment and knowing how much paint you need. It gave you resources for websites to go to properly dispose of it. It’s pretty helpful.*

*There are too many steps and too much math. Most of my students would not get past the first set of formulas.*

*The second graph made a lot of sense to me; the first had too much math.*

*It was telling me to do a lot of things but it wasn’t bossy. It was friendly, had a positive tone.*

Comments from Group 2:

*That it’s costing the government a lot to clean this.*

*How much it costs the government for landfills.*

*It’s helpful tips, especially estimating how much to buy.*

*I liked the idea of giving paint to charities. I never thought of that and I like that idea.*

*I had no clue how to measure, so this is new information.*

*I didn’t read anywhere in there, if you can’t donate it, where do you take it?*

### Top-of-Mind Understanding of Paint Message Piece

After a single reading of the message piece, participants wrote down the top three main messages before any discussion occurred. They did this without having the piece in front of them, to determine how well a single reading would impart the educational messages desired. See Appendix B for transcription of what the participants wrote.

It is very apparent that a single reading of the piece results in a good, comprehensive understanding of the educational messages imparted in the text.

Respondents were asked what is the most important message?

- The most salient component was how to determine how much paint to buy using the calculator tools.
- Closely following that were:
  - The importance of buying the correct amount
  - The cost to the purchaser of purchasing too much
  - The cost of disposal

Responses regarding the second most important message were mostly split evenly between two points:

- How to calculate and purchase the correct amount of paint
- What to do with leftover paint

Participants were almost unanimous regarding the third most important message: methods for disposing of or donating leftover paint.

### Likelihood of Reading Message and Where to Place the Piece

Most of these participants purchased their paint in a large hardware store like Home Depot. Most would not read the paint stewardship flyer if it were one of many in the store. Many suggested a large poster, with an attention-grabbing headline and prominently featuring the calculator. The headline should emphasize what is in it for the consumer – Saving money for the paint purchaser (not so much for the government) being the most important; Protecting the environment secondarily. They suggested graphics to catch their attention, including making the calculator very prominent and charts showing how much paint is wasted.

Many also indicated there was too much text and they wouldn't take the time to read it, especially when they are on a mission to buy paint. And many admitted they would not take it home to refer to later. This reinforced the importance of keeping it short.

Comments from Group 1:

*It depends on where it is. It would need to be more than a flyer in the paint store. They have so many flyers with product advertisements, it's overwhelming. If it were a poster in the paint store that stood out as not trying to get me to buy something, I might read it.*

*If you've got flyers sitting in holders at the store, I'm less likely to pick them up because normally they are trying to sell you something. You could catch my attention by "Helpful Hints" or "How much paint do you need?"*

*Give it a headline that stands out: "Save money. Protect the environment. Paint buying chart."*

*If I'm shopping, my mind's focused on paint. I'm not looking for reading material. Especially Home Depot, my mind set is get in and get out. I'm wondering if you've thought about posters. Some of us won't pick it up and read it while shopping.*

*Put it in the color chart section of the store, at the front end of your purchasing decision. The chart would definitely pull me to read it. If I wasn't sure how much to buy, I would pick up the chart.*

*The biggest point that would make me pick it up is if I were trying to figure out how much to buy and that chart were the first thing I saw, that would probably draw me to it.*

*Maybe show an example: "One gallon will paint a room like this."*

*If you see a chart, you don't have to read anything. If it's mostly text, you're too inundated with (words).*

*Maybe put charts showing how much paint is wasted.*

*Put a character on it that will attract my kids, like Dora the Explorer.*

*Emphasize the recycling part and the environmentally safe way to dispose of things, that would grab my attention.*

*Make the chart smaller and put it on the paint cans.*

#### **Comments from Group 2:**

*If there's a hook to get people to read it, it's how to save money. Sure, it's good to save money for the government, but it's more appealing for the common folk to say "This is how much YOU can save."*

*If it had a banner that said "How to save money" it might catch my eye more. I don't know if I would read it if it said "How to recycle."*

*I would read it. There's a big green movement now.*

*A title saying "How to save money on your paint purchase" might help.*

*Put the chart on the paint can label.*

*It's too much information. I'm in there to make my purchase, and I'm just not going to read it. I would never read it in the store.*

*If you're there to buy paint, this is the last thing you're going to be looking at. It's too much to read. You're in a mode to pick up the paint and get the job done. If I saw it before-hand, I'm a little green, I want to save money, I want to save the environment, here's some tools to help. But if I'm there to make my paint purchase, I'm not going to read all that fine print.*

*It needs to have something to draw me in. A piece of paper with a lot of writing on it I wouldn't read. If you put a poster board in front of where the paint is and say "How to save money" or "How to be green" that would be helpful, but a brochure format I don't think people would read it.*

*Condense it.*

*A big sign will make me look at it.*

*A poster board with something to attract you to it, like "Before you start." But it needs to be simple to read, to the point.*

## Motivators

Most indicated the piece would influence them to buy the right amount paint.

The best motivators appeared to be those that impact the shopper personally:

- Saving money
- Protecting the environment
- Storage space
- Storage hazard
- Health hazards

Several suggested including statistics and visuals on how much money the average person wastes annually by buying too much paint.

Comments from Group 1:

*It gives me the information I need to figure it out.*

*The main selfish reason is you're saving money and you're saving space. All the other stuff is bonus.*

*This is very easy to pick up and figure it out yourself instead of trying to track down a clerk at Home Depot.*

*Thinking of how much paint I've stored over the years, I don't want to store paint. So it sounds like this would be a useful tool. It also let's you know what happens with that paint and how bad a problem it is. We try to be as green a family as possible.*

*It gives information on how to get rid of the paint. You want to dispose of it properly, but you don't know what to do with it so you end up storing in your home.*

*I'd be motivated by the guilt, if nothing else.*

Comments from Group 2:

*The cost of clean up*

*Better for the environment*

*The things are easy to do.*

## Leftover Paint

Participants said they buy more paint than they need because of:

- Touch ups
- May need another coat
- Larger cans are much less expensive
- Worried about matching color if have to go back for more

The main reasons not to buy too much paint mentioned by participants are:

- Wastes money
- Space
- Clutter
- Fire hazard
- Disposal

## Legality of Disposing Paint in Trash

Half the participants believed that disposing of paint in the trash is illegal and the other half didn't know. Some did not advise using illegality as a motivator in the piece, because people will try to get away with it anyway and because it would change the tone of the piece. Others, however, said they would be motivated by including a warning about illegality in the piece.

Comments from Group 1:

*Nobody ever thinks they'll get caught.*

*The piece then starts becoming fairly negative. Now it's very friendly.*

*The environment is what drives me to take my used oil back.*

Comments from Group 2:

*I think most people would go through a risk-reward analysis. The hassle of disposing of it properly versus tossing in the garbage and no one would ever know.*

## Introductory Paragraph

The most salient feature of the introductory paragraph is the cost to government of disposal of paint. The general concept of waste is the second most mentioned feature of this paragraph.

Most thought the paragraph should be made stronger. It did not capture their attention or deliver a message of urgency. Part of the problem is the length of the paragraph. Many would prefer brief, bulleted information to dense sentences.

Many did not make the connection that disposal costs ultimately come out of their pockets as tax payers. They talked about cost to government as if it were a distant, abstract issue. They agreed that it would be more impactful to reference the cost to local taxpayers than to government. And many wanted to know how much they personally would save by not buying too much paint.

They found the message believable, especially based on their own experience with storing leftover paint.

Comments from Group 1:

*It's costing the government millions, and you're like "yeah, okay." You almost need to know your personal cost.*

*Talk about the cost to Californians, rather than anonymous government.*

*I wonder if you would get your message across with just bullet points.*

*Maybe if the numbers were placed first, instead of having to find the numbers in the paragraph. Say "Did you know your local government wastes over \$16 million annually? Did you know Californians dispose of over 2 million gallons a year?"*

*The average person has 3 gallons of leftover paint each year?"*

*The 2 million gallons of leftover paint is astounding. That would catch my eyes.*

*How much money it costs each household.*

*What a waste!*

Comments from Group 2:

*It's clear and compelling but it could be enhanced. Talk less about the cost to local government and more about how much extra consumers pay. It's the wrong hook in terms of the government cost rather than personal cost.*

*It's too long. Take out some of it.*

*10% leftover paint sounds like a small amount and doesn't sound like a big deal. On the other hand, 2 million gallons is a large number.*

*I understand government trickles down to you as far as your pocketbook, but I suggest they say something specific about what it costs you personally.*

*I don't think the average person understands the tax structure. You have to appeal to what it's going to cost me out of my own pocket. Then you appeal to people's idealism. In the short term, they want to save money and in the long term, most people want to leave the world a better place for their kids.*

*If I don't buy that extra can of paint, will it really make a huge difference? I might buy one less paint can, but am I globally going to make a difference? Maybe put specific numbers on what kind of money I will personally save, how many fish will I save?*

*I want to know what it's going to save me right now.*

*Those that are environmentally conscious will take part. If you don't care about the environment, I don't know if this will cause you to move.*

### Section 1: Buy the Correct Amount of Paint for the Project

There was no confusion about the message in this section.

Everyone found the paint matrix easy to understand. The paint calculator is more difficult to understand and use for some people, but some prefer the precision it offers. They wanted both the calculator and the matrix, but recommended placing the easier paint matrix above the calculator on the page.

The term "spread rate" was unfamiliar to most. "Coverage" or "coverage rate" was preferable. Some found the five "spread rate" options confusing and too numerous. They recommended reducing the number of options and highlighting the most common option.

Comments from Group 1:

#### Calculator #1

*I like the first calculator. This actually helps solve my problem where you don't know how many coats a particular wall might take.*

*I like having the website for next time, but I wouldn't be able to use it in the store. It's not useful.*

*It's easy enough to figure out. I like the example of 10 x 10. Once you've got that you can figure it out.*

*There are 5 different spread rate options. I think it would be good to simplify it. There are too many variables. It would intimidate some folks.*

*I was drawn to the matrix because the calculator looked like a lot of work.*

*Graphics are easier to understand than numbers, so the paint matrix would be more understandable.*

*I'm not into all that arithmetic. It's not for a beginner. How about a kiosk at the store that asks you simple questions and figures it out for you.*

#### Calculator #2 – Paint Matrix

*I like it. It's quick and easy.*

*There's nothing less than a gallon shown.*

*It's intuitive.*

Comments from Group 2:

*I like it. It helps you save on time and money. You don't have to go back and won't have all that extra paint.*

*It's handy. If you get it right the first time, you avoid the need to recycle and the waste and cost to government. It's a domino effect.*

*The first one's better than the matrix. The texture makes it more accurate.*

*I have no idea what "most common spread rate wall paint applied by a roller means."*

*It doesn't tell you if the ceiling is included.*

*The paint matrix is better because it's quick.*

*I'd use both. I'd start with the matrix first.*

*I'd use the first one if I was at home, but at the paint store I'd use the matrix.*

*They're both good tools. The matrix is better for a beginner or someone who doesn't have time.*

#### Section 2: Store Paint to Keep It Fresh

This message is clear and very helpful. Again, most would prefer short, bulleted tips rather than a long paragraph. Most found it motivating and were happy to have learned something new and useful.

Information that is missing and would be helpful includes:

- Is it okay to store paint in high temperatures?
- How long can you store paint before it goes bad?
- What is the definition of a safe place?

Comments from Group 2:

*I like the helpful hints because I've had so much paint dry out.*

*I had not heard of using plastic. I thought that was the most important thing I've ever read.*

#### Section 3: Reuse

Another straightforward message: reuse or donate. However, most would not read it because it is too wordy. Bullets would be the better approach. Many appreciated the innovative ideas on what to do with leftover paint.

Some suggested the title should be "Donate" rather than "Reuse." Most assumed "Habitat Restores" is Habitat for Humanity, but they weren't sure. The term "reuse depot" was also unfamiliar.

Several said they would check out the website. Some would only do this if they had a lot of leftover paint.

Comments from Group 1:

*I don't think, honestly, I would read most of it. I like a few of the things about it, but it could be added to Section 2. It's very wordy.*

*I would skip it.*

*I would never think of those things on my own. I like that they are giving me ideas. I just don't like the way they are giving them to me.*

*Include schools as a place to donate to.*

*Localize it. Say "Your neighborhood school."*

*The first few sentences lose you. It doesn't grab my attention.*

Comments from Group 2:

*These are new ideas of what to do with leftover paint – things I have never thought of before.*

*I lets me be aware there are other options besides the trash can.*

*Bullets are easier for people to read and understand.*

*What's "Habitat Restores"? Is it like Habitat for Humanity?*

*I think I get the gist of "Habitat Restores" but because they put it in quotes, I'm not sure.*

*I'll guess reuse depot is a place you can drop off extra paint.*

*Reuse depot could be anything. It could be government, a non-profit, but it's probably a place you can drop it off and someone will come by and pick it up.*

Section 4: Recycle and Proper Disposal

The fourth section is not as strong or as clear as other sections. It lacks enough detail for people to know what to do and whom to call for more information. Participants were confused by the last part which says it is okay to put dry, empty cans in the trash. They were concerned that this gave them permission "to be bad." They also wanted clarity on whether it is legal to put paint in the garbage.

Once again, they thought the text should be simplified and in bullets.

Comments from Group 1:

*I'd take the last part (about disposing of empty, dry cans in the garbage) out.*

*Remove the option of throwing it in the garbage.*

*The main message for me was 'Don't put it in the garbage,' until the last two sentences. Why would I do all the stuff above?*

*If you're going to be good, you're going to be good. If you're going to be bad, no one will stop you but you're kind of giving me an option (to be bad).*

*I still don't know if it's legal to put it in the trash or not.*

*Tell us what happens – it's toxic, it's bad, it's not legal. Bring in the whole green thing. This is too wishy-washy.*

*It's good information, but the way it's presented causes you to be a little confused.*

*I'd like to know the shelf-life of paint. It mentions "spoiled" but is that two years, five years?*

*As a homeowner I want to know where to go, who to call.*

Comments from Group 2:

*It's vague as to what to do with a half can of paint. It doesn't say if it's legal or illegal to put in the trash.*

*I would start with "Improper disposal is a crime."*

*Or tell us what is improper disposal.*

*I'm not exactly clear on what to do with the cans.*

*It's a little disjointed. Maybe use bullets. And move the website to the very end.*

*It keeps on talking about recycle, but I want to throw them away. I've never heard of recycling and I don't want to bother with it. And it's not clear on how to throw them away.*

Convenient Disposal

Participants were asked for their definition of convenient disposal of paint. By far the most popular idea was dropping the paint off where they bought it. Many suggested duplicating the process for recycling automobile oil.

Out of the 20 focus group participants, only one knew where to find a household hazardous waste facility.

The second group was asked about how to handle the charge for returning paint to the manufacturer. All agreed they would rather see the fee as a line item on their receipt than having it buried in the cost of the paint. Of course, they would rather get money back when they returned paint as a motivator to recycle.

Comments from Group 1:

*Take it back to Home Depot and they could donate it to schools.*

*Recycle it the way we recycle used automobile oil.*

*The most convenient would be if the trash people picked it up, so you wouldn't have to take it anywhere. The stores that sell it to you should have to take it back and recycle it just like the auto shops have to take back oil.*

Comments from Group 2:

*The best idea is to return it to the stores where we bought it. They are doing that with batteries.*

*Let the stores where you bought it donate it.*

*Same as with car oil.*

*Have a paint drop off day.*

Comments about disposal fee:

*You're basically paying a fee upfront for something you might not use but in general it's a societal good. I would want it specified (on the receipt) so at least you know what you're paying. You may not like it but you'll know.*

*I think disclosure is absolutely crucial. People need to know what they are paying for. If it upsets them, they should stand up and say I'm ticked off.*

*You're shifting the cost from the government to the consumer.*

## Media Preference for Paint Message

As reported above, by far the most impactful place to deliver the paint message is at the paint store via attention-grabbing poster and flyers. Some endorsed the idea of a shelf-talker that points to a poster.

Most participants do not listen to radio ads or PSAs. A few suggested advertising on the HGTV home remodeling channel or in home improvement magazines.

They were also asked which “sponsor” of the message would be most influential. Responses were mixed. The most popular sponsor is a consortium of government, manufacturers and nonprofit environmental organizations (favored by half the participants). Most of the rest preferred paint manufacturers or nonprofits.

Comments from Group 1:

*If it were in the paint aisle would be the only place I would be looking for something like that.*

*HGTV.*

*Maybe home remodel magazines.*

*You need the chart.*

Comments from Group 2:

*A shelf talker that says “Have you estimated the proper amount?”*

*Radio wouldn’t hurt but it’s probably not your best investment.*

*You’re not thinking about this when (watching TV, listening to radio, etc.), you’re doing it when you go to the store.*

*Select your demographics. If you put it on HGTV, people will watch it.*

## Ad Testing

### **Ad Depicting Closet – What would you do with the space?**

The second group was shown these ads cold first thing, before they saw the educational paint message. Although these ads were thought provoking and pointed out the problem of leftover paint, they did not offer solutions to the problem. Some found them confusing – they couldn’t figure out what the call to action was.

The first group saw the ads after having discussed paint for two hours, yet they still found the ads confusing. They also noted it lacked a call to action.

Most participants did not like this ad.

Comments from Group 1:

*Funny, but true.*

*I like the visual, but the words don’t make sense to me. It took me two or three times reading it to get it.*

*It’s confusing. Why does she have paint in her closet?*

*Is she buying a closet organizer?*

*It doesn’t make sense.*

*I didn't get that it was paint.  
It doesn't seem as though that paint is hurting anyone. It seems nice and tidy.  
It is confusing. If I hadn't been in here talking about paint, I would skip past this. I  
couldn't make out the picture.  
It would be good to have Earth911 in there because it doesn't tell you what to do with the  
paint.*

Message of ad:

*Recapture your house.*

*Organize.*

*Time to let go.*

Comments from Group 2:

*I have the exact same situation at home. I have five one gallon containers taking up  
space. Other things could go there. I'd rather not store them.*

*It brings out the thought: I'd like to store my paint somewhere else.*

*(The message is) what do you do with all the paint that's leftover?*

*It says, you have the cans, now what are you going to do about it?*

*(The message is) uncluttering your closet.*

*I'm curious what the solution is.*

*I want to know how to dispose of all the extra paint I have. (The ad) doesn't tell me how,  
but it puts it in my head. What should I do with it instead of just keeping it down  
there?*

*I'm curious as to what the pitch is. It could be something as to what you do with your  
leftover paint or it could be something to help you buy the right amount so you  
don't have extra paint.*

*It's sort of confusing.*

### **Van Gogh's Legacy Ad**

The Van Gogh ad is much stronger. The message is clear and it includes a call to action. Participants definitely preferred this ad and indicated they would be more likely to pay attention to it and take action because of it.

Comments from Group 1:

*I get this one.*

*It tells you what they want you to do.*

*It makes sense, it's in context.*

*Funny and has a message.*

*The benefit is you're going to help save the environment.*

*It's a clear message.*

*It has more color and draws my eye.*

*(This messy paint) is what I don't want in my house.*

Comments from Group 2:

*This one definitely puts across "measure before you buy the paint so we're not left with  
all this extra paint that's not good for the environment."*

*It has the message and the solution.*

*It's self-explanatory.*

*Van Gogh's a famous painter, so it ties in with painting.*

*This ad is more appealing. I consider myself an environmentalist and my family does a lot of recycling. Nevertheless, when we buy paint, we buy with the intent of having some extra. The space issue isn't a concern to me.*

### Recycled Paint

Of the 20 participants, only one had heard of recycled paint. Several were concerned that recycled paint might not be available in enough colors and some were doubtful about the quality of recycled paint. Once assured that it is available in many colors, almost all indicated they would be open to purchasing recycled paint to help the environment, and some because they expected it to be less expensive. (To screen out peer pressure, the second group was asked to write down whether they would buy recycled paint. This occurred before the discussion of Green Seal certification. Eight wrote that they would buy recycled paint, one said he would want more information before deciding, and one said no.)

#### Comments from Group 1:

*I'd feel like I was doing a good thing (by buying recycled paint).*

*I think green, environmental.*

*It seems like it would be cheaper.*

*It takes care of the wasted paint, and you feel good.*

*It will lead to a better tomorrow.*

*People now want to make a contribution however they can, so buying paint would be a way of contributing to a better world.*

*The only (negative) thing in the back of my head would be the quality.*

*Where has it been?*

#### Comments from Group 2:

*It's a great idea, but would I use it?*

*Is it just as good as regular paint?*

*Yeah, I'm doing my bit for the environment, but if I don't get to choose my color, I don't want it.*

*Recycled paper has a certain (lower) quality. So we would really need to know the value of recycled paint.*

*I would certainly consider it, but a cost-benefit analysis would come into it.*

*If the performance is it's non-toxic, it covers as well, I don't need extra of it, it doesn't cost a ton more, is it also available in the same color schemes.*

*Usually green things, cost more money. But with paint, if you pay more for something that may not look as good or have the same quality as things that you would pay less for...if it is equal quality I would say fine.*

*I would buy it to save the environment.*

*I would do it to save money.*

*I wonder if it lasts as long as new paint.*

*There are unknowns.*

Only a few had heard of Green Seal certification. Participants assumed Green Seal represented nontoxic, environmentally friendly paint.

The moderator read a definition of Green Seal certification – “It has been evaluated for environmental merit and industry performance and is certified to perform just as well as ‘virgin’ paint.” Participants were left confused by the definition. “Environmental merit” was meaningless to them. Also, they didn’t like the term “virgin paint,” preferring “ordinary,” “traditional,” or “original.”

All indicated they would be more likely to buy recycled paint if it had Green Seal certification.

## APPENDIX A

### Participant Written Survey Results

*For this survey, please think about the last time you bought interior or exterior paint for your house.*

1. Where did you purchase the paint?
  - 18 Large hardware store (e.g., Home Depot)
  - 3 Big box store (e.g., WalMart)
  
2. Do you usually purchase extra paint so you will have some leftover for later touch-ups?
  - 13 Yes
  - 9 No
  
3. How much extra do you buy?
  - 1 Enough for touch-up
  - 1 Approximately ½ a can
  - 1 Approximately a full can
  - 5 1 quart
  - 1 1 can
  - 1 ½ gallon
  - 1 1 gallon
  - 2 2 gallons
  
4. Do you usually end up using the extra paint for touch-ups?
  - 9 Yes
  - 7 No
  
5. If you don't buy extra paint for touch-ups, why not?
  - 2 Frugal; cost
  - 2 Will repurchase if need extra
  - 1 If the color is white or not custom
  
6. For your most recent paint purchase, how much paint did you buy?
  - 4 Just the right amount (including enough for later touch-ups)
  - 14 More than enough to do the job plus later touch-ups
  - 3 Not enough – had to go back and get more
  
7. Did you measure the area to be painted before purchasing the paint?
  - 6 Yes, measured accurately (with tape measure or yardstick)
  - 6 Yes, estimated area (e.g., by pacing area)
  - 9 No
  
8. How did you decide how much paint to buy? (Check all that apply):
  - 9 Measured area before going to store
  - 2 Clerk at store helped me determine how much to buy
  - 10 Educated guess

9. Did you have leftover paint?  
 19 Yes  
 1 No
10. What did you do with the leftover paint?  
 20 Kept it
11. If you did not dispose of it, how long do you plan on keeping it?  
 3 Until next touch-up  
 3 Until I repaint  
 2 Until I move  
 1 6 months  
 4 1 year  
 2 2 years  
 2 Until it goes bad  
 1 Indefinitely  
 2 Don't know
12. If you still have leftover paint, how do you plan to dispose of it once you are done storing it?  
 1 Don't know  
 4 Check with city or county for proper method of disposal  
 1 Take it where I bought it and see if they will dispose of it or have disposal suggestions  
 1 Donate to high school drama class for stage  
 1 Maybe share with friends  
 2 Don't know  
 2 If small amount, put it in the trash  
 1 I would normally just throw away, but now want to find environmentally safe way to dispose  
 1 I'll remove lid allowing paint to dry out. Then, do some research to find out most environmentally friendly disposal method. Will ask friends for advice or search the web for a solution.  
 1 Whoever takes hazardous liquids – usually a place like the dump or transfer station  
 1 Ask someone how to properly dispose  
 1 Yard sale or donate

## APPENDIX B

### Participants' Written Impressions of Messages

Before discussion of the piece, participants were asked to write down their first impressions uninfluenced by the comments of others.

#### Entire Piece

Participants read the entire piece through once and returned it to the moderator. Following are their top-of-mind, unaided recollections of the messages.

#### Main Message #1

1. Measure before you buy
2. How big an issue that residents in California are dumping/disposing of their leftover paint (est. \$10 million annually)
3. Leftover paint is prevalent and potentially hazardous, not to mention costly
4. Don't waste paint, save money
5. Buy what you need and only what you need
6. Use paint wisely
7. Save money by using paint distribution chart. You can buy the appropriate amount of paint, saving a little for touch ups and reducing waste.
8. How to measure paint.
9. Be wise, buy the right size. "Statistics" .... so many people store and dispose of leftover paint.
10. How to recycle, reduce, and reuse unused paint
11. To help environment and safety in regards to leftover paint. How to properly measure for the right amount of paint.
12. Reduce amount bought to save money
13. Methods/procedures to best estimate how much paint to buy for a project
14. Reduce, reuse, recycle paint
15. Most people purchase more paint than is needed for a potential job
16. Educate people about paint and the cost of improper disposal
17. That you should measure your paint needed by using the estimator. You can save money and have the right amount of paint.
18. Make an educated decision on how much paint you need using tools given
19. Don't waste
20. How to figure out how much paint you need

#### Main Message #2

1. Proper storage
2. How to decide how much paint is enough for your project – use math formula
3. Tips on buying the correct amount of paint
4. Protect environment
5. Showed how to buy enough paint using a calculator
6. Measure it
7. Reducing unneeded paint by finding others who could use it.
8. What to do with leftover paint

9. Helpful chart to figure out amount
10. The best thing is to measure and have just the right amount
11. Reuse paint
12. How to store paint
13. Good recommendations on storage procedures of leftover paint
14. Save money, protect environment
15. Plan, measure and calculate your paint area
16. How to measure your project to buy the proper amount of paint
17. It is important to dispose of unused paint properly
18. There are ways if you do have leftovers to store them properly
19. Tools to determine paint usage
20. How to store paint

### Main Message #3

1. Ideas for disposal
2. What to do with leftover paint – recycle or donate
3. Be conscientious about possibly donating unused paint
4. Know how much paint you need. Helpful hints
5. Where you can dispose of paint and where to donate paint.
6. Recycle it. Store extra paint.
7. Reuse unneeded paint by finding others who could use it. Leftover paint is expensive and hazardous.
8. Recycling – you can throw away cans but remove the tops.
9. Programs and ways to recycle old paint
10. Recycle paint
11. Where and how to recycle paint
12. That being proactive with estimating paint quantity is beneficial for costs and being earth friendly
13. Ways to dispose of unused paint
14. How to reuse, store and recycle paint
15. Excess paint causes unnecessary waste and costs money to dispose of
16. In the event that it needs to be disposed, do your research on how and where to dispose of it
17. What to do with excess paint
18. What to do with the extra paint. 10% of paint goes to waste.

### **First Paragraph**

1. A lot of paint is wasted
2. The amount of leftover paint being dumped in California yearly producing environmental damage
3. Californians are disposing of too much unwanted paint
4. Reduce, reuse, recycle
5. Paint buyers buy too much paint
6. Be conscious when buying and using paint
7. Buy the right size. Too much paint is being wasted.
8. How much leftover paint there actually is and how much it costs government
9. Hazardous leftover paint costing local governments more than \$16 million annually

10. Common to overbuy and then waste the paint, costing millions to dispose
11. That we have too much paint
12. Purchase the right amount of paint for the project
13. 10% of paint is left over. That it is costing \$16 million to the government because it's a hazard to the environment.
14. Most people overestimate when buying paint which leads to hazardous waste and government costs
15. Everyone thinks more is better, but it's more costly
16. Waste is expensive (frontend and backend)
17. Save money
18. Clear and compelling way to tell public that people buy too much paint and that leftover paint costs us all

### **Section 1 – Buy the correct amount of paint for the project**

1. Be informed before you purchase
2. To reduce waste/disposal, it's important to figure out how much paint is necessary.
3. How much paint is needed – gives tips
4. Save money
5. Calculate the paint before buying
6. Buy only what you need for the job
7. Nice way to help someone purchase the right amount of paint
8. Use the matrix to avoid waste
9. First sentence is too lengthy – repeats what already said. Paint surfaces are a little confusing.
10. How to estimate the amount of paint needed for any given area
11. Buying the right amount of paint helps. Eliminate the need to store, dispose or recycle paint. Saves time and money
12. Self-help – how much to buy
13. I really like this information. It has a lot of info and good, believable points. Easy to read and use.
14. Too wordy – spread rate box confusing. Matrix is useful
15. Ways to simplify the amount of paint need for a project
16. Measurements are important – helps you buy the right amount
17. You can use the handy calculators provided to help in estimating how much paint depending on room size and paint characteristics
18. Do your homework to lower the amount of paint you use
19. tools to prevent waste
20. Use paint calculator to figure out how much

### **Section 2 – Store paint to keep it fresh**

1. What to do when finished
2. Store paint properly for safety reasons and convenience of being able to reuse it for touch-ups, and be able to get more for what you paid for
3. Tips for storage of paint
4. Proper storage
5. Store leftover paint properly
6. Store paint wisely, name it on the top of can
7. Store paint properly

8. Store correctly
9. Properly store paint. Mark lid to remember is helpful.
10. Storing your paint properly as to not waste it for future jobs
11. How to properly store paint
12. Best way to store leftover paint
13. Very good info. How to keep paint usable.
14. Proper storing of leftover paint
15. Storage properly to keep the paint fresh
16. Store your paint properly to save the paint for future use
17. Proper storage is important for safety reasons
18. Storage tips

### **Section 3 – Reuse**

1. Hazards and hints
2. What to do with unused leftover paint: reuse or donate
3. There are uses for your old paint
4. Don't forget about it
5. Use the leftover paint or donate it
6. Reuse old paint or donate it
7. Helpful tips to reuse unneeded paint
8. Lists what unused paint can be used for
9. What can you do with leftover paint? Good resources listed
10. How to reuse your paint by donating it
11. Examples of reuse of paint – donate. Website of reuse options
12. New ideas about what you can do with leftover paint
13. Good info, but I'd like to know life span of used paint
14. Uses for unused paint
15. Reuse your leftover paint or donate or recycle it
16. Don't let it go to waste. Reuse it.
17. Don't let paint go to waste. Things you can do

### **Section 4 – Recycle and proper disposal**

1. Recycle options
2. Recycle
3. Recycle options
4. Recycle
5. Recycle leftover paint
6. Recycle, use proper disposal
7. Helpful ways to properly dispose of paint
8. Website!!
9. Informational. Throw empty cans without lids on.
10. How to properly dispose of your paint
11. Tools on recycling leftover paint and proper disposal
12. New programs to recycle paint and/or cans
13. Proper disposal – tools on recycling
14. If paint is no longer good, dispose of it properly or recycle at your local facility
15. Dispose properly
16. Disposal options