

HOW DO YOU CONTROL COATING COSTS?

Most of you using coatings, varnishes and adhesives would most likely want to know which of the items you have to choose from are the most economical to use. The key is in the word **use**. It isn't easy to know which product is truly the least costly. Many of us automatically zero in on the lowest priced product as the best purchase value. However, unless all of the factors involved are considered you will have a greater chance of paying more in the end.

We should all know this from personal experience whether we purchase an automobile, paint, detergent, computer, article of clothing, appliance, you name it, we know the lowest price often ends up not giving us the best value.

So what are the factors that need to be considered? Well price is certainly one of the factors and it is usually the first factor that we are exposed to, but again beware; the lowest price is not always indicative of the best buy.

One of the biggest factors determining best value will be **mileage**. Yes **mileage**. How far does the coating, varnish or adhesive go? How many sheets, how many impressions are finished with a given quantity?

When we drive for example, some of us have **mileage** on the brain and in some automobiles an onboard computer can even calculate **mileage** for us. Miles per gallon of gasoline is even on the minds of governments as we see estimates of miles per gallon-liter for city and highway driving made available to consumers.

Mileage related to driving vehicles is on many of our minds, but how many of us have **mileage** on our minds when we consider how far a pound, a kilo, a gallon or a liter of coating, varnish or adhesive will take us. Well we should be thinking this way if we want to **control the cost** of these products.

Today there is even more reason to think about **controlling the cost of coatings, varnishes and adhesives**. Recently we have seen a large increase in the price of a barrel of oil and we may see even higher prices in the future. The chemistry of most coatings, varnishes and adhesives is based mainly on petrochemicals derived from petroleum (oil). Presently these downstream petrochemical derived raw materials are seeing price increases. Soon these increased costs will have to be passed along to users.

But, you have the power to control coating costs! Test and know the **mileage** a given product gives you! Know too, that once determined **mileage** doesn't change.

When we consider the cost of coatings, varnishes and adhesives, there is also the question of solids. Let's look at an example. If a coating, varnish or adhesive is priced at \$1.00/lb and another at \$2.00/lb. Then if both products are 100% solids obviously the lower priced \$1.00/lb product is less expensive than the \$2.00/lb product. But if the products are not 100% solids and solvents or water are components, some percentage of the product is lost during use and does not end up as part of the final converted product. In this case, the volatile components are part of the formulation's cost in terms of raw material cost, processing costs and even freight expense.

Consider this example, a coating, varnish or adhesive priced at \$1.00/lb and another priced at \$1.50/lb. The first product contains 35% solids while the second contains 60% solids. If we divide the price by the solids we will find the cost of a dry lb of the product.

In the case of the first product, \$1.00 divided by 35% = \$2.86. In the second case, \$1.50 divided by 60% = \$2.50. In these examples the product with the higher price is the least costly product on a dry lb basis. Assuming both products produce the same performance at the same rate of use then using the higher priced product yields the best value and valuable savings over time.

However, it still comes down to **mileage!** Regardless of the dry pounds cost calculation, it's still a matter of how far the coating, varnish or adhesive will go while doing the job required.

The point of these concepts is that it is never wise to choose a coating, varnish or adhesive based solely on the price quoted. The product with the lowest price is not always the best buy or value. Highest solids do not always automatically point us to the best value either, nor does a dry weight calculation.

Use your head and **conduct informed mileage tests** to prove which product will provide the most value to you, the user! Remember **mileage** won't change; it's the one factor that can control your costs.

Other factors that can increase the cost of coatings, varnishes, and adhesives in use are related things that cause a press line to be shut down. Needless to say shutting down a press line is expensive.

If for example, you're buying a coating, regardless of price, that gives you grief on press, what's it really worth? It may in fact be costing you a lot more than you'd care to think about. Down time is very expensive. So if you're running a coating or varnish that foams excessively, or slings or back traps allowing ink to reach the blanket so that the press is shut down for a premature wash-up, you're coating costs just went up.

Furthermore, if a coating, varnish or adhesive causes multiple problems that add up to cause even more repetitive down time, then your cost of this product really went up.

Often times the cheapest priced product is the one that will cause the most problems. The lowest priced products in the marketplace aren't priced where they are because they use the best raw materials. There is no free lunch as is often said.

The bottom line is focus your efforts to make an informed selection of the coatings, varnishes and adhesives that you purchase and use. Pay attention to the real costs associated with a products use.

Above all else, conduct **mileage** tests and determine which product will go the farthest while providing the performance required. Don't settle for the lowest priced product alone when you make your buying decision. Determine what the real cost per unit is before making the final purchasing decision. **Control your costs** by conducting **mileage** tests.

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