



**Paint JAR Inc**

Highland Park, Ill.  
Founded 1997  
25 employees

**BUSINESS MIX**

45% restoration  
40% residential repaint  
10% new residential  
5% commercial

**WEBSITE:**

[www.paintjar.com](http://www.paintjar.com)



# green benefits

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*Chicago painter leads the  
way in earth-friendly  
products and practices*

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**M**aybe – as a famous Muppet frog once said – it’s not easy being green. But for Jonathan Rubenstein, there’s no other way.

“I’ve always led a healthy lifestyle, so choosing a ‘green’ route for my company is like completing the circle,” says the owner of Paint JAR, a Chicago painting contracting firm. “I love the outdoors and see it as a dwindling resource, so I try to do my part to lessen my impact on the earth. You can be part of the problem or part of the solution. I like being part of the solution.”

Rubenstein is a paint industry leader in green business practices – a champion of environmentally friendly coatings and a member of the Chicagoland Clean Air Coalition, a group of businesses dedicated to reducing their environmental impact. He’s a stickler for reusing and recycling, educating employees on the value of green practices, buying high-mileage fleet vehicles, and even trying to get his driver to improve his acceleration and braking habits to save on gas and emissions.

After visiting the local Sherwin-Williams manufacturing plant, Rubenstein switched to the company’s zero- and low-VOC products like Harmony, ProGreen 200 and Duration



**Zero-VOC Harmony Interior Latex (walls) and low-VOC ProClassic Enamel (trim) beautify a contemporary home in Highland Park, an upscale Chicago suburb.**



Home. In 2006, the Chicagoland Clean Air Coalition calculated that Paint JAR saved 22,000 pounds of VOCs by using them. But it wasn't just the paint alone; Rubenstein was also impressed with the company's other earth-friendly measures like its wash-water management techniques and methods of recovering and recycling cleaning solvents. (Rubenstein recently installed a rain-collection system to provide water for his own lawn.)

### A critical eye

Though his motives aren't finance-driven, his earth-conscious practices have also been good for Rubenstein's business, 90 percent of which is in Chicago's exclusive North Shore and Gold Coast neighborhoods. It's a niche he targeted when he founded Paint JAR in 1997, after gathering 10 years experience working for a high-end residential renovation company.

He credits Paint JAR's success with this demanding clientele to a company-wide culture of perfectionism in both workmanship and customer service.

"I'm more critical than any of my clients," he says. "I see things that others don't see, and I'm not satisfied until the job is done right. I want it right from beginning to end."

He counts on his supervisors to run a clean, organized job site and maintain standard practices on every interior project: removing shoes upon entering the home, setting up a "work zone" for tools and product, establishing a place to clean equipment, and asking if there's a bathroom that can be used, or if the customer prefers that the crew use a portable toilet.

"I want us to add as little disruption as possible to the homeowner's life," Rubenstein says. That's a formula for success that echoes his decision to make a low impact on the environment. **PPC**

#### PREFERRED PRODUCTS

Interior:  
Sherwin-Williams  
"green" coatings,  
including Duration  
Home, ProGreen 200  
and Harmony Interior  
Latex.

Exterior:  
Duration Exterior  
Coating



*A multi-color SuperPaint topcoat with A-100 Exterior Latex Primer enhances the curb appeal of a new Irish pub.*



## Painter To Painter

### Was there anything unexpected when you formed your own company?

I realized the first week I wouldn't be as successful as I wanted to be if I was running the business and doing all the painting. I quickly hired five painters. By the second month, I had 10. By the fourth month, I had 20. That's a pretty good number for us. We're celebrating our 10th anniversary in business this year. My crew is steady at around 25 painters, and I've got eight independent contractors that I can turn to during heavy deadlines.

### You recently started a construction division. Why?

On some projects, no matter how good our paint job, the wood still looked bad. We started replacing things like rotted railings, crown moldings and trim, and it made a huge difference. I hired a full-time carpenter; we now have six. It adds value to our paint jobs, and has enabled us to expand into rehabs and new construction. I see this as the next growth area for the company.



*To achieve a washed-out look that a homeowner wanted for the never-painted brick of her Highland Park home, Paint JAR and Sherwin-Williams worked together to develop a rag-off technique using white Vertical Concrete Stain. To preserve the home's architectural integrity, Paint JAR also uncovered the home's original latticework and restored it with Duration Exterior Coating.*