

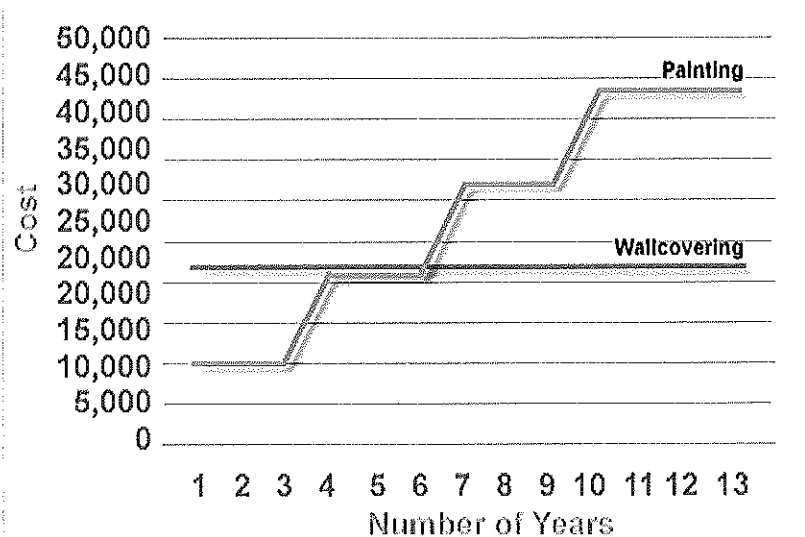
Rolling with the Punches: A Case for Commercial Wallcoverings Over Paint

New York, NY, September 2007 – If walls *could* talk, they would tell a sad tale of abuse – computer carts and bags banging round corners, shoe scuff marks, dirty handprints and any number of mysterious dings and scratches hurled their way on a daily basis. Unlike in the home, no one really looks out for the walls in our more public spaces, until they become so unsightly that the problem can no longer be ignored.

The quick-fix is to slap on primer and a couple of coats of paint and be done with it. Wallcoverings on the other hand are far more durable and long-lasting: Many of today's wallcoverings have a life of seven to ten years, versus an average three-year life span for paint. Not only are they more resistant to abrasions, chipping and cracking, wallcoverings also *protect* the walls they cover and thereby extend their life cycle. On the rare occasion when wallcoverings take the brunt of a blow, most marks and scrapes are virtually camouflaged by the designs and textures. Moreover, new protective coatings have made commercial wallcoverings nearly impervious to abrasions, so replacement of strips is rarely an issue.

In addition, wallcoverings defined as scrubbable may be cleaned with nothing more than mild soap, warm water and a gentle sponging—an important feature in active stairwells, corridors and other high-traffic areas.

On the face of it, paint appears to be a less expensive option than wallcoverings in contract settings. An oft-cited 2004 *Commercial Wallcoverings vs. Painting** survey calculated the projected “life-cycle” savings of using commercial vinyl wallcoverings – the most widely used material – over paint, covering a 9-12 year period, which is when building wall surfaces tend to be redecorated (visit www.wallcoverings.org to view complete report).



The data was broken out by region to account for various cost differentials, and allowed for material and labor-projected increases of about 1.5%. In general the upfront cost of wallcoverings is more than double the cost of paint, but since it is a one-time cost, it represents anywhere from a 70-99% savings over the 9-12 year period.

While the aesthetics of one over the other is often a matter of taste, there is no contest when it comes to the design solutions that today's range of commercial wallcoverings offer specifiers and interior designers. There are the sound-busting acoustical performance wallcoverings; the cost-saving sustainable wood wallcoverings; emerging eco-friendly wallcoverings; and the dry-erase styles that are replacing chalkboards since chalk dust has been identified as an asthma trigger – to name a few.

Where does all this innovation leave paint? Not in the dust, but suffice it to say that wallcoverings are giving paint a run for the money.

**Conducted by RJF International*

Contact: Anne Martin 917.817.7557; anne@martinmarcom.com