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After building a highly successful painting business in the Philadelphia area, **Matt Rathgeb** expands his customer-centric blueprint to the national stage with **Groovy Hues.** page 38



# The Artist at Work

by **MATT COSENTINO**  
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After building a highly successful painting business in the Philadelphia area, **Matt Rathgeb** expands his customer-centric blueprint to the national stage with **Groovy Hues**.

**T**here were many points along his journey to becoming a successful entrepreneur when Matt Rathgeb easily could have given up on his dreams. Even now, as he looks back on his path to overcoming addiction, only to struggle with getting his then-fledgling painting company off the ground, he's not sure how he survived.

But Rathgeb is nothing if not persistent. His tenacity, creativity, and positivity enabled him to beat the long odds stacked against him.

"In the beginning you're wearing every single hat: the estimator, the salesperson, the person who answers the phone, and the painter," he recalls. "It's tough because you're doing every single job, and that's why most people don't make it through

that stage. They get so overwhelmed that they want to give up, and trust me, I thought about quitting a bunch of times at that stage."

Yet he fought through the doubts and faced every challenge.

"Eventually you're able to hire people and you learn to delegate and to systemize things," he adds. "It's been quite a journey and sometimes I don't know how I got through it, but it was really just waking up every single day, doing the little things behind the scenes, and never giving up, no matter what."

Those lean years are long gone for Rathgeb, who in two decades built Rathgeb Painting into a flourishing business. He recently joined forces with a national partner and rebranded his company under the name Groovy Hues. Devoted to "spreading positivity through paint," Groovy Hues provides an array of painting services—interior, exterior, and commercial, as well as ancillary services such as power washing.

Although his business is now part of a larger overall home-services corporation known as HorsePower Brands, Rathgeb owns 100 percent of Groovy Hues Greater Philadelphia. His enterprise will act as the flagship location of the painting division and be a model for other franchises across the country.

"We're taking the systems and processes that we've implemented and have made us successful locally, and applying them on a national stage to support franchisees who are opening painting businesses throughout the country," he says. "They're going to follow our model, which is customer-centric and uses software, technology, and CRM to make it a more pleasant experience for the client."

"Other than a few exceptions, there haven't been a lot of professional painting models in the industry, which is why we wanted to support other franchisees," he continues. "It's been awesome for me to be in a position to offer them help to grow their business. They reach out to me all the time with issues they have day to day, and I help coach them through it."

The fact that Rathgeb is now guiding others is a testament to his own work ethic and a credit to the mentors who helped foster his success. He learned the values of a blue-collar career while growing up in the Lawncrest section of Northeast Philadelphia, but he got sidetracked by substance abuse and homelessness. After fully committing himself to his recovery, he was attending an addiction meeting one day when he was introduced to a fellow recovering addict in painter's overalls. That man, Bob Morrow, took Rathgeb under his wing and changed his life.

"I could tell [Morrow] was a great person, so I started asking him for help in the recovery space," Rathgeb recalls. "His demeanor and how he carried himself as a

guy coming off the streets who wanted to change his life was exactly what I wanted. The painting was a secondary thing that later became a passion.”

Rathgeb started working for Morrow’s painting business, which was based in Chestnut Hill. At the time, he was a high school dropout with few marketable skills, and he lacked a clear direction for his career.

“I really learned from [Morrow] how to live right, but he was also teaching me painting simultaneously,” Rathgeb recalls. “I had nothing to fall back on, no education or anything, so I treated the painting industry like it was the only shot I had to obtain any type of success. That was a blessing at the time, because I went all in with it.”

Rathgeb absorbed as much he could from Morrow, read widely about how to build and operate a successful business, and consulted with business coaches. Once he felt ready, he went out on his own and steadily built a strong customer base. He ultimately got to the point where he was landing major projects for interior and exterior jobs in high-end neighborhoods, which he saw as necessary growth that enabled him to expand his team.

In addition, he developed important relationships with people such as renowned Keller Williams Realtor Mike McCann. McCann started referring his own clients to Rathgeb, which he continues to do to this day.

“I met Mike at a real estate conference, and we hit it off right away and became great friends,” he says. “He’s been an incredible mentor to me, not just in growing my business but in helping me invest in real estate.”

Likewise, Rathgeb’s relationship with Josh Skolnick, the entrepreneur behind HorsePower Brands, led to his role with Groovy Hues. Each time he speaks with a



Rathgeb attributes much of his success to vital relationships with mentors such as renowned Keller Williams Realtor Mike McCann.

franchisee, Rathgeb shares the business philosophy that fueled the success of his own company: Nothing matters more than the customer experience. With Groovy Hues, clients can expect informative, no-pressure sales calls, free color consultations with a designer, quick and convenient scheduling, zero-percent financing options, and clear communication throughout the duration of the project.

Rathgeb believes those values will yield

fruit for other franchisees as well.

“I’ve spoken to Josh multiple times over the last decade and have always looked up to him,” he says. “Aside from his impressive career, which speaks for itself, our core values have always been the same. It was only a matter of time before we naturally connected in the business world. It’s been amazing so far.

“I’ve been blessed to have great support and mentors,” he continues. “I thank God every day for the Bob Morrrows, Josh Skolnicks, and Mike McCanns of the world. From the guidance of people like them, I’ve learned immeasurable life lessons. Now, I can pass them on to others. What a gift!”

Who can blame Rathgeb for his optimism? His rise to becoming not only a successful business owner but also a family man with four children proves that almost anything is possible through hard work, positive thinking, and guidance from a few trusted mentors.

“I travel a couple of times a year throughout the country to speak at painters’ conventions, and I always say that painting was the perfect symmetry between where I was at in my life and trying to get my life together,” he says. “The work itself saved my life, because it calmed me down. I had low self-esteem, but painting gave me a purpose every day and I loved everything about it. As I got better, not just at the skill itself but the business, it gave me so much confidence to keep moving forward. And that’s what I’ve been doing ever since.” ■



Rathgeb with his family



## Groovy Hues of Greater Philadelphia

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