

# Floor Finishing Mythology, Part 2

by Rick Meehan, Vice President of Marko Janitorial Supply,  
[www.MarkoInc.com](http://www.MarkoInc.com)



Last month in *eClean*, we began dispelling the myths about floor finishing. As a quick review, we discussed the need to understand the following before tacking a floor coating job:

1. TYPE of floor to be coated.
2. COATING recommended by flooring manufacturer or other authority.
3. AMOUNT of square footage to be coated.
4. PROCEDURE for applying the particular coating.
5. TOOLS needed for applying the coating most efficiently.
6. LABOR broken down by hours, people, and wages to completion.
7. TOTAL COST of all products and labor required.

Let's continue where we left off...

Quality of acrylic finishes is of major importance when determining job costs, but more importantly, quality directly affects customer satisfaction. If a customer's floor isn't shiny enough, scratches easily, in short, looks bad, do you think they're going to hire you again? Resolving the quality issue is easy enough; however, selling quality is perhaps the most important factor in customer satisfaction. Help the customer afford the level of floor finish that is required for their particular situation.

As a perfect example, which may be applied to almost any other client, let's discuss large, established church floors.

Grand old churches are notorious for adding on and remodeling rather than tearing down and rebuilding. This means that multiple floor types of various ages can usually be found in them. Plus, large churches in general experience heavy foot traffic at least once every week, sometimes every day. They usually offer many classrooms, several sanctuaries, a gymnasium, conference rooms, offices, restrooms, youth facilities, adult facilities, day care facilities, schools – in short, every floor covering known to man from birth to death can be found in them.

Floor maintenance is a huge headache, especially in those gyms. So, what type or types of acrylic finishes should be offered to help them maintain a high appearance, withstand the traffic, save the most money on stripping and refinishing in the long run? The answer lies in understanding details about acrylic finishes.

Metal interlocked acrylic polymer floor finishes, the most common coating used on resilient floors today, would be excellent choices for big old churches. Factors to consider when choosing the finish are:

- **Coverage** – usually ranges from 1000 to 2500 square feet per gallon.
- **Drying Time** – usually ranges from 20 to 40 minutes per coat depending on weather conditions. Rain means much longer drying time; sun means much shorter of course.
- **Freeze/Thaw Stability** – it is best not

to allow acrylics to freeze, period.

- **Gloss Rating (ASTM D 1455-87 Testing Standard)** – the higher the number the greater the light reflect-ability, or shine. A finish rated 75-90 is considered brilliant. This is an actual test, not a subjective choice.

- **Heel Mark Resistance** – Subjective by manufacturer ranging from good to excellent. In general, more expensive acrylics have a better resistance due to higher quality ingredients.

- **Leveling** – Most acrylics are termed “self-leveling” which means they will spread evenly and flatten even if bubbling occurs during initial application.

This is another subjective rating that ranges from good to excellent.

- **pH** – Most acrylics will fall between 8 – 9 on this scale. This has nothing to do with longevity, simply a tech spec for the material safety data sheet.

- **Recoat** – The ability of the finish to be recoated without stripping original finish first. This is subjective, but in general, no problems occur from recoating the exact same product on itself.

- **Shelf Life** – This is an estimate of how long a sealed container of unused finish can remain in storage before it goes bad. Acrylic finishes will rot like milk. Fresh product smells slightly sweet with a touch of ammonia, while old product smells distinctly bad! Never apply finish that smells rotten.

- **Specific Gravity** – This refers to the density of the liquid versus the density of water. With water rated at 1.0, the higher the rating, the thicker the product. Thickness makes a difference for self-leveling and spread-ability. Acrylics fall within 1.01 – 1.04.

- **Percent Solids** – Of all the features in an acrylic coating, the solids content,

which refers to the amount of acrylic in water, is perhaps the most important quality-defining feature. Solids content in acrylics range from 10% to 35%. If quality products are being considered, a higher solid content usually means a better finish.

Since a wide variety of acrylics are available, it takes a thorough understanding of these features to choose the right finish for the job. In the case of large churches that plan to administer to the congregation forever, the approach is to choose a finish that will withstand the volume of traffic, last the longest under those conditions, and can be easily maintained over the long run. The biggest expense the church (or any client) will incur is the stripping and re-waxing of the floors. The longer the finish lasts, the less money invested.

To save a large church (or any client) the most money while making a good profit on the application and maintenance of the floor finish requires a plan. As a contractor, the plan is synonymous with long-term profits. With a church, every member is a potential client. If these clients are happy with the look of their floors, they will tell



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everyone they know about it; likewise the opposite. I usually recommend selling the highest quality finish to large churches for this reason.

The best type of finish I have found rates a high gloss, heel mark resistance, and 33 percent solids content. There are many good brands to choose from in this category. With high solids content, a good quality finish will be very resistant to even extreme gym floor use. My company sells one that remains on gym floors for several years without the need to strip while still looking fresh. Of course, proper maintenance must occur. That aspect should be part of the contractor's sales plan too.

An add-on sale is to return with high-speed buffing equipment to polish those expensive acrylic floors as needed. This ongoing cost is still far lower than starting over from scratch. Churches

like that because their funds are limited by congregational giving. With proper sales techniques, any contractor can use these arguments to convince other types of customers of the benefits of applying quality floor finishes, plus returning for maintenance polishing. Over the long haul, both client and contractor benefit – the perfect sale!

A final aspect to choosing the right finish is the ability of the finish to be used on multiple floor types. Generally, the same water-based gym floor rated acrylic finish can be used on every other resilient floor in those large churches, so why sell multiple coating types to the same customer? Remember this: the more complicated you make the issue, the lower your profits. Too many factors increase the chances of making errors.

Every floor coating requires knowledge, experience, and training. If you have a quality professional finish that works great in high-traffic situations, then what's more costly, training for many types of finish applications or training for one?

I contend that choosing a limited group of floor finish products that work well in a large variety of situations is the least expensive cost to the contractor and insures better performance for the customer. Specializing in those few finishes insures fewer complaints and greater repeat business. While most floor finishing jobs are relatively easy to perform, choosing the proper finish for each situation requires dispelling the myths by acquiring detailed product knowledge coupled with practice, practice, practice. Any cleaning agency may become a legendary floor maintenance company if care is taken to aggressively understand the world of coatings rather than assuming they know it all.

*Rick Meehan is the Vice President of Marko Janitorial Supply, which has been selling a full range of janitorial products since 1968. To learn more about their*

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