

Company name: Harrison Muir Inc.

Jurisdiction: Predominantly in Ontario, with selected projects in other locations

Established: 1962

Specialty: Diversified protective coating and contracting services to municipal, industrial, auto, food and beverage, power, biotech and energy sectors.



DEVELOPING INTERNAL STRENGTHS FOR BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE

Preamble: Dan Orrett spoke with Top Coat about what Harrison Muir believes in and how it chooses to operate in a market that increasingly likes to throw curve balls. For this performance-oriented company, the key is self-reliance — supporting their home-grown teams, investing in and maintaining their own equipment, and customizing their decision-making tools and technologies. The result is agility. It's a customer service formula that works.



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The recession has amplified the last-minute nature of the market, making agility even more of a competitive advantage.

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very dynamic. One year, the majority of work might come from a few large bridges or power plants, the next year from many smaller jobs for private industrial plants: you can't predict where the business will come from year to year. Also, in a market downturn, clients may have the money today but not tomorrow, so if you get a PO, it's best to jump on it before it is cancelled. Look what's happened to automotive!

It is evident that today's market carries huge business continuity risks being a union painting contractor. We have to know how the competitive market is changing regionally and by sector and concentrate on those markets we can effectively compete in. To perform, we have to have our ear to the street and be agile.

At Harrison Muir, "teamwork" also embraces third party relationships.

We place a lot of emphasis on the team. We're a larger organization, so we have depth in terms of our crews, with more than half a

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dozen supervisors. My partners - Jack Mills, our founder, and Bill Mogavero — and I are all "doers." We're not afraid to tackle new things, and we respect the fact that someone else may be able to provide better input in certain areas than ourselves. We bring skills from all





types of construction, which allows us to take on multi-faceted projects. We foster strong relationships with our labour partners and material suppliers and sub-trades. We have a lot of integrity in terms of accounts payable. We won't finance our business on our suppliers' money. It all helps when you have an emergency situation.

A strategic investment in equipment and resources allows for quick turnaround.

We invest heavily in equipment and resources so that we can handle multiple projects, and we keep both well-maintained. While most of our equipment is available locally through rental firms, by owning equipment we control logistics internally, mobilizing our equipment from the shop to the field, so we're not depending on a rental company. We're performance-oriented as individuals; it's about cooperating with the client and servicing them.

No assumptions: Harrison Muir believes in a rigorous approach to pricing.

We take a methodical, customized approach to pricing. Most projects fall in to general repeat scopes of work with site or logically specific twists. Often it's a one-off estimate process, within the parameters of that type of work - an approach that probably comes from Jack and I being civil engineers. We like to analyze things. It leads to competitive and realistic pricing that addresses the clients' needs and concerns.

Good communication combined with customized software means no surprises.

These days, the highly dynamic nature of business and more important client issues means that painting and maintenance is often subject to budget and last minute constraints. We manage this uncertainty by fostering a tremendous amount of transparency in our company—we're always communicating our activities and opportunities with one another. Another strength is using today's technology to reduce costs and risk, and create efficiencies in basically every aspect of our business — just ask "Jack Blackberry Mills." We've computerized most of our systems, which puts all the information at our fingertips and helps

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us roll out a project faster. When one of our supervisors fills in an order, for example, he'll use a computerized equipment requisition that's been customized for the job.

In a market where minutes matter, Harrison Muir harnesses high-tech tools.

Digital gadgetry enables endless efficiencies for our operations. We leverage technology in all

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areas of our work processes and business, from network and communications, to management tools and programs. We don't shy away from new technologies, and instead embrace it as a means of improving our operations and customer service. If something urgent comes up, we can address the issue immediately – our use of various 'gadgets' and technologies enables us to continue working seamlessly.

Cultivating a reputation for fairness is one way Harrison Muir attracts and retains its people.

I would say on top of our list of strengths is our people. We treat our people well – fairly and respectfully. We also emphasize safety and workplace compliance. We're known in the industry to be fair, and we have huge respect for our labour partners, The International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades.

Harrison Muir has a long history in the industrial painting and coating business. We expect to continue this legacy through our leading business practices, the internal development of unique tools, our ability to adapt to change, and our innovative approach to solving our clients' challenges.

