

# THE 20-GROUP EXPERIENCE

**“Where else could I get a room full of consultants to help me with my business, for what it cost me to attend this meeting?”**

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## **Background**

The 20-group concept goes back to the automotive industry in the 1940s when auto dealers decided to form small groups of non-competing dealerships. The dealers met together a few times a year to exchange ideas, identify best practices and discover opportunities and challenges facing their businesses.

While the number of DuPont™ Star Coaters<sup>SM</sup> represents a much smaller group, the concept of these 20-groups is nevertheless meaningful, just as it was for the automotive industry. For that same reason though, we can only place about eight to ten companies in one group due to the geographical territories of custom powder coating shops.

## **Antitrust**

The 20-group philosophy is build on the idea of small groups of non-competing companies working together to network and learn best practices for their businesses. Great care is taken up front to ensure that competitive lines are not crossed between the members. As a result, they feel free to talk openly, sharing successes and failures, and *dollars and sense*. Each typically has their own niche and unique way of serving their markets. However, as powder coaters, they have a lot in common and can come together to learn and grow. All of the groups are well-versed in antitrust guidelines. Without this backbone, these groups could not exist.

## **Group members**

If you were a casual observer at one of these meetings, you would see a group of open-minded, forward thinking business people always in pursuit of ways to improve their businesses. A great deal of respect is present among the members. Each contributes to the quality of the meetings and they all understand and take seriously their commitment to not only be present but also to come to the meetings prepared. The meeting locations rotate around so that each company will eventually serve as host. DuPont assists the host company in planning the agenda and logistical details.

## **What do they share?**

Though the meetings are facilitated by DuPont personnel, these groups decide their own agenda. They have also chosen to participate in benchmarking exercises, comparing certain aspects of their business and how they perform. Sometimes the groups elect to bring parts they have quoted and the discussion might involve a lesson in “what went wrong” or “how well this job worked out.” They have developed such a strong network that they have actually sold machinery among themselves and recommended each other to other companies who need their niche services. They often email each other with an urgent technical issue and look to their group for guidance. They are a team.

An important part of each meeting is the audit. Group members are given an audit form and a clipboard. They rate the different processes involved in the powder coating operation. Later in the meeting, the group openly discusses their findings with the host company.

## ***There are now three groups of Star Coaters, the A-Team, the All Stars, and the Masters.***

### **The A-Team**

If you were to speak with any of the members of this group, they would tell you that, to them, the greatest benefit of their membership in Star Coaters is their involvement with this small group. They would tell you that the networking with other like-businesses has encouraged them to take their own shops to a new level of operation. In many ways, it has changed how they do business.

This group was formed in 2003. They meet twice a year, in the Fall and Spring. They have already visited all the facilities of their counterparts in the group and are on their second round of visits.



### **Current A-Team members include:**

Dave Arney & Steve Hockett, **Advanced Ind'l Ctgs**, Stockton, CA  
Jay & Dona Burkard, **Burkard Industries**, Clinton Twshp, MI  
Rich King & Terry Krebs, **Cost Effective Ctgs.**, North East, PA  
Erik & Gloria Ender, **Freedom Finishing**, Benton Harbor, MI  
John Heyer, **Kettle Moraine Ctgs.**, Jackson, WI  
Bill Stock & Rose Boyle, **Microfinish**, St. Louis, MO  
Bob Zimmerli, **Plastonics**, Hartford, CT  
Ivan Reed, **SourceOne**, Lincoln, NE

## The All Stars

This group was formed in 2005 and they have developed the same harmony, devotion, and respect as that of the A-Team. Attendance continues to be their priority. This group would tell you that each of their meetings brings unique conversations and learning experiences. They also have visited each facility represented by the group and recently met in Houston, Texas at the DuPont Powder facility.



### Current All Stars members include:

Randy Winkler & Brenda Boreman, **Imperial Metal Sol.**, Cleveland, OH  
Larry Sloan, **Plas-Tech Coatings**, West Chester, PA  
John McGeehan, **Powder Coating Inc.**, Mulkipto, WA  
Lanny & Donna Woods, **Pro-kote LLC**, Jackson, TN  
Steve Rogers, **Rogers Mfg.**, Olathe, KS  
Kenny Spielman, **S & B Finishing**, Chicago, IL  
Brian & Jeanne Bell, **Westside Finishing**, Holyoke, MA

## The Masters

This group was formed in 2008 and is really just getting started. Their goal is to realize the same benefits from their group as the first two groups. They are still in the relationship building stage but will soon garner the trust and respect that becomes integral in a 20-group.



### Current Masters members include:

Bruce Bryan, **Acme Finishing**, Elk Grove Village, IL  
Greg Yahn, **Advanced Finishing USA**, Fairview, PA  
Robert McDonald, **Armour Powder Coating**, Cambridge, Ontario  
Wayne Wallace, **Augusta Coating & Mfg.**, Thomson, GA  
Kevin & Kraig Maas, **Maas Brothers Inc.**, Livermore, CA  
Robert Norris, **Nor-ell Inc.**, St. Paul, MN  
Stephen Walters, **Progressive Coating**, Chicago, IL  
Steve Dolan & Jeff Nathan, **Teknicote, Inc.**, Cumberland, RI

### Is this for you?

Carefully consider whether your involvement in a 20-Group could benefit you and your business. One of our current 20-Group members, Ivan Reed of SourceOne in Lincoln, Neb. has volunteered to take your calls with any questions about The 20-Group Experience. His phone number is 402-474-6603, his email is [ireed@sourceonex.com](mailto:ireed@sourceonex.com).

Feel free to call Star Coater Central, 713-996-1890 or email [starcoater.powder@usa.dupont.com](mailto:starcoater.powder@usa.dupont.com) for more information or to obtain an application.

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