



# HOW NOT TO BUY A PAINT BOOTH

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Purchasing a paint booth is not a small investment. The right paint booth allows you to meet process needs, lasts a long time and pays itself off with increased productivity and energy savings. The wrong paint booth purchase can lead to many problems, including overspray on vehicles and in your shop, non-compliance with current codes, and many other health and safety hazards for your employees and shop. You can protect your business from making a poor investment by learning how not to buy a paint booth.

## DON'T: BUILD YOUR OWN BOOTH

A quick internet search for “how to build a homemade paint booth” will leave you with many results about how a trip to the local hardware store can supply you with everything you need to assemble a homemade paint booth for your shop. As easy and cheap as it may seem, these guides often ignore the logistical hurdles and safety concerns involved in constructing a homemade paint booth.



Unlike buying a paint booth that has been carefully engineered for your needs, a homemade paint booth will likely not provide the airflow you need. Improper airflow can result in overspray on the item being painted, which leads to a poor-quality paint job,

increased rework and decreased customer satisfaction. Overspray also can be common on the booth's walls, which poses a fire hazard and contributes to paint finish quality issues, as well as on the painter, which can have significant health consequences.

As it is nearly impossible to contain all of the hazardous vapors and particles from paint in a homemade paint booth, there are many serious health and safety concerns involved with building your own booth. Without proper containment, hazardous fumes and particles are released into your shop, where workers not wearing protective equipment are exposed. Once a painter's exposure to certain chemicals, such as isocyanates, reaches a certain level, it can result in breathing problems, asthma, hives and rashes, and be potentially career-ending.

Additionally, many components of homemade paint booths are not designed to handle chemical coatings and need to be replaced often or become non-functional and hazardous to your shop. Many homemade paint booths are constructed using plywood; when soaked with overspray over time, that becomes a significant fire hazard.

There are also applicable laws and codes – enforced by the EPA, NFPA and OSHA – that are necessary for operating your paint booth. Depending on placement, many paint booth components, such as fans and light fixtures, are required to be explosion-proof. Strict requirements exist regarding air velocity, UL listed components and fire suppression systems that must be approved before you can start painting in your booth. Due to inadequate airflow, filtration and fire hazards, homemade paint booths are not code compliant. Operating in a booth that does not meet code compliance can lead to health and safety issues, as well as hefty fines.

A homemade paint booth may seem desirable due to the low cost and its easy, do-it-yourself nature, but the final finish will make it clear that it is not a true paint booth. It lacks proper airflow, proper parts and much of



the safety and code compliance assurances that come with investing in a new, well-engineered paint booth.

## DON'T: PURCHASE A USED PAINT BOOTH

The price of buying a used paint booth may initially seem low, but once you factor in the unknowns — the condition of the booth, lack of proper documentation and the cost and hassle of teardown, shipping and assembly — it can quickly become an expensive, time-consuming project. Before you type in “used paint booth for sale craigslist” into Google, consider the following issues with purchasing used booths.

If you are in the market for a used paint booth, you are at the mercy of the seller to know its condition. You also may not know the maintenance history of the booth, which plays an important role in its safety and longevity.

Depending on the former owner, documentation about the booth may also be hard to come by. This includes items such as assembly instructions, booth manuals and replacement parts lists. All of this information is needed for putting the booth back together once it has been torn down, ordering replacement parts and filters and receiving the permits required to begin painting.



Assuming the used paint booth was well taken care of and all of the documentation has been provided, the next hurdle is obtaining and assembling the booth. Even the most careful teardown and packing will likely lead to damaged or missing parts. Shipping is also not as straightforward as you'd think. Paint booths are not meant to be portable and shipping a large crate or several crates on a truck is not cheap.

Once you start assembling a used booth, you will quickly learn that the booth was designed for a different business and workflow, requiring modifications or alterations to make it work for your needs. Also, if the floor of the shop isn't perfectly level, the alignment of the booth panels will be off, making installation nearly impossible. Uneven flooring is a common issue, and for that reason, some paint booth manufacturers, such as Global Finishing Solutions (GFS), feature floor track leveling in their booths to

accommodate flooring differences and make installation easy and secure.



Although the initial low cost of a used paint booth may be appealing, all of the additional costs and headaches make it not worth it. The cost alone of the amount of time spent figuring out how to reassemble the booth, get it up and running, and obtain proper permits should make a new paint booth seem like a steal.

## DON'T: BUY THE MOST EXPENSIVE BOOTH

On the other end of the spectrum, buying the most expensive paint booth on the market is not necessarily the best decision. A salesperson isn't likely to fight you on it, but you may not need a booth with all the bells and whistles included. Chances are, you just need a booth with the right bell or whistle.

Top-of-the-line paint booths are packed full of features designed for high-production shops. But just as there is good reason a collision repair center would be interested in a premium airflow system option on a higher-end booth, there are legitimate reasons why a shop may not need options like a four-wing entry door, dual-skin insulated panels and a sidewall observation window.

By selecting the most expensive paint booth on the market, you are shorting yourself an opportunity to optimize the booth for your own shop's needs, while taking into account shop space and output. Having options provides shop owners a lot of flexibility in creating the perfect booth for their operation. For some, this may mean an economy-level booth with some added options, while another may be best suited for a more premium booth with no add-ons.

## DO: BUY A QUALITY PAINT BOOTH

The truth is that even a no-frills paint booth will perform leaps and bounds better than a homemade or used booth. The price tag to make your own booth may be appealing, but it comes at the cost of putting the health and safety of yourself and your employees in jeopardy. A used paint booth may then sound like the best of



both worlds — you get an actual booth for a much lower price. The reality is that the chances that a used booth will be in good condition, have the proper documentation and survive both teardown and reassembly are basically non-existent. This means the price will increase significantly, as will the amount of time spent correcting these issues.

There is no question that going all in on a premium booth will yield great results. But what if you could get similar results with a less expensive booth tailored specifically to your operation?



Many paint booth manufacturers, like GFS, sell through distribution so that businesses have a resource in their area to guide them through the purchasing process. This ensures you get the right booth, under warranty, and are saved from all of the hassle when buying a used one. With local representation, shops have a knowledgeable resource to consult on local codes and regulations. Many distributors also assist in replacing parts and filters, as well as providing any service needs when it comes to preventative maintenance or booth repairs. Whether you are designing a new facility or buying a new booth for an established shop, working with the experts will ensure you are paying for a paint booth that aligns with your goals and expected shop output, instead of investing in one that won't turn a profit.