



The hidden cost of cheap paint rollers

The price of paint rollers vary in price from a few dollars to over \$20. Why would you pay more? The answer is productivity. The quality of the material used to make the fabric can make a big difference to your productivity.

The productivity of different paint roller fabric materials used under the same circumstances (same person, roller speed, temperature, surface etc.) is very different. A comparison from one of the paint roller manufacturer, rolling one coat on a wall/ceiling using different fabric material paints the picture:

Polyamide/sheepskin	70m ² per hour	High quality material
Polyacrylic	45m ² per hour	Medium quality material
Polyester	35 m ² per hour	Cheap material

Using the productivity figures from Resene Paints to completely finish 70m² of ceiling/walls with 3 coats (using a factor 0.24 to convert m² to hours) will take about 17 hours with a high quality roller. The actual painting time is only 3 hours. Therefore, using a poor quality roller will have double the actual painting time and will take about 20 hours all together.

What if a roller paints only 10% more productive? This means 10% quicker painting or saving 15 min for the 70m² 3 coat-job. A painter could earn at least \$12 more using a 10% better roller at \$45/hr. Assuming that the cheap roller costs \$12 and the only slightly better roller costs \$20 (10% better in this case):

Then the cost of a better roller is earned back in 2 painting hours, as you can paint 10% more in the same time and you will have a better quality finish and less splatter.

The calculations above are based on a real test example for a European manufacturer and confirmed by Dulux and on the Resene productivity tables. Cheaper fabrics do serve a purpose. Good microfibers for paint rollers are an example of polyester/polyamide blend but the smart and super fine structure of the fibres still makes them extremely productive. The productivity will depend on manufacturing process and structure of the fabric. Coating fabrics with Teflon also increases the productivity of the fabric dramatically (up to 30%).

The conclusion is clear, spending a little more on the roller with a better fabric, will save you time and money. If you are not sure about fabric materials, choose Polyamide rollers. Information can be difficult to find and many paint rollers have limited info on the package. Be aware that not all polyamide or microfibers rollers have the same productivity. Never go for the cheaper roller sleeves if the price is the only reason. Try different rollers to find the best rollers for your jobs. A more expensive roller can pay back its price within hours of painting.

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