It's a typical summer day in Atlanta. The sun is blazing, humidity is around 85 percent, and the temperature is a blistering 90 degrees Fahrenheit. A professional finisher with more than 20 years in the construction industry is working on a job. Hang the drywall, attach the tape, apply the first coat of mud, scrape and smooth, wait to dry, sand. Repeat at least once or twice more. The finisher has been working for hours. He is hot and tired. His arms are sore from holding the mud pan. His muscles are aching from the repetitive movements necessary to do a good job. He thinks to himself that there must be a better way.

Finisher by day, artist by night, he relaxes at home with his canvas and paints. Many thoughts swirl through his mind. How can he
He thinks and he paints. He even uses some tools of his trade in his art—drywall mud to create a three-dimensional effect on his paintings.

He continues to think and paint. Then he begins to experiment. What happens if he does this? What if he adds that? Does it do anything? No, not really. Not for the long term.

Then, one day, it happened.

The finisher added something to the mud, and it changed everything. The mud became smoother and easier to apply. It wasn’t as bubbly. When it dried, it dried evenly and not in splotches.
When he went to sand it, he found fewer rough spots and pockmarks.

The finisher began working with his new invention. Perhaps it was just a fluke, but he continued to use it in his art.

Then, he began to use it in his home. Finally, he started using it on the job.

He noticed how he completed his jobs faster. The mud spread on walls and ceilings easier. It glided over corner bead more evenly. He didn’t have to sand as much anymore. His muscles weren’t aching as badly since he had reduced his repetitive motions. To top it all off, the finish looked beautiful.

The finisher-artist had become a finisher-artist-inventor. His invention is Dr. Smooth Mud. He started sharing Dr. Smooth Mud with his friends in the construction business, and they achieved the same great results. He then brought his idea to investors. They believed in him, and in his product. Mikel and Company, LLC was formed soon thereafter.

Dr. Smooth Muds “coming-out party” took place at the AWCI annual convention in San Antonio, Texas, in March 2002. The comment that “Dr. Smooth Mud is going to revolutionize the industry” was heard more than once.

**What Is Dr. Smooth Mud?**

Dr. Smooth Mud is a TriCoPolymer™ liquid admix for commercially prepared drywall mud. Three co-polymers work together to maintain the integrity of the spherical structure of the gypsum, strengthen the bonds among minerals, and create an ordered chemical structure.

All of this results in a smoother product with less shrinkage, fewer bubbles and pockmarks; it therefore requires less sanding. Labor costs are cut dramatically since application is easier and
practices still exist because they are used in an attempt to change the mud for easier hand and machine tool application. The problem is that the addition of such products can void the manufacturers’ warranties.

On the other hand, if finishers add Dr. Smooth Mud (and only Dr. Smooth Mud) after the recommended amount of water is added to their joint compound, they can then offer their customers a three-year limited warranty. Drywall mud treated with Dr. Smooth Mud creates the smoother consistency needed for faster and easier application, even with the use of mechanical tools.

**In the Lab**

Claims made by the makers of Dr. Smooth Mud are backed up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Paper Adhesion</th>
<th>Shrinkage¹</th>
<th>Edge Cracking</th>
<th>Smoothness²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Brand B (dry)</td>
<td>Water 2% DSM 100%</td>
<td>Water 5% DSM 2%</td>
<td>Water 0</td>
<td>Water 2 DSM 3 50% 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Brand C (wet)</td>
<td>2% 100%</td>
<td>22% 11%</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>3 4 130% 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Shrinkage measured when dry
² 1 = very rough, 2 = rough, 3 = slight roughness, 4 = smooth
by research. Tests performed on Dr. Smooth Mud by an independent laboratory focused on ASTM standard C474-01. Scientists also tested other associated properties of the product. Different brands and types (dry and wet) of joint compounds were used in the tests.

ASTM properties tested include shrinkage, paper adhesion and edge cracking under moderate and cold temperature conditions. The tests performed demonstrate that joint compounds mixed with Dr. Smooth Mud shrink less, have greater paper adhesion, and have fewer occurrences of edge cracking compared to joint compounds not mixed with Dr. Smooth Mud.

Associated properties tested include smoothness, paint adhesion and drying time. Joint compounds with Dr. Smooth Mud had a smoother consistency, improved paint adhesion and produced uniform, controlled drying instead of spotty drying. (Refer to Table 1 on page 82 and Table 2 above for a summary of the results.)

In the Field

Experienced finishers, naturally skeptical about a new product on the market, were given Dr. Smooth Mud to try. The skeptics were pleasantly surprised. Some of them even want to now become sales representatives for the product! In the past five years, more than 1,800 professionals across the country have tried Dr. Smooth Mud. Observations include the following:

- Decreased air entrapment, resulting in a smoother finish.
- Sanding time reduced up to 70 percent.
- Fewer re-coats to achieve desired level of a professional finish.

Dr. Smooth Muds inventor continues his quest to improve the finishing profession. Additional applications of Dr. Smooth Mud are being explored, and Mikel and Company is working toward the creation of a new ASTM standard. Through representation on the ASTM Committee on Gypsum and Related Building Materials, Mikel and Company intends to propose the creation of a higher standard, a level 5 finish, which is believed to be possible with two or three applications of joint compound with Dr. Smooth Mud.