
Embracing Technology – Digital Reproduction Magazine May 2006

The world is changing, consumers tastes are changing, and businesses like ours need to change with it.

In an age of technology, today's retail consumer is flooded on a daily basis with new concepts and methods of marketing & merchandising, encouraging them to spend their luxury dollars on new & innovating products. It would be fair to say that today's consumer has more choices in luxury items to buy, but not necessarily more dollars to spend. So this has created a "raging battle" for market share which is going to get harder over time. Those who will win this "war" will know how to attract and engage their target customers with unique concepts and products that offer an individual experience.

There has been a strong trend towards new technologically advanced products like Ipods & Plasma / LCD TVs, DVD's, Digital Cameras, Playstations, etc; which is a clear indication that today's retail consumer is very ready to embrace new technology as soon as it is available. Today's consumers are no longer conservative. They expect to be entertained and excited in a retail environment.

This growing appeal of consumer technology has dramatically changed the face of many industries and markets over the last 5 years, and will continue to change the landscape of our combined industries – For example -

The signwriting industry has changed; most signs are now printed on wide format solvent based printers, rather than painted by hand.

The printing industry has changed; typesetters and film strippers who previously had to do an extensive apprenticeship are now obsolete.

The "1 hour photo" printing industry has changed so dramatically that it has failed to react to the changes in digital technology, and as a result, many of these shops are closing down at a rapid rate.

Even the framing industry has endured some serious change...

20 years ago, the fine craft of picture framing was a very manual process, with simple mechanisation. Now, the leading framing businesses rely less on skilled staff, and more on advanced computerised equipment such as computerised matcutters, computerised underpinners, computerised double-mitre saws, and even the task of price quoting is now commonly calculated with computerised POS systems. More recently, faxes and phones are becoming obsolete as orders to wholesalers can be made automatically online as well.

New framing visualisation software is about to hit the market Australia, and this is going to make some big changes into what consumers expect when they decide to shop for custom framing. This new technology directly engages the consumer, and offers them a unique way to "experience" their purchase, visualise different framing concepts before the work is done. I can already see that in 10 years time,

this technology will no longer be a point of difference; it will be an expectation and a requirement.

Digital printing is yet another new "technology driven" concept entering in the custom picture framing arena, which is driving new changes and new demands. Customers are becoming aware that they can now get their own images & photographs printed onto canvas & other media, and they now want to create a modern, unique and personalised wall hangings for their homes.

More than ever before, today's retail consumer is paying more for products that offer them an individual, unique experience. Custom framing combined with digital reproduction fits comfortably into this category.

Today's consumer is much more aware of technology, and now expects to be engaged by it in their retail experiences. For example - quoting a price from a POS system is no longer a "point of difference", it is an expectation. Being able to offer a double-layered, multiple opening mat with ovals is no longer a "point of difference", it is an expectation.

Merchandising and presentation needs to be considered much more by custom frameshop owners than ever before. Framers need to think more "retail", learn how to sell, and eliminate the traditional "I'm just a paid by the hour carpenter" mentality which most seem to suffer.

The battle for market share is only going to become more aggressive, and those who will survive will be the ones who recognise what today's consumer expects, and meets those expectations.

If you haven't already done so, now is the time to embrace new technology, and find the answers you need for your business to be able to retain or increase its market share in the future. If you don't start to consider this, and make the investment and changes your business requires to survive this changing landscape, you may find that someone else will meet the market instead of you, leaving you behind to pick up the scraps.

Complacency does not create market leaders, nor does it create new business. Only those that recognise these changes, and react accordingly, will be the ones who profit at the end of the day.

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With over 15 years experience in the framing & graphics industry, Jared Davis CPF, GCF has covered the wholesale, commercial and retail aspects of the business. His previous sales, marketing & training experience gives him an understanding of the changing opportunities for retail businesses, and he offers an up-to-date approach on new methods and techniques now required by today's business owners, to be able to successfully market, merchandise and sell their services to consumers. Jared is also a featured educator at major international industry tradeshows & conventions.