
Don't Give Them Away: How To Sell and Price Fancy Mat Corners and V-Grooves

Many custom framers these days rely on computerized mat cutters (CMCs) for mat cutting, and this technology has allowed for the sale of new, creative design opportunities, especially fancy corners and V-grooves.

With most CMC software packages, there is usually a vast array of new shapes and fancy corners in the way of templates. These designs are easy to create and can add substantial value. However, for many custom framers, these concepts tread on new ground, and the uncertainty of how to price and sell them can make it easy to essentially "give away" these extra design elements to customers.

I've found that there has been both a slight level of confusion and a lack of confidence when it comes to selling and pricing these enhanced design elements. So, let's take a look at both aspects:

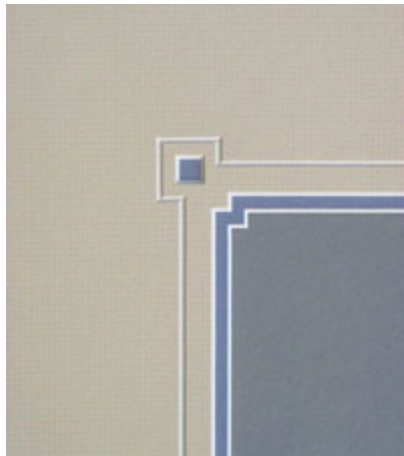
Selling Fancy Corners & V-Grooves

For starters, allow me to share with you the first law of retailing: If they can't see it, they won't buy it. Consumers will rarely part with their disposable income on products and concepts that they have to imagine. So, if you want to be able to sell creative matboard design elements, such as fancy corners or V-grooves, you must have visual selling aids and samples.

The ultimate goal is to not have to work to sell the concept to your client, but have your client ask for it. Let the desire lead to the sale. Here are some useful ideas:

- 1.** Pre-cut corner samples of fancy corners are a popular method of demonstrating what certain design elements look like. However, my previous experience with this technique suggests it is definitely the most difficult and least effective way of selling fancy corners, as customers still cannot easily visualize them around their own artwork.

- 2.** Incorporate creative design elements, such as fancy corners and V-grooves, into your framed gallery pieces and wall displays wherever possible. This is the most effective way of selling these concepts, as customers can see the difference created by the design element, which subsequently triggers a strong desire for it to be incorporated into their own custom frame designs.



Vee outline squares close-up



Rectangle V-groove

3. Create a “with-and-without” example. The most powerful and convincing way to demonstrate the benefit of the use of a design element such as a V-groove is to create a before-and-after-type display aid, which shows a framed concept with the additional design element and without it. For example, V-grooves are a great tool for tying together multiple openings, so why not show the difference with a display example (such as the one pictured below)?



An example of a “with-and-without” display; framed piece by Odette Miles & Sami Sadek, co-owners of Fastframe, in Bentleigh, VIC, Australia. The picture on the left shows the piece without a V-groove, and the picture on the right shows it with a V-groove.

4. Create miniature samples of framed concepts using different designs as sales aids and reference tools. Not all framers have unlimited wall display space for full-sized framed ideas, nor do they have the time and materials. Miniaturized versions can help tell the same message if used effectively.

5. Create a photo album of previously framed items that incorporate the use of these design elements. Take photos of great frame designs you have previously created, and use the pictures to create a catalog or “menu” of designs that incorporate such design elements as fancy corners or V-grooves to show clients some different ideas they might like to consider.

6. Cutting V-grooves into your matboard corner samples is a great way to help show the style and emphasis a V-groove can create around a piece of art, straight from the initial consultation. Some framers even create a second set of mat corner samples with V-grooves pre-cut into all of them, ready to use. To make these samples, depending on your CMC, you have to create a simple design on your CMC that cuts a V-groove into your pre-cut samples for you.



Kobe Vee triangle close-up



Layered corners

Calculating Price

When it comes to pricing creative design elements such as fancy corners and V-grooves, what you should charge must be based on what your customers are willing to pay.

Being able to tastefully add such design elements as fancy corners, V-grooves, clip art and lettering to mat designs creates a dynamic, value-added effect that significantly increases the perceived value of the overall finished product.

Before owning CMCs, most framers would have to price these types of extras by the labor involved, which was usually more expensive than the client could justify. Even though a CMC significantly reduces labor, it doesn't mean you should give away exceptional designs.

Your CMC needs to pay itself off somehow as well. Find a comfortable middle ground for pricing these designs more affordably based on what they are worth from the eyes of your consumer, not based on your old labor price. A tip: When a customer asks you, "How much extra would it cost for some fancy corners like the ones in the example on your display wall?", the price can sound more affordable if you quote the exact cost per corner rather than the total cost for all four corners together.

Even though your time and effort might have been minimal, always stand back, look at your finished product, and ask yourself: "How much more value has that design element added to the overall product?" Then, put a figure on this, and use it in the future. Don't just "give it away." It's important not to shortchange yourself and equally important not to devalue the perception of your product.



With over 16 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 tradeshow & conventions.