

# Sales Strategies



by Jared Davis,  
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## *Merchandising With Mats*

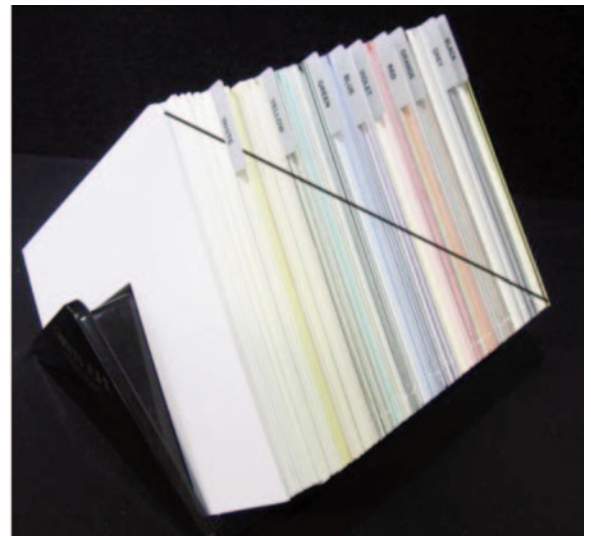
**M**atting is a vital aspect of custom framing. It can influence the overall visual design, the level of protection, and the potential profit of a custom framed piece. As a result, it is always important to tastefully use and enhance artwork with matting. Matboard corner samples are a valuable tool

at the front counter and deserve to be treated with importance. Here are some tips on managing your matboard samples so you can use them to your advantage during the sales process.

*Matting can make a big difference in the look of any framed piece—and to your bottom line*

**Keep Them Clean** – The way you present your matboard corners can be perceived as a direct reflection of both you and your work. Keep your samples clean of smudges and fingerprints. Have you ever noticed how faded or ragged matboard corners tend to be excluded from frame choices? Be sure to update and replace your tired and worn corners whenever necessary. If you have a CMC, it's not hard to quickly cut a new corner sample.

**Stay Up to Date** – Obtain current discontinued matboard lists from manufacturers and diligently remove any discontinued colors. The inconvenience of spending 10 minutes on this task once every six months will return the cost of time and frustration involved when you have to re-consult the same job with a client. Also don't forget to order and add any new matboard color set samples as well. It's always nice to try something new.



*Rather than separating samples by brand, price, or texture, arrange them by color so you can show all the options by color category.*

**Highlight Favorites and Best Sellers** – Consider making small highlights or writing notes on the backs of your favorite mat samples and/or best sellers. This will help encourage better stock turn. You could also write cross-reference notes regarding compatible color matches so alternatives can be considered if something is out of stock.

**Organization** – From an initial design point, mats are all about color. Tabbed dividers are useful to help categorize your mat samples logically. You can also use a mark system, such as a diagonally drawn marker line, to help give you a quick reference method for faster re-sorting. Rather than separating your samples by brand, price, or texture, mix them all together, segregated logically by color. This will help you offer all available options easily under each color category.

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*Beveled Edges* – Ormond from Ormond's Framing in Port Macquarie, Australia, believes in cutting bevels on all his matboard corner samples so his customers get a more realistic effect of how their mats will look. He does this using his CMC, so it doesn't take long to cut a set of samples. If you offer color core or 8-ply samples, make sure you cut bevels into these so customers can see the added value. And don't forget to mix them in with all of your matboard samples.

## Enhancing Your Mat Sales

Given that there's so much creativity and versatility available through matting, it's surprising to see that mats are often underutilized in custom frame shops. Here are some tips for enhancing your mat sales.

*Assume Mats* – Always assume a customer wants a mat. Mats protect an image from touching the glass and enhance the overall frame design. Most frame designs look better with a mat, so do your customers a favor by designing with mats from the get-go.

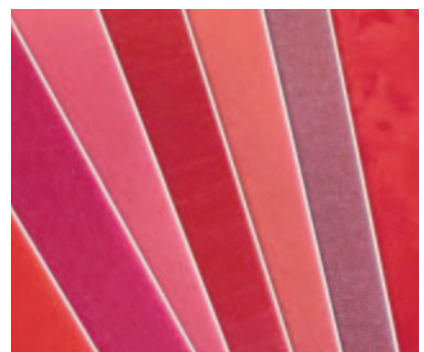
*Start With the Best* – When it comes to the varying quality of matboards you offer (conservation vs. decorator), consumers naturally have a desire for the best, so always start by offering your highest quality mats first. It's far easier to step down in material quality to save cost than it is to add on to a sale after you've already established a lower cost. The same also applies to mat design. Always start with the design that will suit the art best, whether it's a triple mat design or an elegant fabric suede design with a double fillet, and take it from there. Give a customer the opportunity to see the best possible designs at the beginning of the design process. It is easy to add value with matting because customers can easily visualize the difference in what they are paying for.



This display demonstrates popular mat design options, such as spacing, V-grooves, and fillets.



A framing menu of your best mat designs can show creative work you've done for other customers.

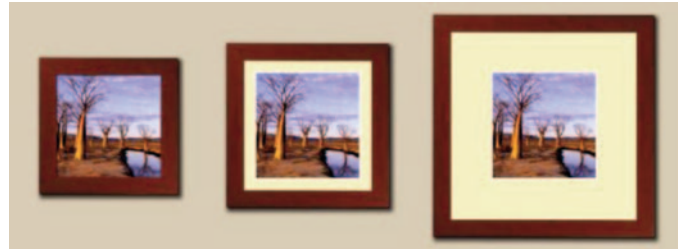


This simple display showing fabric and specialty mats alongside standard mats can boost sales of mats that offer something beyond the ordinary.

*Create a Display* - Dedicate a portion of wall space to display high quality matting. Show the application of value-adding creative matboard concepts, such as fabric mats, layered mats, and fillets to enhance the art. Jenny and Rodger from Rowville Framing in Mel-

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bourne, Australia, have created a handy point of sale display that demonstrates popular mat design options, such as spacing, V-grooves and fillets, so they can show customers these design concepts during consultations. Another useful display showcases how differently a framed image looks with a very narrow mat and a wider one using the same frame design. This can convince a customer visually of the importance of having the right balance of matting, which is sometimes hard to see with corner samples alone.

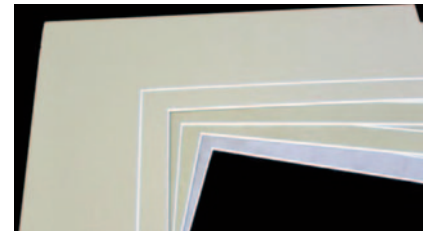


*This display shows how different a framed image can look with different mat widths.*



*Keep some foamboard corner spacers on hand so you can create layers of space with mat corners.*

**Create a Menu** – A picture is worth 1,000 words. Sharing photos of some of your most successful mat designs can be helpful selling tools. James from Hornsby Framing in Sydney, Australia, has created a range of printed menus to use as a reference library for showing customers creative mat designs he’s done for previous customers.



*Cutting V-grooves in matboard corners allows you to introduce the service in all your consultations.*

**Terminology** – Many customers may not understand industry jargon, so when it comes to describing things like the conservation aspects of a matboard, try to use wording and examples they will easily understand. Otherwise, customers may feel intimidated. Explain to them how conservation grade matboard will not yellow, stain, or damage their artwork. If you choose to describe pH levels and buffering agents, it could be confusing. It is also helpful to be sensitive to how you describe layering mats using the common terms “double mat” or “triple mat,” as some customers will assume that the word “double” also applies to the price! Use softer verbal descriptions like “layered mat” or “step mat” to avoid this perception.

**Inform Your Customers** – Customers often need to be better informed about both mat design and matboard quality. Customers expect framers to offer advice, so you need to communicate your thoughts on the design details throughout the process. The more you share, the more they will trust and recognize your expertise. When it comes to mat design, it is important for customers to understand the reasons behind your selection of design details. For example, “Can you see how this ¼” reveal on the bottom layer mat highlights the dark brown undertones in the artwork and also complements those tones in the frame?” Explain why you selected these design-enhancing options so

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they feel more comfortable with the price that reflects these add-ons. Inform your customers about the quality of the matboards you use. For example, “These mats are higher quality, so they won’t cause damage to your artwork. And they won’t fade as quickly.” Supplement your advice by offering brochures and literature that help customers learn about the benefits of conservation grade matting.

**Quoting Price Options** – Ralph from Value Picture Framing in Brisbane, Australia, says that whenever a customer asks him what the price of a single layered mat costs compared to a double layer mat option, rather than to quote the two full-price figures, he calculates and quotes the difference between the two prices. That way, customers understand how much value the extra detail is worth. For example, “One mat for this frame design is only \$25 less than the layered mat design, which added a lot to the overall look. Would you like to go with one mat or stay with the layered mat design for a more custom look?”

**Fabric and Specialty Mats** - You will never sell anything your customers can’t see, so don’t hide your best decorative mats. Fabric mats sell themselves. Customers love their luxurious textures. Bring them out of hiding and mix them in with your standard mats. It’s amazing how many more fabric mats you’ll sell regardless of their higher price when they become part of the selection process. Don’t let your fear of higher-priced specialty matboards control how you create a mat and frame design. Let desire drive the sale, and give a customer the chance to fall in love with the product. The price will take care of itself. Adam from Art Land Indooroopilly in Brisbane, Australia, says that his

fabric mat business went from zero to 50 percent of his custom frames when he offered a fabric or specialty mat option. He says this started when he simply began to mix fabric and specialty mats in with standard mats. As a result, his average frame price also took a nice leap.

**Spacers** – A bit of space can add depth and drama to a frame design. Make some ¼” foamboard corner spacers slightly smaller than your standard samples and store them with your mat samples. This will allow you to create layers of space with your mat corners.

**V-grooves** – V-grooves can be a tasteful feature on many mat and frame designs, and they are easy to cut if you have a CMC. Colin from Final Finish Framing in Sydney, Australia, made the extra effort of cutting V-grooves into all of his matboard corner samples, so it’s included in every consultation. As a result, more than 60 percent of his custom framing includes V-grooves, which is an added value (and profit) on every frame.

Matting makes a huge difference to any framed piece and to your bottom line, so don’t neglect its potential. At the end of the day, remember that it’s not only what you put into the frame that makes a difference, it’s what the customer gets out of it! ■

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**Jared Davis, MCPF, GCF**, is an educator at industry tradeshows and conventions who specializes in sales and marketing. Based in Brisbane, Australia, Jared has had 20 years experience in the framing industry, and has authored numerous articles for major industry publications. He now works full-time as a product manager for Megawood Larson-Juhl in Australia and as an international educator and consultant for Gunnar International. He is also the author of *Getting the Most Value from Your CMC*. He can be reached at [jared@jared-davis.com](mailto:jared@jared-davis.com).