

Sales Strategies



by Jared Davis

Creating Front Counter Magic

Vivian Kistler used to say, “Hey, we’re only framers, not magicians!” And when it came to creating a frame, she was right. But when it comes to the “experience” you offer a customer at your front counter, framers do need to master a little magic.

Before you learn how to become a master magician at your front counter, you can benefit by understanding some basic selling psychology. Whenever a product (or service) is sold in anywhere in the world, there are

two requirements that dictate if consumers buy a product:

1. They need to know about it (through marketing and education)
2. They have to want it or need it

If people don't either want or need a product, then they are not going to buy it, even if they know about it. So either want or need is an essential ingredient to any sale. Basically, every single product or service sold anywhere to anyone is either a want or a need. Consider these examples:

Examples of needs

- Gasoline
- Washing Machine
- Fridge
- Milk and Bread
- Electricity Bills
- Car Repairs

Examples of wants

- Luxury Items
- Fashion
- Vacations
- MP3 players
- Plasma/LCD TVs
- Perfumes and Fragrances

When you consider these examples, it is easy to recognize the following law of consumerism: “People pay more for what they want than for what they need.”

Customers, in general, will shop down the price on things they need, as they are considered “begrudging purchases.” Yet they are very happy to justify spending a bit more on “want” purchases because they deserve to spoil themselves with something special!

As retailers relying on selling a product and service, it is your job to create either the want or

You'll make a lot more sales when you appeal to a customer's emotions



Working side by side with a customer helps create a more trusting design process, personalizing the buying experience and eliminating the typical “you vs. me” feeling that sometimes results from working across the counter from a customer.

the need for your product in your marketing, merchandising, and contact with potential customers.

Consider how custom framing fits into either of these two categories:

- For general domestic retail consumers, custom framing is a want.
- For an artist, photographer, or corporate client, custom framing is only a need.

For most framers, the largest target market is the domestic retail customer, which is the focus of what follows—the methods and benefits of dealing with the “want” customer.

What Do “Want Customers” Really Want?

When it comes to buying custom framing, a customer's true goals are:

1. Maximize value for money (which is a fixed, universal trait for all consumer buying)
2. An item that performs a purpose to fulfill their desire, such as a frame
3. Maximize the overall experience—that is, the feeling

At the end of the day, your customers are actually driven more by the “feeling” of buying the frame than they are by the frame itself because they value that experience more. If feelings are the true motivator, then it's natural to understand why the process of getting something custom framed needs to be ultimately about the emotional experience of making the purchase.

The Magic of an “Emotional Experience”

The ability to create an emotional experience is where you ultimately become the magician of your front counter! As a “magician” (not a

framer), your front counter is the stage for your performance, and this is where all the magic happens:

- The magic of being able to transform a customer's treasured memory into a timeless masterpiece.
- The magic of customers being personally rewarded by an overall enjoyable experience, which is totally unique to them.
- The magic of you being rewarded by a profitable sale!

In creating the ultimate emotional experience, you ideally want customers to feel that the framed artwork is going to reflect their unique style and individuality. You also want customers to feel that they played a significant part in creating their final designs and that they enjoyed the overall process.

20 Ways to Create an Emotional Experience

There are many ingredients needed to create the right emotional experience for customers at the front counter, including shop presentation, shop atmosphere and ambience, and shop display. But most of the magic is based on your personal interaction and communication. Here are some suggested methods you can use to create the emotional experience:

- *Be prepared to spend more time on design* – The consultation process is now more important than the frame itself. This is what today's customer really wants and is willing paying for. Do not rush the process; let the customer feel there is plenty of time to go through the whole process without any pressure or time constraints.

- *Every customer is different* – Aim to customize the consultation for each customer. Don't formulize the process too much; make each customer feel it is unique to them.
- *Personalize the communication* – Using a customer's name is vital to creating a personalized experience. Make sure they know your name as well, so they feel comfortable using it. This is where staff name badges can really help.
- *Personal appearance and presentation* – Take pride and make sure your presentation and attire is always clean, neat, and appropriate for your clientele. You must always remain approachable. Uniforms with corporate branding always add credibility and comfort to customers' perceptions.
- *Eliminate distractions* – Make sure your consulting area is always clear of distractions. The ideal counter should have nothing on it at all—no phone, no computer, no register—just a clear, blank canvas conducive to creating the masterpiece you intend. Everything else should be close at hand but not obstructing the view.
- *Respect the artwork* – Handle and treat every artwork like a masterpiece, even if it is not. Just like magicians, some framers put on white gloves in front of the customer before handling or touching the artwork. This displays the ultimate respect.
- *Consider your approach* – Remember; create the design “with” the customer, not “at” the customer. Rather than working opposite the customer, walk around the design table and work on the same side “with” your customer, side by side. This also allows you to be more

polite by not having to turn your back on the customer, which can be considered rude. This will help build trust and eliminate the “you versus me” feeling that can sometimes result.

- ***Make your samples accessible to the customer*** – If possible, allow customers clear access to your sample wall so they can enjoy the experience of touch, feel, and close inspection of the moulding choices. This makes them feel as if they have more control over the process than you do.
- ***Ask the right questions*** – This is critical! The first questions you should always ask at the start of a consultation should stimulate emotional motivation behind why they want to get these things framed. Here are some examples:
 - So, could you tell me the story about this piece?*
 - So, why do you want to get this framed?*
- ***Get the full story*** – Let them tell you all about their personal motivation, whether it be a memory, a tragedy, or a positive experience and try to find a way to relate. Later on in the design process, you can ask more design-related questions, such as, “Tell me about the room you are going to hang it in?” or “What style of furniture do you have?” But don't ask these before you reveal the emotion behind wanting to have the piece framed.
- ***Listen*** – When customers are talking, especially about the story or emotional motivation behind framing the artwork, make sure you remain quiet and listen. Don't interrupt. And encourage them to tell you the whole story.

Remember, this consultation is their experience, and they will value this just as much as the frame itself. Also, the more you listen to the customer, the more information you will learn, which may help you later in the design process.

- ***Be natural*** – Always behave in a warm, heartfelt manner as a human being. Never try any hard-sell tactics, always be sincere, and treat people with the same respect that you would want to be treated yourself.
- ***Consider your attitude*** – Read your customers' attitudes first and try to mirror their conversational style in a positive way. Don't be too bouncy or too submissive, but always be passionate and involved in the consulting process. Take a lead role in the consultation, but don't be too “alpha”—that is, too overbearing or opinionated. Take a more sensitive and informative approach.
- ***Compliment and encourage*** – Compliment your customers' decisions and choices and always make them feel like each choice is theirs, not yours. The design process should be creative, and you want a customer to feel that he or she has hidden, artistic talent in their choices and decisions. Say to them, “I can see you've really got an eye for this” when appropriate. The more proud and emotionally attached they become to “their” design, the less important the price will be at the end.
- ***Never break the bond*** – Negative body language and actions like turning your back, walking away, answering a phone, or conversing

with anyone else will kill the personal experience and attention, so always avoid this behavior. Customers should feel that they are your one and only focus and deserve nothing less than 100 percent of your attention.

- ***Don't try to make decisions rational or logical*** – Eliminate the word “think” from your vocabulary. Ask the customer “how do you feel about this option” not “what do you think about this?” “Think” is a rational term, and the design process should not be rational or logical.
- ***Avoid confusion*** – Too much choice can overwhelm and lead to indecision. Don't allow a mess to develop, with too many sample choices on the counter. Stay in control and eliminate the options and choices as you go so that the comparisons and decision-making process is clear and easy, with minimized choices.
- ***Use visual examples*** – Any good frames shop should always have some visual aids and framed examples to help inspire beautiful, upscale frame designs that truly enhance and complement the artwork. Part of your shop display should incorporate examples that demonstrate different design options and concepts.
- ***Eye contact*** – You can't trust someone that doesn't look you in the eye, which is also critical when you are quoting a price. Always look a customer in the eye when you quote the price.
- ***Passion*** – It never hurts to display a bit of passion and excitement with your customers, as it can help get them emotionally involved in the process.

- *Quoting the price* – When it comes to the point of quoting a price, rather, “Okay, the price for that one is \$XX.” Try a more subtle, emotional approach, such as, “So the price for this wonderful design you and I have come up with today only comes to \$XX.”

So what about the price?

Unless a customer insists, try to save quoting a price until the end, especially when you've had time to create an enjoyable, emotional experience and have only few final options to compare. If you're asked to quote a price too soon, simply say, “Well, we really have unlimited options available to suit almost any price or style, so let's start by hav-

ing a look at what you like first, and we'll take it from there.” Keep in mind that if you focus on maximizing a customer's experience, you will also help divert the focus away from the price at the end. Just remember:

- The more they love it, the more they will be willing to spend.
- The more they spend, the more value they will place on it.
- The more value they place on it, the more they'll want to do it again.

At the end of the day, customers buy framing because they want it, not because they need it. They're not just buying four bits of wood and a piece of glass, they're buying an experience! That's why it definitely helps to put a touch of

magic in your performance at the front counter.

And Vivian, if you're listening, do you think that maybe framers *can* sometimes be magicians? I can almost hear her response: “Hey, nice one, kiddo!” ■

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