

Sales Strategies



by Jared Davis

The Importance of Being Nice

How often do you walk into a retail shop and experience no service or, even worse, bad service? It seems to happen more frequently than ever. It also seems to happen more often with larger retailers than with smaller, independent owner-operated businesses.

In today's changing retail environment, consumers are increasingly becoming conditioned to expect no service. Poor service and indifference are becoming more commonplace, and this has created an opportunity for smarter owners to make their

The key to winning customers' repeat business is to give them the time and respect they deserve

businesses stand out even more by focusing on offering great service.

Remember the old days when the gas station attendant used to come to your car window, speak to you like a customer, and offer to fill up the tank with gas for you while you sat in the car? And maybe then, he would even clean your windshield with a squeegee? Those days are long gone.

As a consumer yourself, you love receiving exceptional service. And it stands out more than ever, especially when you don't expect it. Businesses that offer great service are rewarded by your return business and loyalty, which is increasingly harder to achieve in retail. On the other side, it only takes one small experience of bad service to turn someone off forever, even if it means they have to travel farther and pay more

for something not quite as suitable. That's why communication and personalized service need to be integral parts of your custom framing business.

For the most part, your customers are unfamiliar with the custom framing consultation process so it is your job to calm those concerns, be attentive, and provide a service and consulting experience they will never forget.

No matter how attractive a shop may be, without good, friendly service it just won't provide the great shopping experience that will keep customers coming back. An average looking frame shop where customers are greeted with a positive attitude and where the staff takes genuine interest and time to make sure you feel delighted about your overall experience is far more likely to get your future business.

The attitude projected by the consultant at the front counter will not just make or break the sale but will also determine if you'll get any future business. Custom framing is an emotional purchase. Consumers not only allow their emotions and feelings to dictate how they spend their money but also where they spend it.

Everyone has bad days, and because you may resent being interrupted by customers wanting attention when you are in the middle of something else (and always, it seems, just at the most inconvenient moment) your off-putting attitude can be detrimental. The impression that you create with a customer is always important, and you only get one chance to make a good first impression.

The Basics

Great service starts with communication, and there are some basic rules you need to recognize to get things going in the right direction:

- Listening to your customers and offering pleasant responses lets them know you are sincerely interested in them and their projects. This establishes trust and long-term customer loyalty.
- Look people in the eye when you are listening to them. Hold on to your own thoughts or comments until they have finished telling theirs, and make sure your response reconfirms what they have told you.
- Take an interest in your customers' concerns and be sensitive to their comfort and feelings.
- Politely acknowledge any customers waiting during busy time with eye contact and a polite apology and explanation.
- Be humble, avoid arrogance, and leave your pride under the counter.

- Learn and use customers' name to help make them feel the whole experience is personalized to them.
- Be warm, heartfelt, and sincere, and make sure all your customers feel they are your one and only focus not "just another customer" to you.

Going the Extra Mile

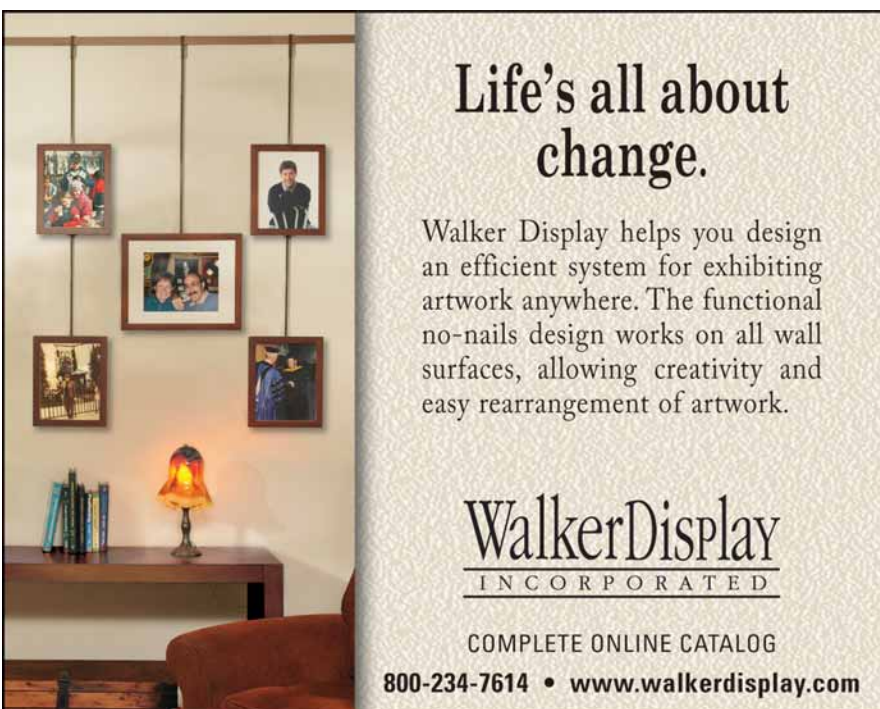
Once you've got the communication basics in place, you can start to implement some ideas to go the extra mile for your customers, taking your service to the next level.

Here are some suggestions:

- Offer to carry framed pictures to and from their cars for them.
- Always wrap and protect framed pictures for customers with consideration and care so they are safe to take home.
- Offer a complimentary wrapping service for items that will be gifts.
- Ask customers how they will hang their framed products, and offer advice on appropriate solu-

tions. Even create a brochure explaining some useful tips and considerations they can use for hanging.

- Offer a hanging service, even if you have to outsource it.
- Provide a waiting area in your store where customers feel comfortable and welcome to sit if they have to wait for a consultation.
- Offer a solution to safely keep young children entertained in your store, allowing parents to be able to comfortably focus on their consultation.
- Offer tea and coffee to customers for more comfortable consultations.
- If you have the space in your shop, consider creating a separate "private consulting area" to help give some extra privacy for special consultations.
- Be willing to offer after-hours consultations if required. Think about your customers' convenience rather than your own.
- Offer a home/field consulting service for specialized customer and corporate requirements.
- Find little ways to create goodwill, such as replacing broken wire on the back of a frame for free or giving away hooks and hangers with each frame as a courtesy.
- Wear a name badge so customers feel comfortable in learning and remembering your name.
- All staff, even if they don't specialize in front counter consulting (and only work in the back), should always be prepared to greet waiting customers kindly and make them feel that their needs will be attended to as soon



The advertisement features a photograph on the left showing a wall-mounted display system with several framed photos hanging from thin vertical wires. Below the photos is a small table with a lamp and books. The right side of the advertisement contains text and the company logo.

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as possible.

- Thank your customers, and let them know you appreciate the fact that they chose your business over your competitors.

Common Turn-offs

Finally, there are some common service turn-offs that you should definitely avoid because they potentially damage customers' experience in your business:

- Ignoring customers and making them wait while you finish what you are doing.
- Talking on the phone with a personal call while a customer is waiting for your attention.
- Having an unpleasant or lazy demeanor and appearance.
- Showing signs of boredom, lack of focus, or impatience during the consultation.

- Looking at your watch or the clock while your customer is making a decision.
- Answering a phone call during the middle of a consultation without politely excusing yourself.
- Conversing with other staff or workers about unrelated topics while you are consulting.
- Overdoing "niceness" by eagerly attacking customers with a pushy approach as soon as they come through your door. Read their body language. If they want to browse, make them feel comfortable doing so; just be ready to listen when they want to ask you questions.

At the end of the day, it's simple. Treat your customers the way you would really like to be treated

yourself. The person at your front counter can make all the difference and should be your number one, most powerful selling tool. Good service is all about going the extra mile, and customers always remember great service more than a great price. ■

Jared Davis, MCPF, GCF, is an educator at industry tradeshow and conventions who specializes in sales and marketing. Based in Brisbane, Australia, Jared has had 18 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 Mouldings in Australia and as an international educator and consultant for Gunnar International. Recently he released his first book, *Getting the Most Value from your CMC*. He can be reached at jared@jared-davis.com.

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613	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3/8"/10mm	\$17.85	777	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/4"-7mm Hard Pink Yellow	\$8.99	740-2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	12 lbs.
614	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/2"/12mm	\$18.90	778	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3/8"-10mm Soft Lt. Blue Green	\$9.25	740-3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	16 lbs.
615	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5/8"/15mm	\$20.95	779	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3/8"-10mm Hard Lt. Blue Green	\$9.25	740-4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4	20 lbs.
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624 (hard & MDF)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/4"/7mm	\$16.80	781	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/2"-12mm Hard Dk. Blue Red	\$10.95	740-6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6	28 lbs.
625 (hard & MDF)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/2"/12mm	\$18.90	782	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5/8"-15mm Soft White Black	\$11.25	740-8	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 8	36 lbs.
627 (hard & MDF)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5/8"/15mm NEW	\$20.95	783	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5/8"-15mm Hard White Black	\$11.25	Easy to wrap		
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619	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/2"/12mm	\$18.90	786	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5/8"-16mm	12,000	\$24.95	3+ @ \$13.95 ea.	
620	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5/8"/15mm	\$20.95	<small>Note: #786 for Fletcher Pneumatics</small>			Prices expire 8/31/10		
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622 (hard & MDF)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/4"/7mm	\$16.85						
623 (hard & MDF)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1/2"/12mm	\$18.90						
626 (hard & MDF)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5/8"/15mm	\$20.95						

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