

Sales Strategies



by Jared Davis

Dealing With Objections

Objections! You hear them almost every day, and sometimes they catch you off guard. Your front counter is a hotspot for dealing with them, and many can be difficult to overcome if you're not prepared. For most owners and staff, handling objections doesn't always come naturally, so you must continue to practice and

learn what response works best for each objection.

Every objection is slightly different, with a different response needed depending on the customer and situation.

Many have the same

motive behind them. When confronted with an objection, on the surface most of them seem driven by price. But when you scratch a little deeper, you soon discover that price is often a cover for other issues.

There are many different objections, such as:

- “Why is framing expensive?”
- “I just want something cheap to go around this.”
- “Another place is cheaper than you.”
- “But I can buy a ready-made frame elsewhere for \$40 - why does yours cost so much?”

Objections seem like negative issues, but if you anticipate and expect them and know how to handle or prevent them, they are really opportunities for making sales.

What Causes Objections?

To best deal with objections, you first need to

understand what causes each objection. Here are some examples of what can cause a customer to raise an objection:

1. **Poor consultation.** “Okay, thanks for the quote. I'll go home and think about it.” A poor consultation can lead to confusion, dissatisfaction, and doubt. No one likes to spend money with a person or business that is seemingly insensitive to his or her needs or expectations. Remember, it's all about customers, not you. So always ensure that you personalize their front counter experience accordingly.
2. **Lack of desire.** “So what do you have that's cheaper than this frame?” Sometimes a consultation can fail to build an emotional desire for the custom frame, which only satisfies the “need” aspect of a custom frame purchase and not the “want.” People pay more for what they want rather than need, so focus on the emotional aspect of the frame to create more “want.” Most custom frame jobs have an emotional motive behind them, often about family or memories, so it is critical to use and enhance this emotion to create a strong desire for the right frame option.
3. **Failure to establish value for money.** “Another place is offering 50 percent off on their framing this week; can you match that?” If you're not the cheapest framer in town, you need to find ways to demonstrate your difference to price-conscious customers. This can be done throughout the consultation by shop presentation, point of sale display, and verbal education. This objection seems like it may be driven by price—but that may not be the case. Customers like to go through a justi-

Objections are really requests for more information and are an essential part of the buying process

fiction process to avoid remorse or guilt for spending so much on a luxury item. If you calmly explain in straightforward terms why your price is higher than the budget retailer down the road, most customers will be happy with this and will move on from the point. Most customers are quite happy to pay more if they can understand and recognize the value for money. They want to buy from the best, which is why they came to your shop. They just need you to justify that you are the best.

4. **Need for justification.** “Hmm, I don't know if I can afford that.” Consumers who are unfamiliar with the relevant prices of custom framing need to find a way to justify (usually, to themselves) spending more than they initially anticipated on something they really want. Compared to the cost of most home furnishings and decorator items, custom framing is not that expensive. At the end of the day, most customers can afford it. It's just a matter of helping them avoid feeling guilty about spending a bit more than they should have for something that will give them personal pleasure for years to come.
5. **Lack of education.** “I didn't think it would cost that much. How come it is so expensive?” On the surface, this objection seems like it is price driven. However, unfamiliarity with custom framing is a common hidden cause of many objections, as most consumers are not familiar with why it takes more than just four sticks of wood and a piece of glass. Find out if this is the first

time your customer has ever had anything framed, and take a few moments to help educate by showing and explaining the process first.

6. **Lack of trust.** “Okay, leave it with me; I need to think about this first.” This objection makes you think it might be because your pricing is too high, but it's very often not. People don't like spending money with people or businesses they do not trust. This is a universal law of retailing. Developing a personal rapport with the customer is vital when selling a product like custom framing because, unlike with other “luxury” products, framers cannot always rely on recognizable branding to develop trust and credibility for your product. Engage and open up with the customer at your counter and avoid making the consultation dispassionate, disconnected, or robotic.
7. **Incorrect perception.** “Why can't you just frame that on the spot, now for me? I can buy a frame off the shelf from Wal-mart for \$40.” Sometimes customers come in with a completely incorrect perception of what is involved with custom framing and what the relevant costs may be based on perceptions about other products or concepts that are different. Again, this is based on unfamiliarity, not price, so it is important to find ways to educate customers what the difference is. In this case, it is the difference between a ready-made frame and a handcrafted custom frame.

Overcoming Objections

Overcoming objections is about

being prepared. Not only do you need to anticipate objections that may arise, but also for each objection you can anticipate you need to come up with a clear, concise answer to counter that objection. Being able to turn an objection into a positive point is a strong selling skill to master. Remember: for every disadvantage, there is an advantage.

Steps to overcoming an objection:

1. **Don't avoid** – Don't ignore or avoid an objection. It's not going to go away if you ignore it, so you may as well acknowledge it and get it resolved as quickly as possible.
2. **Pause** – Don't speak. Just take a few quiet seconds to allow the customer to recognize that you are thinking about what he or she has said. If you respond to an objection too quickly, it can be perceived as defensiveness, which may weaken the credibility of your response. Take this time to control your nerves, whether it is from shock, defensiveness, or excitement. Just take a few breaths before proceeding.
3. **Listen** – Focus on what the customer is really trying to say, and then decide if there is a possible underlying motive behind the question that you need to consider. Sometimes when the objection seems to be about price, it may actually be unfamiliarity, doubt, or lack of trust. Put yourself in the customer's shoes; what would you say if you were that person?
4. **Clarify** – Ask a question to ensure you have a full understanding of the customer's concern, even if you are just repeating the customer's question. “So what

you are saying is that you feel the price is too expensive?” Too many framers assume they know what the customer is thinking and feeling. Avoid this by asking questions so you are absolutely sure. Don't assume. Maybe even ask them why they feel that way, just not in a smart or defensive way.

5. **Respond** – Put yourself in their shoes, and be sensitive with your response. It's not what you say; it's how you say it. Begin by saying that you understand their concerns, and avoid being defensive or cocky. Address the concern with factual points, using examples, sales aids, and literature if they are on hand. Don't be condescending. Just because you're a “framing expert” doesn't mean you need to make them feel insecure. Don't stray off on any tangents, either. Just keep things focused and succinct.

6. **Confirmation** – Get confirmation, making sure a customer is happy with your response and that you have covered that person's concern. If a customer is happy, great! If not, find out what's still bothering them and address it. If you cannot overcome an objection, at least confirm that it is still an issue and move on. If you lose the sale, at least you'll have a reason to analyze later.

Preventing Objections

As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure, and the best method for dealing with objections is to keep them from arising. To prevent a customer from raising an objection, you need to answer a concern or doubt before it is raised. This is done in several ways:

- Providing information and education about custom framing, including the materials used and the process involved.
- Provide information on the benefits that beautiful custom framing can add to the customer's lifestyle and decor.
- Provide information on the dangers and disadvantages of poor quality framing.
- Identify and use methods to establish trust and credibility with customers.

If you can understand your customers' emotional needs and create a strong desire for their framing projects, they won't be judging you on your price alone.

It is important to educate your customer on the relevant aspects of custom framing and, even more, to educate them emotionally. The easiest way to turn a consultation into an emotional journey is to ask more emotional questions, such as, “So

tell me, why do you want to frame this?”

When you recognize that objections can provide you with helpful insights into what your customers are thinking and that they provide you with a chance to focus on that side of the sales process, you can move ahead with your sales presentation.

You will get objections. They are a natural part of selling, and you need to develop a positive attitude towards them. Welcome them without fear, and be proud of your quality, your service, and your price. When customers raise objections, it shows that they have a genuine interest in buying a frame. Objections are an important way that people can communicate their feelings, and the information they seek through objections is an essential step in making a decision to buy. ■

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