

Sales Strategies

by Jared Davis



Beyond the Corner Sample

A picture says 1,000 words, as the saying goes. And in the profession of selling “pictures,” being able to show customers how their framed artwork will look when complete is becoming a necessary requirement in front counter consulting. For decades, frame shop owners have been able to rely on basic visual aids like moulding corner samples and matboard corners to demonstrate how framed artwork will look. But times are changing, and consumer expectations are increasing. The suc-



Framecor in Perth has an ideas wall that is frequently changed to suit upcoming seasonal sales themes and opportunities.

Today, you can no longer rely on corner samples alone. You need some extra visual tools to maximize your sales.

cessful frame shop of today can no longer rely on using corner samples alone to make sales. You need to employ some extra visual tools to succeed, especially if you want to sell more profitable custom framing.

Don't Tell Them, Show Them

The luxury buying habits of today's consumer is driven by desire. With marketing at an all-time high and all forms of media technology readily available, consumers are spoiled with visual choices for products they can spend their disposable income on. From the Internet to YouTube to printed catalogs, it's all offered in

abundance, professionally displayed in vibrant color and visual detail. Consumers are also increasingly suspicious of salespeople, especially verbal sales pitches, and they prefer to make choices based on information delivered in methods other than verbal.

To genuinely sell high-value, upscale frame designs to new clients, you have to show them, not tell them. So how can you make it easy for customers to see what they might like? There are numerous concepts used by framers at the front counter to help meet this challenge, such as visualization software, good-better-best displays, vendor-supplied sales aids. Here are few tested ideas to consider that I have picked up from innovative framers on my travels.

The Ideas Display

Nothing inspires a customer's desires more than an eye-catching display of physically framed examples and ideas. This concept is becoming essential for any frame shop. Your walls are valuable real estate to help show off your best ideas to your customers. Most framers never seem to have enough space to show the full range of what they offer. So the best way to supplement this is by creating a framing ideas menu.

A framing ideas menu is a great place to start with every consultation. Before the moulding and matboard selection commences, why not offer a menu with images of framed work that has been organized into logical categories—certificates, medals, photos, keepsakes, sports memorabilia—so that clients can see some real examples of what you've done in the past to help inspire their current choices. Customers often don't know exactly what they want until they see it first. As long as you have some photos of previously framed artwork to start with, a professional looking framing menu is not expensive or hard to create. Just use a simple online photo book, such as those on www.shutterfly.com or www.snapfish.com.

The iPad Menu

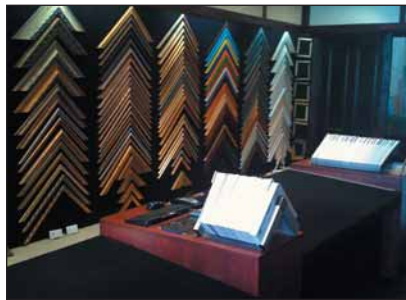
Taking the framing ideas menu a step further, why not create an interactive menu



This 8"x11" photo book (20 pages) costs less than \$30 to produce from www.snapfish.com and helps give customers a visual sample of your designs.



Complete Framing in Sydney lets customers use a framed iPad, which contains a categories selection of framed ideas and concepts.



Bottomley Fine Framing in Melbourne uses slightly inclined consulting stations, which are also lower than the standard bench height.



Tony Stocks from Framing to a T in Melbourne has installed step rails on the front of his consulting tables to give customers a safe way to step up and become high above the table for a better view of the design options.

using an Apple iPad? Consumers are engaged by technology and attracted to interactive devices. After investing in a basic iPad, Greg and Kelly Gillespie from Complete Framing in Sydney framed it and incorporated it into their displays, using it to attract browsing customers by inviting them to play and discover some of their framing ideas. The screen saver is always active, but there is a sign above it that says, "Play with our iPad!" Customers can see all the photos, organized into categories similar to the framing ideas menu.

The photo categories are taken a step further than general categories and themed into popular seasonal opportunities—Mother's Day, Father's Day, birthdays, Valentine's Day, weddings, and even "Our Greatest Hits."

Consulting Table Design

When you go to a show or a concert, you always want to have a good view of the stage and the performance. When it comes to selling custom framing, your front counter is your stage for performing (your consultation). Thus, being able to comfortably view the framing options is vital to creating a good experience, allowing customers to feel that they have made a good decision.

A vast majority of custom framing clients are female, who are typically shorter than males, but most framing counters are designed and fabricated by men. This results in a common issue that front counter consulting tables are generally too high to

provide a comfortable viewing distance between female clients and their artwork. Consulting tables need to be designed to provide the best viewing height for your average consumer, not designed to be the same height as a workbench. If you commonly find yourself consulting with artwork on the floor, then your consulting table is probably too high.

Here are some innovative concepts to consider when designing your consulting table:

Keep it Low – A lower height consulting table allows for shorter people and allows a more comfortable viewing distance to see design options and artwork.

Inclined Table – Aside from the slight issue of gravity, a slight inclination or even an adjustable angled table is ideal for creating a more comfortable viewing angle for customers.

Step Rails – Install step rails on the front of consulting tables to give the customers a safe way to step up and become high above the table for a better view of their design options.

Stools – Make your counter lower, and add comfortable, padded stools for customers. Adjust the height of the stool legs to find just the right height.

Go Bigger!

Too often, it seems that the size of vendor-supplied moulding corner samples are never quite large enough to help a customer truly visualize the final result. Miranda Smith from Gallery 360 in Perth fabricates her own jumbo-sized corner samples for sample wall display to assist with visualiza-



Wayne and Shelley Schirmer of Frame Smart in Tamworth designed and built their own low-level consulting table to make it easier for customers to see during the consultation.



Andrew Corrigan from Frame by Frame in Victoria has designed his counter to be lower and added more comfortable padded stools for customers—with stool legs cut off 4" to make them just the right height.



Gallery 360 in Perth makes its own double-length corner samples to help customers better visualize finished frame designs.

tion. This is especially useful for larger artworks. It also offers a unique point of difference to other frame shops, which only carry the usual corner samples.

Themed Vignettes

Rather than a traditional moulding sample wall, Eddie Hayes from "Frame – Oz Images" in Cairns incorporates his moulding ranges into numerous themed vignette displays throughout the shop floor display. This helps tell a story and provides a different focus for each display, stimulating creative options for the consulting process.

Customers want to feel inspired, creative, and comfortable throughout the consulting process, and many of these innovative ideas assist in adding to the consumer's overall experience, which is a primary goal when selling a luxury purchase product.

They extend your consulting tools to make the design and sales process easier for customers, helping to give them an experience that they'll want to repeat in the future. ■

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