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## Creating the Perfect Sample Wall

“Sensory Overload!” – That’s the feeling most customers get when they walk into your shop and look at your corner sample wall! Many framers don’t realize this, but your sample wall is the most important sales tool in your shop, and in my travels visiting different businesses every week, I’m disappointed to say that too many of the places I visit suffer from tired, neglected, “out-of-control” sample walls – which actually don’t do them any favours in helping them try to sell custom framing.

Because of this, I have put together some essential thoughts on what I consider contribute to “the perfect sample wall” – and I’m going to start with a couple of basics:

**WALL LOCATION** - Your sample wall is a great way to visually convey the message of what your business is about – custom framing! A good wall should be worth of showing-off, and should be visually identifiable from the entrance of your shop. The wall should be located in a prominent position, which is well lit and easy to access – additionally it also needs to be within close proximity to your consulting table.

**CARPETING THE WALL** - The most popular (and reliable) system for displaying moulding corner samples is using a hook & loop Velcro® system, with Velcro® dots on the samples, and fabric “front runner” on the wall. Front runner can be purchased in lineal length from most car interior and upholstery suppliers. The best “long term” method of securing front runner fabric to a wall is using EVA wet glue, applied with a paint roller. You will want to apply this in “sections” at a time, and you need to apply a layer that is at least 1-2mm thick all over, so that the glue will soak through and penetrate the fabric, as your roll it out over the wall by hand. Don’t worry if it soaks through the fabric, because it will dry clear. Just a tip - Don’t use spray adhesive or contact glue to adhere front runner or fabric to a wall, because it will eventually become brittle and break its release within a very short time.

Once you’ve got those basic elements in place, I have put together a the following “*Jared’s Top 10 Tips for creating the perfect sample wall*” –

1. **BREATHING SPACE** – Corner samples can visually suffocate from lack of breathing space. Tightly bunched samples create a confusing, continuous “blend” of colour & texture, making it difficult for the average consumer to visually determine where one sample starts and the next one ends. Comfortable breathing space is critical, and the space between each sample is just as important as the sample itself.

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2. **CONTRASTING BACKGROUND** – In my opinion, only very dark coloured or black fabric walls do the best job of flattering your samples, and offers a neutral perspective in which to display them. Golds & coloured samples are more defined against a high contrast black background. The only colour that doesn't really work on a black background is black! But when you consider that a black frame is usually a "last resort", I think it is a small sacrifice to make, when all the rest of your samples will look so fantastic!
  3. **EFFECTIVE LIGHTING** – Lighting makes a big difference. Your sample wall can look rich and vibrant on a dark (black) background, with complementary track lighting focused towards showing them off! In my opinion, you can never spend enough money on lighting.
  4. **CHEVRON CUT** – Being able to visualize the finished product is the hardest obstacle to overcome on the counter, and the traditional mitred "cross cut" samples certainly do not help your client to be able to visualize the finished product, as nicely as a chevron cut sample, nor do they look as appealing on display. "Chevron cut" are vertically mitred samples, which take up no extra space on your wall, but offer more visual representation of the moulding. Demand "chevron cut" samples from your supplier, or if required, make them yourself.
  5. **CATEGORISE YOUR SAMPLES** – "Any sample, anywhere", doesn't help reduce customer confusion & indecision. Applying a logical arrangement method to your samples is important for your customer to understand that there is actually a logical method to choosing the correct frame for their artwork. This is just like creating a menu for a restaurant. Think of the obvious themes and use them (eg: *Traditional Golds, Contemporary Golds, Formals, Decorator Mouldings, Country Classics*, etc). Categorising your samples "by supplier" or "by price" definitely doesn't do you any favours in helping you sell "the right frame" around "the right job".



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6. **BREAK IT UP** – Display some framed examples on your sample wall to visually help break the display up into more digestible sections. This helps eliminate the “Sensory Overload” which comes from too much choice. Don’t just limit your sample wall to “samples” – mini framed examples can be useful selling tools to show customers different ideas, concepts and “add-ons” you can offer as well, such as fillets, v-grooves, shadow boxes, etc.
  7. **KNOW YOUR 20%** - As the saying goes - 80% of your sales come from 20% of your products. Find out which are the samples your business can’t live without, and make sure they are prominently located in your themed rows and easily accessible. Important samples may change with trends, but it is important to always know which ones are your vital samples. One simple way of keeping track of popular samples is by simply making a tally mark on the back of the sample every time you sell a frame in it. Within 6 months you will have sufficient data to be able to confidently update your wall, and not have to worry about discarding a sample that might be important.
  8. **KEEP IT FRESH** – Your wall is valuable “merchandising” real estate! Try new things, and stay in touch with new styles & trends. What sells well today may be unpopular tomorrow. Make an effort to rotate your samples and actively cull the samples that don’t work for you in place of new ones. Today’s consumer is always looking for something new and different. Don’t just keep showing them the same old stuff – look for new trends and stay ahead of the game.
  9. **LESS IS MORE** – You don’t need to have “every sample on the planet” to win the sale. In fact, offering too much choice can easily lead to indecision and doubt from the customer. Limit your choice of samples on display, and make sure you reduce the “close matches” and “double ups”. Good framers are selective about the samples they put on display – and keep a balance between offering a wide range, without offering too much choice. Furthermore, fewer samples leads to better stock turn, which leads to higher profitability.
  10. **REPLACE WORN SAMPLES**– Damaged, or worn corner samples don’t do you any favours regarding presentation, and could easily lead to your client doubting your quality & workmanship. If a sample is tired and worn, don’t leave it – order or make a new one.

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CONCLUSION - Your sample wall is your single most important tool in the consulting process, and keeping it presentable & organised takes constant work. You can't just do it "once a year" and expect it to work well for you. However when you realize how much it can help optimize your sale potential on each and every job – it is not difficult to justify a small amount of time on a daily basis maintaining it. At the end of the day, you need to reduce our potential sale obstacles and make sure your wall works for you – not against you.

As a final note, if you happened to get some value out of this article, please e-mail me some "before & after" photos of your walls, and I'd be happy to give you some personal feedback – [jared@megawood.com.au](mailto:jared@megawood.com.au)

*Photo permission provided courtesy of Nielsen Bainbridge.*



*With over 16 years experience in the framing & graphics industry, Jared Davis CPF, GCF has covered the wholesale, commercial and retail aspects of the business. His previous sales, marketing & training experience gives him an understanding of the changing opportunities for retail businesses, and he offers an up-to-date approach on new methods and techniques now required by today's business owners, to be able to successfully market, merchandise and sell their services to consumers. Jared is also a featured educator at major international industry tradeshow & conventions.*

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