

Sales Strategies



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Building Repeat Customers

Australians are famous for throwing boomerangs. However, it does take some practice and skill to learn how to throw a boomerang that actually comes back. Likewise, when it comes to selling a frame to a customer, there's no guarantee they'll come back again—unless you do things right.

It's much harder to win a new customer than it is to retain an existing one. In the case of custom framing, most consumers have more than one wall to fill, and repeat customers are also known to spend more than first time customers. That means building repeat business is crucial to the growth of any framing business.

So what makes customers want to come back? Here are a few strategies designed to help encourage customers to return to your business again and

again, a sign of customer loyalty.

Make It Personal

When it comes to business, people are loyal to people. Customer service starts with the person, so learn and use the customer's name in conversation, and also make sure it's easy for

them to recall and use your name as well. A simple name badge can facilitate this. Discuss the story behind the customer's framing project, and relate to that memory and experience on a per-



It can take a bit of focus and effort to find ways that help encourage customers to come back again—just like learning to throw a boomerang!

sonal level. Be warm, share emotions, and get to know your customers individually.

Spend Time

Customers love a positive experience, and studies have shown that they will view a buying experience as positive when they don't feel ignored or rushed. Be prepared to spend time with them. Even better, invest time with your customers. Don't forget that they have more walls to fill than just the job you're designing with them today.

Inspiration Display

Customers can be inspired by framing ideas they might see on display when they come into your store. Dedicate prominent display areas to show customers your creative abilities. Even though customers may come in just to frame a diploma, they may leave your store inspired by a great idea for another custom frame. It's much easier to sell higher-value work when your examples raise the bar.

Creating a personal connection with customers and exceeding their expectations with added value is key to keep them coming back

Add Value

Karen and Jerry Monnery, owners of The Framer in Adelaide, Australia, regularly employ an added-value strategy to exceed their customer's expectations, enhancing their satisfaction. Jerry says, "Where appropriate, we try to find ways to offer little extras into the job at no extra charge. For example, we might add an extra fillet or V-groove to a mat, upgrade a double mat to a triple mat, or even upgrade the glazing of a small frame from standard glass to anti-reflective glass. We feel these can help add value to a sale without really costing us too much. We usually try to use some offcuts we already have lying around. At the very least, you can even just offer hooks to hang their picture."

Karen explains, "Even if there is a small value to the additional cost of materials added, we consider it an investment in marketing. Not only does this help encourage loyalty, but the customer may also feel so good about the little unexpected extra that it can translate into a little extra word-of-mouth for our business."

Peak Customer Satisfaction

Whenever customers come in to pick up a framed work, a quiet objective should always be to help sell them their next custom frame. There is a powerful moment of peak customer satisfaction when customers finally see their creations completed for the first time. This could be an ideal opportunity to ask, "So what do you think might be the next thing you'll want to frame?"

Follow-up Communication

Peak satisfaction can remain for up to two weeks after customers have collected their frames, so that can be an optimal time to reach out for further inspiration. Using this strategy, not only can you thank them for choosing you but also ask for feedback, perhaps even with a link to your



Karen and Jerry Monnery, owners of The Framer in Adelaide, Australia, look for opportunities to exceed their customer's expectations by adding complimentary extras to their frame designs.

highlight possible strengths or weaknesses of your business. Some business owners use customer relationship management (CRM) software to automate the process of personalizing follow-up letters and emails to clients at scheduled times. It's best to keep this process as personalized as possible because you want to send the message that you care about the customer more than just selling a product. This builds genuine loyalty.



Promotional postal campaigns, such as this \$30 gift credit coupon from Fix-A-Frame in Brisbane, Australia, can help stimulate return business from existing customers.

entertainment with a gift voucher/coupon, a little reminder may be all that is needed to stimulate some return business. Take advantage of seasonal opportunities such as Mother's Day, Christmas, and graduation season, which are great opportunities for custom framing as gifts.

David Schummy, owner of Fix-A-Frame in Brisbane, Australia, mails a personalized letter with a credit/gift voucher to select high-value clients at optimal times of the year to help stimulate return business. He says, "We found that this credit voucher promotion is far more

preferred business social media review webpage.

For example a short note can say, "We just want to make sure you're happy with the framed artwork we did for you last week, and we'd like to say thank you again for choosing us. We hope it brings you pleasure for years to come. Please feel free to provide any feedback, either directly or on our Facebook page link below. We look forward to seeing you again with your next framing project."

Always pay attention to any feedback you receive, as it may help

Promotional Communication

Reaching out to your customers on a regular basis can promote awareness and help maintain the concept of custom framing in the front of their mind. Whether you do this in the form of an email or direct mail, you could write a newsletter, promote an upcoming event, or provide

effective when it is physically mailed rather than sent by email. We've also found that a dollar-value credit voucher outperforms a percentage discount because a dollar value is a quantifiable amount." (As a side note, Schummy also happens to hold the current Guinness World Record for the longest throw of any object by a human [a boomerang, in his case] of 427 meters! Visit www.davidschummy.com to learn more.)



David Schummy from Fix-A-Frame in Brisbane, Australia, holds the Guinness World Record for throwing a boomerang the longest distance—and he is pretty good at getting customers to return to his frame shop, too.

The Perpetual Coupon

If a coupon/voucher has worked for a client, then it should work for the same client again. When a customer presents you with a coupon to redeem for a sale, rather than accept and dispose of it, hand it back and say, "I probably shouldn't do this, but there are still another few weeks left on this coupon, so you may want to use it again or pass it on to someone else you know."

Before retiring from picture framing a few years ago, Shirley Damon of Damon Galleries, Ltd., in Vienna, VA, told me that she used this "perpetual coupon" strategy with one particular client who used the same coupon several times on different framing jobs before it expired! Shirley said she was delighted that the concept worked so well—and happily accepted the work, regardless of whether it was from several different coupons presented from different clients or several jobs from one client!

Loyalty Discounts

These programs are a common strategy used in many industries. They can work well for larger business models, but there can be a number of issues with this type of strategy for custom framers. First, do they encourage the customer to become loyal to your business or just to your discount? Second, employing this method can devalue your pricing to the point where a discount becomes an expectation. When you consider that the price of custom framing is generally labor intensive, remember that it's hard to discount labour. That makes discounting a difficult game to play unless you have structured your pricing to buffer your margins.

Loyalty programs that rely on accumulation of points or dollars are now a common strategy in retail business, from coffee shops to airlines. They have also reached a

point where they have become generic, just another loyalty card for the pile, and may not necessarily cultivate the genuine, long-term loyal relationships you're after. It is always better to use strategies that encourage long-term customer loyalty for the right reasons.

Unhappy Customers

Sometimes things don't go right.

When a customer brings in a potential problem with a job, rather than look at it as a difficulty, treat it as an opportunity to create a customer for life. Regardless of where blame or fault may lie, take responsibility, apologize for the dissatisfaction, and respond in the customer's favor with a positive outcome. This will result in the customer feeling obligated to remain even more loyal to your business.

Quality

You be judged on the quality of your work, so avoid compromising your quality. If things are not up to standard, dissatisfied customers are unlikely to return. Have you ever had to re-frame another framer's work? Customers won't always tell you what they are not happy with, either. Industry leaders aim to offer a higher standard of product than what is commonly available. If you want your business to be the best, start by selling the best.

Gratitude

Customers like to feel appreciated, and a simple, heartfelt thank-you can go a long way to making a customer feel good about choosing you. There are many ways to show this, whether it is a sign in the store, a follow up email, or simply expressing your gratitude verbally when customers come to pick up their jobs. It costs nothing to say to say thank-you, yet sometimes it means the most. **PFM**

Want to learn more about connecting with customers? Jared will lead several sales seminars at The National Conference in Las Vegas in January.

Jared Davis, MCPF, GCF, has 25 years of industry experience and is the business development manager for Megawood Larson-Juhl in Australia as well as a consultant for Gunnar International. In addition to writing for PFM, Jared also travels extensively as an educator and speaker, teaching at many industry shows and seminars around the world including The National Conference. Jared also serves on the PPFA Board of Directors and is the author of the book "Getting the Most Value From Your CMC."