

Sales Strategies

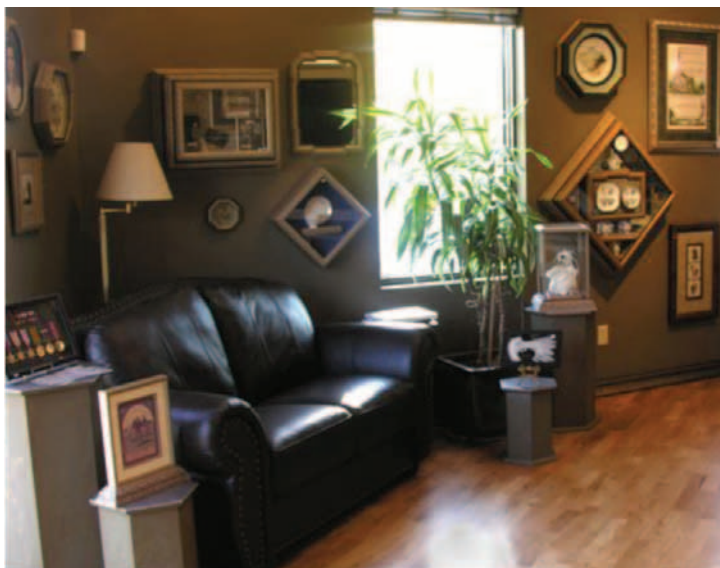


by Jared Davis,
MCPF, GCF

What Customers Want

Business begins with customers. If you don't have what they want, you don't have a business!

Which raises the question—what do customers want? The landscape of retail business has changed dramatically in recent years. With the advent of information technology and increased competition, customers are more informed and have a greater expectation of choice and variety than ever before. Given that business is not getting any easier in these times, it's fair to say that the success of a good business rests now, more than ever, with the customer. The key to future business success is to understand what



Brian Rypstra from Framing Nook in Alberta, Canada, offers a comfortable leather couch for waiting customers and partners—a sign that customers' needs are appreciated at his store.

Customers are often unclear about what kind of framing they want. Take advantage of this by using a sales approach designed to help customers find out what they really want.

today's customer really wants in terms of products, service, and experience. A successful business caters to this demand.

Give Them What They Want?

There's a well known saying, "Always give customers what they want!" This is a good philosophy, but reality can make it a challenge.

For example, how many times have you heard, "Hi, I just want a thin black frame to go around this." So

is that really what they want or is it merely a starting point, based on a lack of knowledge and inspiration?

Mark Heydon, owner of Creative Framing in Melbourne for over 25 years, says that it is a common myth that customers know what they want. Mark trains his sales staff with a very different approach. "If you give them what they want, they may not always want what they get!" he says. "Customers don't always know what they want because they don't always know what we can offer them!"

Customers sometimes have uninformed ideas about what kind of framing they want and what they should buy, so it's important that you don't just cater to an initial demand. Instead, try to work out what a customer really wants. How do

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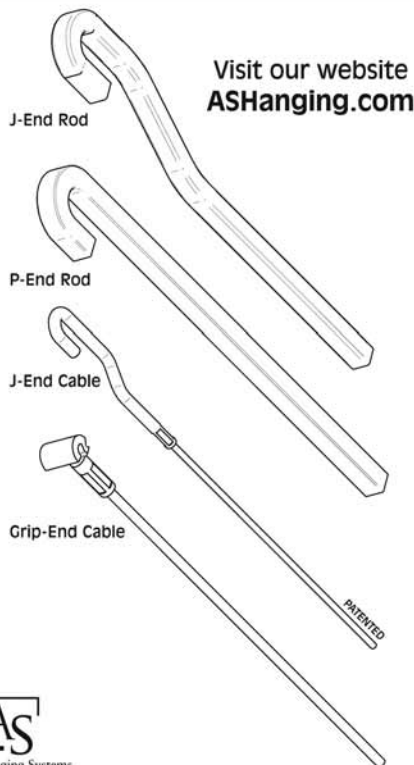
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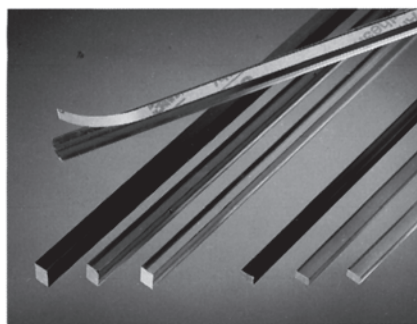
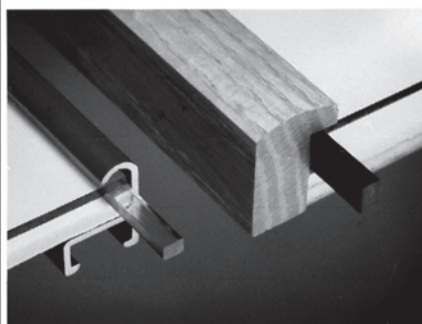


you do this? The key is to shift your perspective. Start by asking yourself, "What do my customers really want?" "Are my customers aware of all the options available to them?" and "How can I show them all their options?"



Do your matboard samples face you, or do they face your customers? It's a subtle difference, but it says a lot about your priorities.

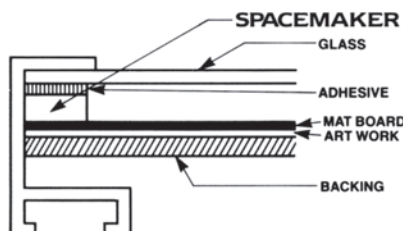
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Shift Your Perspective

Peter Fisk, author of the book *Customer Genius*, says that most people (including business owners) live their lives from the perspective of WIIFM (What's In It For Me?). When dealing with customers, try shifting your perspective away from this to look at things from the customer's perspective. Step into their shoes by asking yourself, "If I were you, how would I be feeling right now? What am I trying to achieve, and what do I really want?" Step back and analyze the event as though you were watching everything through your customers' eyes!

Most businesses focus on selling their products first and retain-

ing customers second. Switch these priorities by thinking “customer first” and “business second!” Create a customer focus by looking at your business from the outside in.

The market for custom framing is constantly changing, and customers’ wants continually change and grow. When it comes to future success, you may need to recognize that the past can be a poor guide to the future. Success can be found by looking at your business from the outside in and identifying when you need to change with your market.

Is your business current with consumer expectations? Are some of your products, services, and offerings dated and unappealing? Have you considered new products or concepts to complement your custom framing? When you look at your business from the outside, the answers to these questions can be enlightening.

Outside In – Customer Focus

Fisk suggests that business owners should reconsider every aspect of their businesses starting from the outside in, their customers’ perspective. What do your customers’ see? How do they feel? Does your business strategy align with your customers? Here’s a quick checklist of questions to ask yourself to assess whether your business has a true customer focus.

- Do you always leave the prime parking location outside your shop free for your customers’ convenience?
- Is your consulting counter designed and positioned to suit your customers’ comfort and experience?



Dave Wetterstroem from FrameMakers in Columbus, OH, combines photo restoration and framing in his window display—part of his philosophy of providing complete solutions to his customers’ total framing needs.

- Are your moulding corner samples within reach of your customer?
- Do the matboard corners on your counter face the customer?
- Do you offer a comfortable waiting chair for customers (or partners) to sit in?
- Do you offer comfortable stools for customers at your design counter?
- Do you wear a name badge?
- Do you have a children’s play corner?
- Do your business’s hours match your customers’ needs?
- Do you accept Amex?

There are hundreds of examples, but ultimately a customer-focused business thinks like its customers and helps them to buy rather than just trying to sell them.

Jeffery Gitmoer, author of *The Little Red Book of Selling*, has a

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The National Conference was excellent. I took classes that were both enjoyable and informative, providing me with new business ideas I could implement in my shop. The WCAF Show allowed me to see the latest industry products while visiting with vendors and buyers from around the world. In addition, The Mirage Resort & Casino was a wonderful venue to host the show. I look forward to attending again in 2013.

Rick Granick

FrameWorks
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famous saying: "Customers like to buy, but they don't like being sold!" Your goal should be to help them buy, not to sell them. In other words, are you trying to sell your customers framing concepts and products that you would prefer to sell, or do you actually help them buy what they want and to do it from you? When you reconsider your business strategy and design it to revolve around the customer, you will be engaging your customers and selling from the outside in.

Deliver a Complete Solution

You're not in the business of selling picture frames; you're in the business of helping your customers find a solution! Customers don't buy products; they buy solutions to their problems.

Some framing businesses offer their customers only generic concepts, products, and services and then rely on their customers to "work it out for themselves" and hopefully tie these concepts together. Instead, whenever possible, provide your customers with inspiration and ideas that bring together your different products and services to enable them to solve their framing needs. For example, when a customer asks, "Do you print photos on canvas?" or "Can you do photo restoration?" rather than say, "Sorry, we don't offer that service," find an outsource option that you can tap into. Then you can offer a complete solution, so you can tell your customers, "Yes, no problem." Customers like to hear that.

It pays to put some effort into showing customers how you can synchronize your framing services with their needs and wants. For example, Dave Wetterstroem of FrameMakers, in Columbus, OH, dedicates his displays to show complete solutions by combining photo restoration, digital printing, and framing all in one.

Emotional Thinking

A major difference in attitude between an owner and a customer is that business owners often make decisions based on rational thinking, while customers usually make decisions based on emotion. Customers engage with people and ideas much more than they do with products or processes.

Emotional thinking, such as hope, fear, and desire, is far more powerful than rational thinking. Consumer desire dictates that the cheapest product doesn't always win the sale. Remember, you are fortunate to be in an industry where you sell a product based on personal memories, art, and beauty—all of which are priceless. So always aim your products and sales at emotional attachment and beauty, and price becomes less important. A product that says "wow!" will sell better than a product that says "cheap."

Pull Not Push

You can either force a customer to buy or you can attract a customer to buy. Discounting, limited time only offers, and focusing on cheaper prices are all different aspects of forceful selling, pushing what you want to sell onto your customers. Most businesses employ this strate-

gy to some extent.

However, customers who are forced to buy in this way are not always convinced of the value of the product, and they don't become long-term customers without the same pressures and influences. On the other hand, customers who are attracted (or pulled) to buy your product will more likely turn into regular customers.

Fisk implies that businesses that only use force-selling strategies are finding that today's customers no longer like being pushed around. Customers want to buy things, but on their terms. They are more aware and know what they want, and they are intelligent enough to be able to explore their options. So rather than riding the same train as everyone else, try to aim for a "pull" approach by offering customers the following:

- Provide great service by going the extra mile
- Inspire shop presentation
- Create a personalized experience
- Sell a unique product that not only looks great but also makes customers feel great
- Give great value for the money. Great value doesn't mean being cheap. It means the customer will end up saying, "and it was worth every cent!"

When you aim to help your customers share their style, stories, and memories with others in their lives, and you share this passion with them, you will realize that you are in the business of something more meaningful than just selling frames.

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- Barb Latzel
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Top 11 Customer Wants

So what do customers want? To answer this properly, it's necessary to drill down deeper. Here is my top 11 list of what today's consumer really wants.

1. **Customers want an emotional experience.** A personal and emotional experience will out-sell a discount every time! If you want to create an experience, you need to imagine that your business is a stage and you need to set the stage for a show. Customers want to emotionally connect with their framing projects. It's better for your business to meet your customers' emotional desires and expectations.
2. **Customers like to buy, but they don't like being sold.** Rather than "pushing out" with typical, generic sales tactics, pull by attracting customers with a genuine approach to great products, service, and value.
3. **Customers like to explore and discover new things.** Create a journey for your customers in your shop that allows them to discover new ideas and concepts that they can use to decorate their homes and tell their stories.
4. **Customers always want something better, even if they don't know what it might be.** Not all customers are equal, but they all want something different and unique. They want to be wowed and impressed by something new. Always show the latest and greatest ideas and concepts to keep things fresh.

5. **Customers want to be inspired.** Customers want to be fascinated and amazed. In a world of standardized products and sameness, make things exciting.
6. **Customers want to feel special.** Treat customers more personally. Customers are not just customers; they are real people with intelligence and feelings. They have lives, and you have the opportunity to create a special part of it.
7. **Customers want to feel appreciated.** Customers have a choice, and they know it. No one likes being taken for granted. Let them know you appreciate that they chose you and your business.
8. **Customers expect to know more.** In an age of technology and instant information, customers expect more details and more understanding about the products and services they are buying. A well-informed customer doesn't necessarily focus on price to make a buying decision, so providing information is always in your favor.
9. **Customers want to do business on their terms.** Do you take Amex? Are you open on Sunday (in metropolitan areas)? Do you print photos on canvas? Do you offer a hanging service? Offer complete solutions, and you'll make your customers happy.
10. **Customers want it now.** This is an age of instant gratification, and consumers

expect to get things quicker. However, most consumers can be convinced to wait for something—if the wait results in a better product, which can apply to custom framing.

11. People want to feel good.

Make sure your customers always feel good about themselves and their decisions in your shop. People remember the feeling much more than the product.

When you truly consider things from the outside in you will realize that you are not in the framing business, you are in the customer business. They are not your customers; you are their framer!

In 1982 Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, was asked if he wanted to do market research and he replied, "No, because customers don't know what they want until we've shown them!" This concept also applies to picture framing. Get to know what your customers like better than they do. Find your passion, get inspired, and show your customers something they really want! ■

Jared Davis, MCPF, GCF, is an educator at industry tradeshows and conventions who specializes in sales and marketing. Based in Brisbane, Australia, Jared has had 20 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 Larson-Juhl in Australia and as an international educator and consultant for Gunnar International. He is also the author of *Getting the Most Value from Your CMC*. He can be reached at jared@jared-davis.com.

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