

Sales Strategies



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The Education of a Customer

Nobody knows everything and, as humans, we're constantly learning new things. As consumers, we are also creatures of habit and generally prefer to buy products we know about, understand, and trust. However, when it comes to buying things we may not entirely understand, we can feel uncomfortable venturing into the unknown and naturally become cautious, especially when significant costs are involved. Such is the case with picture framing.

How often have you had a framing customer suffer from price shock and ask you, "Why is it so expensive?" Picture framers all know there can be

much more to making a frame than meets the eye, but unfamiliar consumers with limited knowledge have to embark on a learning process when they are buying higher value picture framing—especially if it is their first time.

Few customers will happily pay more for a product if they don't understand it. Thus, in the absence of knowledge or

desire, a typical consumer will just defer to "price" as their primary gauge for justifying a purchase. However, educated customers better understand the relative value of framing and are able to justify higher-value framing purchases.

Keep in mind that, when customers are uninformed, they may not be aware of their own lack of knowledge. No one likes feeling ignorant, so always practice a sensitive approach when it comes to sharing your knowledge and advice with customers. Try



Framing Court Miranda in Sydney, Australia, has dedicated its entire wall space above the counter samples to display examples of completed framing pieces, which they reference during consultations to demonstrate different concepts. They also provide inspiration for customers.

Consumers face a learning process when first buying picture framing. Here's how to get them up to speed.

to make people feel comfortable through their learning process. One way to do this is to come from an angle of providing customers with "options," so they not only learn but also feel that they retain control over the process to make the final choices.

When a customer does ask a question, be empathetic and reserve any judgment. Sometimes it can take a lot of courage and humility to ask a question about something you are not sure of, especially when you want to buy it. Also, be conscious that many consumers don't ask questions when they probably should. This can happen because they wish to preserve their pride and confidence. They could also be relying on other ways to research and explore their understanding in order to make decisions, which you may not be aware of.

The proper way to look at selling higher-value custom framing is simple—whatever is best for your customer is going to be best for you. Some refer to this approach as a "Win-Win" philosophy.

Realistically, your goal is not to avoid "upselling"



Frames N Finishes in Adelaide, Australia, regularly uses its visualization software with a dedicated monitor to show customers the different design options they can choose from.



Framing Elegance in Victoria, Australia, has a permanent display of an image framed multiple ways, from Basic to Beautiful, to help demonstrate how much difference design selection can make when framing a picture. They also offer tri-fold brochures at the counter that provide education information to consumers about the methods and importance of conservation framing.



Hornsby Framing in Sydney, Australia, regularly displays different "Before and After" concepts for customers to see the difference that is offered through combined photo restoration and framing concepts.



The PPFA offers the CPF program and exam that picture framers can complete to gain recognition of a greater depth of knowledge about properly handling and framing artwork. A credential such as this can also be used to highlight your expertise and set you apart from others in the eyes of your customers.

the customers, but to genuinely provide your customers with all the information they require to make the best possible decision suited for them. The outcome of this process will almost always result in a higher value sale for you, which is great, but your intent should always be, "What's best for them?"

Consider some of the hidden yet important factors you should focus on to educate your customers to help them make the best decision for their framing.

- **Price is a Reflection of Value** – How many times have you heard a customer say, "I just want the cheapest frame to go around this." Do they really mean it? When in doubt, a customer will just defer to a cheaper price. However, the more you can eliminate doubt, the less important price becomes. Educated customers rarely focus only on price.
- **Conservation Framing** – Consumer research by the PPFA has verified that preservation is a primary motivation for custom framing consumers. Educating customers about the different options and practices in preservation is important, and it addresses one of their key requirements and desires.
- **Design Makes a Difference** – Framers know that frame design can make a huge difference to how a finished

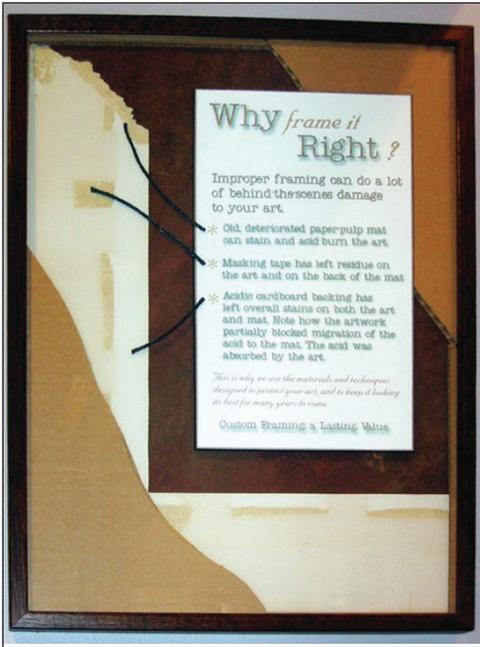
image can look on a wall. That's because they get to see this at work on a daily basis. However, many first-time framing consumers need to be convinced of this, so being able to show them the difference a design can make is vital. It can take more than just corner samples to achieve this, too.

- **Why Choose You?** – What makes you a better choice for them? What is your specialty and what makes you and your business stand out from the crowd? Do you possess some expertise, such as a CPF, that can be promoted and identified by a customer as giving your advice a higher level of credibility? Perhaps you have a strong, established brand. Maybe you have a great reputation. Think about these things and try to identify the strongest points about your business. Then, consider ways you can highlight and educate your customers about this.

Methods of Educating Customers

Here is a checklist of strategies that all framing businesses should consider to help educate customers and achieve higher value sales.

- **Time** – The first step in educating your customer is being prepared to invest the time required to demonstrate and explain different choices and options. An educated and



Frameworks of Cincinnati, OH, has an informative example that powerfully demonstrates and explains the damage that can result from using non-conservation materials.



Collect photos of your best framing jobs and store them in categories on a tablet device so you can easily retrieve them when consulting with customers.

informed customer can become a valued client. Once a customer understands the benefits of choosing better options, this knowledge becomes their platform for future purchases with you. What's also great is that you only need to teach most people once.

- Visual Aids and Samples – Seeing is believing. Nothing is more convincing than showing real examples that demon-

strate the difference between products and options. For example, having samples on-hand can demonstrate different framing concepts and enhancements such as floating, decorative matting, fillets, and premium glazing options. Sometimes, corner samples and loose pieces don't do justice to the real differences, and being able to show real, completed examples will always work best. Invest some time to create a range of visual demonstration resources you can use to help your customer understand their choices and options.

- Signage and Displays – If customers don't know about it, they're not going to buy it. Take things further in your store and consider dedicating shop space for informative

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in-store examples and displays with signs aimed at highlighting your best possible options and differences. For example, a “Before and After” display can be a powerful and convincing way to highlight what you can offer.

- **Image Libraries** – Where possible (and permissible), take photos of your best framing pieces and save these into easily referenced categories on a computer or tablet so that they can be retrieved to show to future customers. Most customers need some ideas to understand the true potential of what you can offer, so incorporate an image gallery into your consultations when possible.
- **Visualization Software** – Some framers use visualization software to help customers compare different framing concepts using an uploaded image of the customer’s artwork. This can be a fun, interactive tool to explore different design choices.
- **Literature** – Information can be more convincing when it is professionally presented in writing, such as tri-fold brochures. This information can also be taken away by a client to read at home or to share with a partner.
- **Internet** – The Internet is at everyone’s fingertips and everyone Googles things they don’t know. When it comes to the Internet, your website can become a vital

resource for knowledge and education. Consider incorporating an educational component into your website that can help customers prepare for some of the variety of choices they can face before they come into your store. Social media, such as Facebook and Pinterest, can also be used to convey educational information. YouTube has become the second biggest search engine and videos have become a common resource for learning.

- **Educate Yourself** – The most important aspect of educating others is educating yourself. True experts never stop learning and always take advantage of opportunities such as industry trade shows, conferences, and associations like PFFA to stay updated and informed. With knowledge comes confidence, and you will feel comfortable and motivated to share new ideas and concepts with your customers. **PFM**

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