

Sales Strategies



by Jared Davis,
MCPF, GCF

Inspired to Change

Change is a vital ingredient in the selling process. Consumers are constantly exposed to changes at the stores where they shop, and studies have shown that most consumers like an active retail environment. Consumers also naturally prefer items that are current and in tune with the latest trends.

Given that consumers like new experiences while shopping, they tend to spend their time shopping in stores that are contemporary and up-to-date. Shopping center management understands that they need to compete for valuable consumer traffic, so the most successful ones usually have expensive refit clauses in their contracts, forcing tenants to make extensive refurbishments to their shops every three to five years.

This doesn't just affect high-fashion retailers; all successful businesses need to change if they want to survive. No business can rely on following the

same formula forever. Considering that picture framing is linked to home decor, which is influenced by fashion trends, they have as much need for change as anybody.

Change doesn't just affect window displays; it applies to all aspects of business. This includes your product range, the way you do business, the way you market your business, how you engage with your customers, and your overall image. For any progressive business, there is always something in need of a change.



(Top) Matt Puchalski's new 3,000 square foot gallery at Masterpiece Framing in Illinois was recently renovated, taking advantage of the historic character of a 1940s' building that was originally a post office. (Middle) Masterpiece Framing in 2006, which featured a framed 75-gallon freshwater aquarium. (Bottom) The first Masterpiece store in 2002.



Updating your store can pay off by making your business more engaging to customers

Shop Presentation

Framers understand that any framed work needs to meet a certain level of customer expectation for visual appeal. An equally important (but often neglected) customer expectation is for a store's image and showroom to be visually appealing. Your overall store presentation creates the first impression customers have of you. It shapes the quick, silent judgments made about



Nick Nazerenko redesigned his original showroom (below) at Spectrum Framing in Brisbane, Australia. The makeover (above) attracted new clientele and made it easier to sell higher value custom framing.



Wayne and Chris Baker's original shop, JR Framing, in Victoria, Australia, in 2007 (below), was redesigned, and a second venture called Framing Elegance (above) was opened, aimed at attracting a more upmarket clientele.



your business and its products. Ideally, your clients' first impressions should exceed their expectations. That's why it's critical that you make improvements on an ongoing basis.

Transformation that Inspires

Progressive business owners see change as an opportunity rather than a necessity. Here are some businesses that have made some inspiring transformations:

Masterpiece Framing – Matt Puchalski of Masterpiece Framing in Chicago recently moved his business to a new location to help it grow and to gain new clientele. He has transformed his business before, starting from humble beginnings as an in-home consulting service. This led to his first 1,400 square foot retail location, in 2002. He upgraded that location, but his latest move to a new site more than doubled the size of his first store and offered an

opportunity to change his look by completely renovating the building to match his vision for the future.

"I always like to stay curious and open to new ideas," Puchalski says. "Just because something works now doesn't mean it will still work tomorrow. For example, I first introduced digital printing and photo restoration in 2005, and that significantly contributed to my business success."

You don't have to be drastic, though, Puchalski says. "I'm a huge fan of slow growth by continually making small changes. I always look for ways to fine tune. It's important to imagine the future but to live in the moment and develop short-term goals. Many small revisions and constant tweaking is necessary to achieve a larger vision. For instance, I regularly change my displays and windows to keep things looking different, and I try to incorporate seasonal themes into my merchandising. I also just retrofitted my light fixtures with new LED bulbs."

Spectrum Art & Framing – After experiencing a decline in the sales of art and framing, Nick Nazerenko of Spectrum Art & Framing in Brisbane, Australia, recently embarked on an extensive updating of his entire business, giving it a more contemporary look. He chose to make custom framing his main focus. This made sense, as it has long been his core product. Since the makeover (and renaming his store Spectrum, Art of Framing), Nazerenko has seen a noticeable improvement in the type of customer his business is attracting. He's also found it easier to sell higher value framing than before, with a notable increase in his average sale. Rather than trying to use every inch of wall space with cheap frame prints and oils, he opted for a more minimalist approach, with a well thought-out placement of upscale frame examples to promote his advanced design work. This made it easier to sell higher value framing.



Jennifer Poole redecorated her Great Frame Up store in Charlottesville, VA, (below) by giving it a more contemporary look (above) that has attracted many new customers.



Frame Up Quality Picture Fram-

ing – Peter and Terrie Abildgaard of Frame Up Quality Picture Framing in Mornington, south of Melbourne, Australia, are second-generation framing business owners. After coming to terms with the fact that their business was losing relevance to today’s consumers, they decided it was time to make a dramatic change. First came the realization that they couldn’t fully make the refurbishments they wanted at their existing location, so they decided to move to a new location across the street. Starting with a blank canvas, a new store design concept took shape. They completely separated the financial transaction area away from the consulting area. The consulting area was also redesigned so it was more enclosed, helping to create a sense of privacy. It was also designed to provide an “in the round” experience, eliminating the “my side/your side” table format. The table was also constructed at a

lower height, allowing for a more comfortable viewing distance. Since moving, their business has grown rapidly over the last 18 months, so they’ve had to increase staffing to manage the new stream of clients and the amount of work flooding in.

JR Framing – Chris and Wayne Baker of JR Framing in Victoria, Australia, bought a long established framing business in late 2007

from a retiring owner. They knew they would have to breathe new life into the business. They made dramatic in-store renovations, improving and updating the overall ambience, lighting, and space. The most impact came from decluttering, installing brighter lighting, and adding a fresh coat of white paint to brighten the store and make it feel less confined. Significant changes were also made to the customer service and consultation process by spending more time with clients, and their pricing structure was completely overhauled. These improvements were favorably received by customers. Today, after a few years of proven success, they have recently opened an additional retail store called Framing Elegance in a nearby town, specifically aimed at a more upscale clientele.

Great Frame Up Charlottesville – Jennifer Poole of The Great Frame Up in Charlottesville, VA, says, “I truly

believe that moving into the luxury market is the future for custom framing, and I wanted to attract a more upscale clientele to our business”. She decided to extensively redecorate her 700 square foot showroom by replacing the older carpet with a high-quality natural cork, and updating the generic fluorescent lighting with natural-level lighting and modern fittings over the moulding corner and design area. New bench tops were also added to the design counters. She also refinished the walls with a faux brick finish (made of thin bricks on metal plate) to simulate the comfortable domestic feel of natural brick. The result is a more attractive, modern style that has helped make the business more appealing to her target market.

The Bottom Line

Business guru Jim Rohn once said, “Your life does not get better by chance; it gets better by change”. Framers, like all business owners, face an ongoing need for change. The question is, will it be a matter of choice or will you be forced to make changes to survive. If you want to stay in business, you need to change. Just don’t let yourself be left behind; because everything else around you is moving forward. ■

Jared Davis, MCPF, GCF, is an educator at industry tradeshow and conventions who specializes in sales and marketing. Based in Brisbane, Australia, Jared has had 23 years’ experience in the framing industry, and has authored numerous articles for major industry publications. He works full-time as a product manager for Megawood Larson-Juhl in Australia and as an international educator and consultant for Gunnar International. He can be reached at jared@jared-davis.com.