

# Sales Strategies



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## *Selling Custom Framing's Value*

**H**ow often have you felt the impulse to compromise your price with a customer? And do you remain confident when you know you can't always offer the cheapest price? The answer is to understand the value of your products and to sell that, not the price. Quite simply, selling value helps your customers justify paying more than they originally had in mind.

It's all about a customer's perception of value. To sell the value of custom framing, you need to find ways to make your products and services stand out above others in an increasingly cost-conscious retail environment. Most consumers understand how to compare price for value when researching their purchasing decisions. But for you to win at this process, you need to know what your customers place the most value on and help them understand the value that you are giving them so they can make the right decision. If

a customer doesn't understand the value of your products and services, there's only one thing they can focus on, and that is price.

Anyone in business can use price as an advantage. But there's

also the well-known business saying: "Price, Service, Quality—choose any two!" If you choose price, then either service or quality must suffer.

When it comes to selling the value of custom framing, the main thing to remember is that you are selling more than just four pieces of wood and a piece of glass. Here are some key factors to help you sell value and overcome the false lure of low prices.



*This attractive store display at Jodie Prymke Fine Art Framing in Adelaide is changed regularly, but it always communicates value and quality.*

*To sell the value of custom framing, find ways to make your products and services stand out above others*

### **Understanding Your Target Market**

A vital aspect of selling value is to thoroughly understand your target market. Many framing business owners are often not clear about what type of business model suits their target market and where they should direct their focus. When you're not sure, ask yourself, "Who is the typical, preferred consumer for my product?" The answer is not the same for everyone because there's more than one way to run a picture framing business successfully. To get started, answer these questions:

- "Who do you sell the most of your products to?"
- "What do your customers expect to buy when

they come in to your store?”

- “Why do your regular customers get things framed?”

There are numerous possibilities about who your target market is. They could be artists, high-end retail consumers, or art collectors. Your target clientele could also be influenced by (or limited to) your demographic area and market niche.

It is very difficult to find successful businesses that have a broad focus and thrive by being everything to everyone—especially if they are considered to be the best in their field. Typically, the best restaurants in town are those that specialize in one type of cuisine with a limited menu but each menu item is a winner. Restaurants that struggle tend to be those that offer a vast selection of cuisines, with a lengthy, uninspiring menu.

Similarly, custom framing owners often need to accept the idea that their particular niche isn't for everyone and focus on catering to a narrow target market. That's why identifying your target market is important. And once you determine it, make sure every aspect of your business relates to this market.

## Confidence

Selling value over price is very hard if you don't have a certain amount of confidence. Being able to control your nerves is difficult when an uninformed customer states, “But I can buy another frame much cheaper than this elsewhere.” It requires real conviction if you want to overcome the impulse to drop your price. To handle this situation right, you need to know what your framing is worth and believe in it! Always look for ways to demonstrate the value of your framing, and practice delivering this information with confidence.



*Artery in Tasmania offers an extensive range of informative brochures to help answer frequent questions by consumers and adds to the perception of the business's credibility and expertise.*



*Customers at Hornsby Framing are invited to write their comments in a customer comments book on the counter when they pick up their framing. Hornsby Framing's website also features testimonials, comments, and photos that communicate the value of the shop's products and services.*

One place that can help you build confidence in your product value is to know the fundamentals of your pricing system thoroughly, including a detailed understanding of how your margins are calculated to cover your overhead. Once you truly know how your pricing engine works, it's a lot easier to deliver a price to a client without hesitation or doubt. It will also help you look a customer in the eye when you quote a price, something that communicates confidence and helps convince a customer that the price you are quoting is fair.

Handling a customer's objection to price with an appropriate reply also communicates a sense of confidence. When asked, “Why is it so expensive?” Erin Salgezzo from Artis Pura in Woolloongabba, Australia, commonly uses the simple reply, “Well, it is *custom* framing,” which she delivers with sub-

tle conviction (not arrogance) and a warm smile.

Nick Nazarenko from Spectrum Art & Framing in Browns Plains, Australia, offers a more direct and humorous approach. “Well I'm not just plonking this into an off-the-shelf frame. I've actually got to make this frame especially for you!”

Even if you are not entirely certain how your pricing system works, you should never be embarrassed by the price of your product. If you are unsure of yourself when you quote a price, it will not go unnoticed—and you will probably lose the sale.

## Sell Your Expertise

Explore different ways to inform your customers about your business specialty, past experience, and design expertise to help them build confidence in you and your products. Shop presentation is the best place to start. It says a lot about the value you offer. It's like you know that you're not going to pay \$20 for a trim and cut when you walk into an up-market hair salon merely by seeing the presentation and feel of the salon. Likewise, you are not going to pay \$200 for a haircut at a traditional barbershop. Choose your market and make sure your customer can identify with it within seconds of walking in.

Nothing sells the value of custom framing better than beautifully displayed examples of inspired framing ideas and concepts. Jodie Prymke Fine Art Framing in Adelaide, Australia, dedicates significant time and creativity in shop appearance and in-store displays to deliver the right message about product value and expertise, which helps attract higher-end clientele.

Demonstrating your knowledge also helps communicate the feeling that you know what you're doing. For example, Roy and his team at Artery in Hobart, Tasmania, offer customers a helpful range of informative brochures, which they created to cover different aspects of custom framing. These help educate consumers about their options while also adding credibility to the shop's service and expertise.

### Selling Reputation and Service

Another good idea is to build a "library" of past success stories that you can share with potential customers. James and Sarah of Hornsby Framing in Hornsby, Sydney, have a customer comments book placed on the front counter so that happy customers can write down how they feel about their framed projects when they come to collect them. This helps sell the value and satisfaction that comes with buying custom framing.

Hornsby takes this idea one step further by featuring a selection of customer testimonials on its website (with permissions) to promote the store's commitment to customer satisfaction. These are often personalized, which makes them a powerful tool for selling the value of their business's overall customer experience.

### Catering to Price-Conscious Consumers

Although it makes sense to assume that customers walk into your shop for the best product you can offer, obviously not everyone can afford a full-priced custom frame. In these cases, it's good to be able to offer some low-cost alternatives while still keeping the focus on your premium custom framing. It shows that you not only produce quality but are also sensitive to the needs of customers.

Glenn Vardy from Frames Now in Melbourne, Australia, offers his customers a broad range of ready-made frame



*The entrance to Frames Now features a premium custom framing area, with a well-stocked display of affordable ready-made frame options for price-conscious consumers at the back of the store.*



*"Gaston Art Great Deal" custom frame display at Gaston Art & Frames offers fixed-price custom framing options in a limited range of value-priced mouldings and mats.*

options, which cater to the price-conscious consumer and are a handy option for those who cannot justify the expense of a custom frame. Glenn is careful to separate his ready-made frame display area from his premium custom frame consulting area so that he does not dilute either concept. This helps consumers understand visually the difference between his two product categories. Glenn has also positioned his premium custom framing area at the front of his shop so that it always has the advantage of being the first option considered.

John Harry Gaston, CPF, from Gaston Art and Frame in Shrewsbury, MA, has another creative idea to cater to price-conscious consumers. John has created stand-alone, self-serve table display area that offers a fixed-price custom-framing solution. This concept shows a limited selection of value-sourced mouldings and matboards so that clients can create their own designs, with the knowledge of what the price will be in advance. Once again, this concept is clearly defined and segregated from his standard custom framing. John says, "With this strategy, I can also get more price-conscious customers through the door, and in many cases it doesn't take much to upsell some of them into higher-value, custom-framing options."

Have you ever had a customer who left you because of your price only to return later because you offered something more important than price? Find out exactly what made such customers return, and proudly promote those features as part of the value you offer. While value is in the eye of the beholder, when it comes to custom framing, the value is there long after the frame is paid for. It's up to you to have confidence in what you make and then go sell it! ■

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