

Successful Retailing: The Business of Framing

Part One: Marketing to a Niche Market



Marc
Bluestone



Bob
Carter



Bruce
Dale



Jay
Goltz



William
Parker

The transcript of this event, an annual breakfast panel discussion held at the **2002 West Coast Art and Frame Show** and sponsored by **The National Conference**, will appear over the next several issues of PFM.

Panel:

Marc Bluestone, president and owner of Frame Group, Inc.; St. Louis, MO.

Bob Carter, owner of Frame Up; Phoenix, AZ.

Bruce Dale, president of Aaron Brothers; a retail chain with 150 U.S. locations.

Jay Goltz, president and founder of Goltz Group, Inc.; Chicago, IL.

William Parker, owner of Ambiance by Parker; Nashville, TN.

Moderated by **Bruce Gherman**, publisher, PFM.

Question:

How do you address the fact that only five to ten percent of the US population are custom framing customers when you develop your marketing plan?

Jay Goltz: You need to look at all of the different kinds of advertising media that are out there and recognize that many of them are cross-sectional. They go to everybody. You can't afford to waste your advertising dollars by going into the same publication as, maybe, the local grocery store does.

You have to look at who is your best potential customer, because the fact is that 90% of the people out there aren't potential customers at all. To spend money going after them is inefficient. When you pick out advertising media, decide by what makes sense to the market, not by the best salesperson or who is good at coming in to bother you the most. Don't think, "Oh, I can afford to do this, it's only \$200." I see a lot of people waste a lot of money—\$200 at a time.

Consider those small \$200 ads that never have any effect versus spending \$1000 to be in the right spot on a frequency basis in front of the right audience. Because if you



Bruce Gherman, publisher of PFM, shown here at the far left, moderated the panel discussion with five retail experts who came to Las Vegas to discuss marketing and its importance to custom framers with businesses of all sizes.

don't do that, you'll never have any impact on the audience. Target exactly who you are going after and spend your money on them.

Mark Bluestone: I see this question as, "How do you get people who don't usually frame items interested in custom framing?" To do that, you have to look at what your ads are like and what message you send in your advertising. Many times, framers' ads are aimed at people who have had items framed before. They are factual; they are about why the person should choose them to do their framing. They don't really address why you should do framing at all.

To that end, you have to think about why people buy. They buy because they want the product and because it will make them feel good. There is an "emotional" sell. Show your audience something in your ad that will make them desire the product you sell. And then, of course, show them why they should pick you—tell them what you can do and your range of services.

Too many of the ads that people run are geared toward someone who already knows something about framing, not the person who doesn't.

Bruce Dale: I disagree with the statistic of five to 10 percent that was given. I think that there are times of the year when we have the opportunity to sell custom framing to a consumer who would not be a frequent customer otherwise. This



The well-attended event also featured a question-and-answer period with the audience.

is true particularly at graduation time and around Mother's Day. These could be opportunities to convince those customers to treat that diploma or wedding certificate differently than they have in the past.

So, I'd say that timing is very important when you decide how you are going to spend that advertising money.

Bob Carter: I agree that the five to 10 percent figure is not as accurate as I'd like it to be. I think of it more of a 90 to 95 percent opportunity. The way we take advantage of that fact is to position our stores in the most visible locations we can. We are in large regional malls.

I want to see the largest possible network of people walk in front of my store. Then it is up to me to capture each person, to create that desire through design, through wonderful windows, and any other number of things that I can think of that will make that person come to me when they need something framed.

To make someone feel

compelled to frame an item is a very difficult task. I want to be in a position so that when a consumer does need framing, they will remember me through my design, position, or location.

Jay Goltz: I want to say something additional about why the five to 10 percent statistic is correct. A \$2.5 billion industry (like the framing industry) in the U.S. is smaller than any major corporation you can think of. If we serviced any more than that five to ten percent, we'd be a \$30 or \$40 billion industry. The key, though, is to keep in mind that in your neighborhood you might serve as much as 30% of the population, because your shops are probably in "good" neighborhoods. ■