

# Successful Retailing: The Business of Framing

## Part Five: Getting Inside New Homes



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 in this and the next issue of *PFM*.

### Panelists:

**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:

Are services that list home sales of any value to us in the marketing of art and framing?

**Bruce Dale:** Those services have worked for us. However, someone here had a good point: You don't want to mail to such a list so that you are mailing them when the people first move in. That's when they are buying new lawnmowers and washers and dryers. We've found that if we hold onto those lists for a bit, then they are a good tool.

**Marc Bluestone:** When using a list of new home sales, as with anything else, the important part of marketing is that you do a lot of things. This could be a valid part of anyone's marketing program. If I had a single store, or even in my own company, where we have a marketing department, we'd try to do a lot of different things.



Bruce Gherman (far left) moderated the panel discussion with five retailers who discussed various aspects of the business of framing.

Maybe in the morning you're putting stamps on postcards to send to new homeowners. Then, in the afternoon, you're finishing a mailing that will go to some other selection of addresses in your community. My point is that no one single thing is going to increase your business, but a number of small things, if done consistently, will.

**Jay Goltz:** I haven't had success with this kind of marketing. I don't like the fact that it is often a one-shot deal and that there is no continuing reminder to those consumers about you.

I would also worry about who you are in those coupon packs with. Are they water heater companies? That's nothing against those businesses, but I want to be advertising with companies that sell furniture, carpeting and brick patios—things like that.

I believe we are in the home décor business. I want to be marketing my business with other upscale businesses. Some of those mailers are heavy with service businesses like carpet cleaners or maids.

**Marc Bluestone:** There are many ways to get into new homes besides "Welcome Wagon" services or group mailers. You can buy lists of people moving into the area and you can age the lists like Bruce [Dale] suggested. You can also make selections from the list based on a specific area or home value. Then you can do your own direct mail piece that presents your business the way you want it to be seen.



*Statements from the panel provided food for thought (and discussion) among the many attendees at the industry breakfast event.*

**William Parker:** I had an associate in Nashville tell me that he had once purchased a new home list. He planned a very nice direct mail piece and he even mailed five picture hooks with it.

However, he got zero response. He sent it too soon—he should have waited six months. People who have just bought new homes often experience some sticker shock at first and cut back on their spending for a period of time. He also shouldn't have mailed all five picture hooks in the same envelope. He could have done five different mailings, over a ten week period, each with a single picture hook.

One of the most common mistakes in marketing plans—one that I have made many times—is the failure to get a repetition of our message going so that we can generate a response from the customer. The average consumer needs to see an advertisement 3.5 times for it to have any recognition at all.

**Marc Bluestone:** I agree: repetition is very important. But I'd also like to ask another question. Do you need a response to every piece of marketing that you do? Even if customers don't enter the store as a direct result, is the act of mailing a postcard a gesture of goodwill that, over time and combined with other marketing efforts, will pay off? Could it work without you realizing it?

**William Parker:** Your point is very valid. We never know exactly what we've done.

This ties into that figure of just five to 10 percent of consumers being likely to be in our market. We often expect an instant return on our marketing. But to any marketing we do, the best response will only be a portion of that five to 10 percent that is buying custom framing.

You may never know when your advertising hooks into someone, but you want to be there in their subconscious. You want to be the name they think of when they need something framed. ■