

Tips on Marketing Canvas Replicas

by Art Ernst

The process of transferring print images to a canvas substrate continues to offer revenue enhancement possibilities for framing retailers. Shops seeking to grow their market might consider applying the flexibility that canvas replicas (transfers) offer with sensible marketing concepts presented herein. One key facet to grasp and relay to potential clients is the notion of distinctive advantage.

Canvas replicas have several such advantages. For instance, in the case of images originally created on canvas, replicas render this artwork back on the medium originally intended by the artist. Transferring poster or print images to canvas allows classic images to be framed in ornate mouldings associated with originals.

Also, with canvas replicas, UV inhibiting additives are contained within the acrylics that extend the life of the images. Versus original oils, replicas are often far less expensive than works of equivalent imagery. They are also easily maintained; cleaned by wiping them with a damp cloth.

Position Properly

When adding canvas replicas to one's array of offerings, it is important to recognize where they fit in relation to other products. A shop whose business is focused on framing posters and the like is trading up when adding replicas to its offerings. In this context, replicas should be viewed as upgrades to the existing product line. Further, open edition custom transfers may fit better than limited editions given the potential price gap of the latter.

On the other hand, a shop or gallery that deals heavily with original works of art may be trading down when adding replicas. In this situation, replicas should be viewed as less expensive alternatives to obtain fine imagery. Moreover, limited edition canvases might best maintain the cachet and investment value often characteristic of originals.

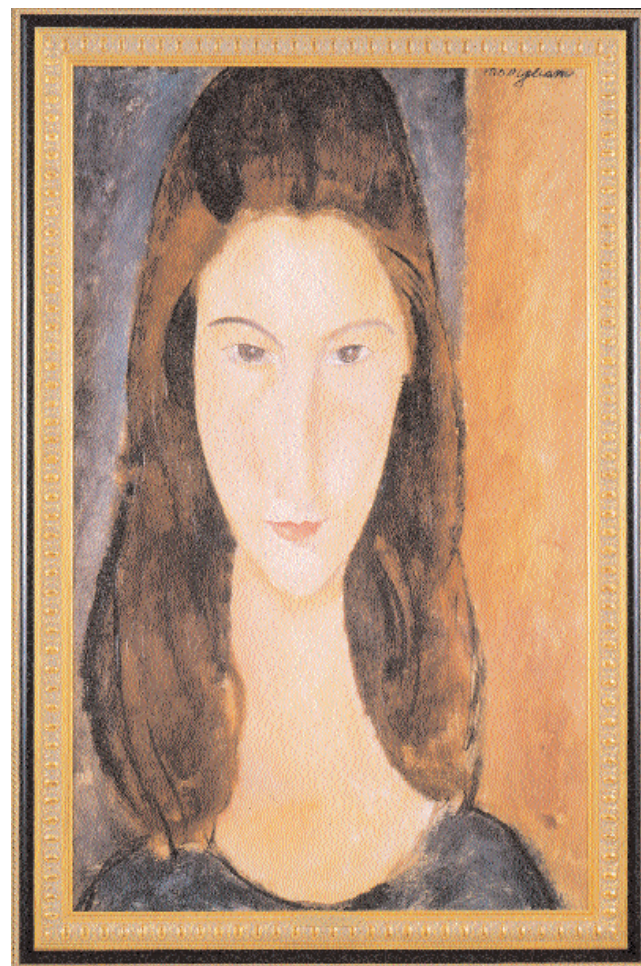
In both situations cited, there has been an expansion of the potential client base.

Recognize Market Segments

A marketing device usually relegated to large corporations is



Customers can own a canvas replica of Claude Monet's "La Jette du Havre" for significantly less than the original.



Offering canvas replica services can add another source of revenue for your business. (Images on this page courtesy of Old Grange Graphics.)

more readily available to individual shops that offer replicas. This device is *market segmentation*, and allows one to create product lines that address the needs of particular customer groups.

Segment by Price

One way to categorize clientele is with price. While posters present an inexpensive décor option and originals are high-end, replicas can be offered at virtually all levels. Miniature reproductions in ready-made frames can wholesale for under \$15, while large, limited edition canvases in ornate mouldings can list in the thousands. Even using the same image, frame selection alone can provide the price flexibility needed to close certain sales.

Segment by Demographics

Mail order companies succeed by properly adjusting product lines to the demographics of their databases. You should know your area and local population better than the mail order companies. Display catalogs from canvas replica studios, as well as actual pieces of artwork pertinent to your clientele.

Segment by Location

Overlapping the notion of a local clientele is the dimension of local geography. More precisely, there is imagery of landscapes of every ecosystem in every clime. There are also reproductions of views of specific cities and historically important places and events.

Shops can take advantage and display artwork related to their vicinity. Even if local residents are all too familiar with these scenes, tourists, new residents, and newly "community-conscious" residents can convert this inventory into revenue more quickly than random artwork.

The bottom line of segmentation is that there are prints or posters with images that will be particularly popular among the people who can potentially come to your store. Presenting these same pertinent images on canvas, to be framed for a variety of budgets and décor, can increase sales.

Display Promotionally and Effectively

Assuming some level of aesthetic appeal, it is generally true that the amount of wall and floor space devoted to a particular art form will bear greatly on sales of that art form. However, with canvas replicas you do not need a lot of space to offer a lot of product, although it is critical that at least one transferred image be displayed.

Moreover, the displayed piece will not only help sales, it will also avert returns as customers will know what to expect. One popular display technique is to hang a poster and replica of the same image side by side. Not only does this exhibit the enhancement of the transfer process, it inculcates the notion that any poster can be rendered as a canvas. Customers may think of images and posters they've seen previously and how your shop can beautify them.

Importantly, your library of print and poster catalogs should be kept near your displayed replicas. A sign indicating that any poster can be made into a canvas replica is also helpful. In this manner your display of one or a few becomes a gallery of thousands.

Offer Photo Services

Many studios that transfer lithographic posters to canvas can also transfer photographs to canvas. Usu-

ally, the mounting process is slightly different and more expensive. Regardless, the popularity of canvas photos that national companies like Olan Mills have discovered could be similarly popular in your shop. Clients may want canvas portraiture for posterity. Of course, classic photo opportunities like proms and graduations present promotional opportunities as well.

Offer Repair Services

When posters or photographs are ripped or crinkled, they are usually considered ruined and subsequently discarded. While traditional photo restoration and repair services may be desired by the client, the canvas transfer process provides another means of rescue. Often, a ripped or damaged print can be transferred. During the transfer process creases disappear. Afterwards, white lines will appear where rips were beforehand. Acrylic paints can then be used to match the image and eliminate signs of prior damage. Some transfer studios provide this service.

Summary

Clearly, getting traffic into your shop is essential for survival and success. While a well-situated shop may do fine with walk-in business, many enterprises are also looking for ways to reach new and existing customers.

Canvas replicas offer frame shops numerous marketing angles to attract new clientele and convert enhanced interest into sales. Traditional techniques of advertising and display certainly come into play. Active pursuit of revenues by presenting, in useful form, all the capabilities of the transfer process will maximize returns.

Your shop has access to all the artwork and ancillary services that the

biggest mail order companies, websites, and distributors do. By combining engaging marketing ideas with the personal contact only you can have with your customers, you should enjoy increasing and well-deserved profits.

For a list of companies that provide transfer to canvas services, refer to the 2003 *PFM* Annual Directory (Special Products/Services), or visit the Buyer's Guide at the *PFM* website (www.pictureframingmagazine.com).



Art Ernst is a small business consultant and freelance writer, producing newsletters, ad copy, and websites primarily for the art trade. From 1991 through 1998, he owned

Old Grange Graphics, Inc., during which time it grew from a small mail order company to a leading company in the canvas transfer industry.