

## I Have Seen The Future of Framing

By Jay Goltz

I've just returned from a trip to Silicon Valley, California, and witnessed what is clearly the future of this industry. I visited a company called FrameNet — a company that specializes in international framing on the Internet. You've probably heard about it by now since it's been written up in many of the computer publications. Nevertheless, I was still stunned. Anybody with a video camera and a computer can now frame pictures over the Internet. Here's how it works.

Your art is photographed by video camera and digitized. The digitized image is transmitted via the Internet to a 50,000 square foot facility in Monterey County. FrameNet has found a way to manipulate the pixels to make any adjustments, improvements, or repairs to the image that the customer desires. After the image has been "improduced", as they call it (because it is frequently improved from the original), it can then be printed at any size from 5" x 7" to an enormous 48" x 96".

Next comes the framing selection, which is nothing less than remarkable. Given that their slogan is "Global Friendly Framing", it's no wonder that all of the frame moulding is made from recycled

materials. The primary ingredient used as a binder to hold the recycled material together is a derivative of orange peels.

After the moulding is cut and joined, a very sophisticated assembly process begins. An automatic glass washing machine and a laser operated mat cutter are simultaneously working on an order. As

the washed glass moves down a conveyer belt, it is met by the cut mat and the freshly printed, improduced art.

A \$420,000 robot with a permanently fixed stapling jig (the technology used on the robot is similar to that used in the automotive industry) assembles the entire package together. Metal frames are not available at this time. The entire process takes all of three and a half minutes.

At the end of the line, the piece is inspected and verified against the work order. Instead of the conventional label put on the back of the frame package, these pieces have a 2" x 3" hologram label with the FrameNet logo on one side and the thumb print of the inspector on the other. The thumb print can be scanned at any time during the process to determine which inspector is responsible for



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## *goltz on business*

the quality control of the order.

The entire operation is run by only seventeen people. Three of the production managers, called “expeditors”, travel through the plant to make sure the machines run smoothly. They cover the large area quickly and efficiently because they are all on rollerblades. These managers all seem to be in their 20’s — I don’t think someone older could keep up the pace!

The company’s daily output at the moment is approximately 1,200 pieces per day, and they are growing at a rate of almost 20% per month. At this rate, FrameNet predicts that by the year 2000 they will be doing 70% of this country’s framing. The only thing that may slow them down is a problem they’ve recently noticed in Seattle during a particularly heavy rainy season. It seems that the frames are attracting fruit flies.

Nonetheless, this new company is clearly going to have an impact on all of us in the industry. I for one am not going to take this lying down. I’m boycotting orange juice. Less orange juice, less peels. Less peels, less resin. Less resin, less business for FrameNet. Less business for FrameNet, and they’ll shrivel up like an old orange.

Happy April’s Fool Day! □

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*Jay Goltz started Artists' Frame Service in 1978 fresh out of college. Artists' Frame Service now employs 120 persons at its main location, a 35,000 square-foot showroom and production facility in Chicago. Goltz has received numerous business honors including induction into the Arthur Andersen and University of Illinois Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame (1992). He regularly speaks at business conferences on topics ranging from entrepreneurship to customer service. Goltz is best-known for his straight-talk on how to succeed in business.*