



by Jay Goltz

GOLTZ ON BUSINESS

Time Flies When You're Having Fun

It's August. It's hot. Too many of your customers are on vacation. Too many people you know are playing golf. You want to sit out by the pool, but you don't have a pool. The last thing you are thinking about is Christmas.

Well, the fact is, that's the first thing you should be thinking about. In our industry, the busy season is the holidays. Sales may not spike up as much as in other areas of retail, but most picture framers enjoy the extra orders the holiday season brings. Given how labor-intensive our business is, it pays to plan ahead when you have the extra time—which most of us do in August.

- Catch up on things you haven't put a lot of energy into, like corner samples. You should be discontinuing, probably, 10% to 20% of your mouldings every year. If you don't do this, you will not be able to introduce the hot, new frames. Don't let yourself fall behind in current trends. Even the most popular frames can end up in the discontinued pile. (Does anyone remember mauve laminates?)

- Now is also a good time to see sales people and see what their new offerings are. You don't want to be doing this during your busy season. Do it now.

- Clean up your store! This is a good time to change the carpeting, paint the walls, replace your faded hours sign in the window... Today is tomorrow, and tomorrow you'll be too busy to do it.

- I know I've said this before, but I can't say it enough. Update your pricing! I

am sure some of your costs have gone up in the last six months. Change them before your busy season, not after.

- Analyze your staff. Now would be the time to hire if you need additional help—not in November when it's too late to train someone for the holiday rush.

- Plan your advertising for the holidays now. Whether it's print ads or a direct mail piece, it's a good idea to get it to the printers before both you and they get too busy.

- Take care of machine maintenance. Many people don't pay attention to their machinery until it breaks down. A good idea would be to give your machines a tune-up to prevent the occurrence of any major problems when you need them most.

- Inspect and replace your sales samples. Chances are that you have some frayed fabric samples, finger-printed matboards, broken corner samples... I know from personal experience that matboards can get fingerprints before you know it.

When it gets busy, we all fall into the "just get the job done" mode. That can prove to be very expensive if other things are being neglected. You can get all set for higher traffic now and make yourself more efficient during the holidays. In doing so, you will have on your best possible face when many new customers are coming in for their "first impression."

Ready, aim, fire! ■

Let Jay help you aim your sales cannon with his book, The Street-Smart Entrepreneur, available at Walden Books or directly from the publisher by calling (800) 352-2873.