



by Jay Goltz

Goltz On Business

Time's A-Wastin'

Most people that you talk to in business have a list of things they would like to do to improve their company. The most common reason for not getting them done is, "I don't have the time." Certainly, that makes sense during the busier times of year. Compared to many businesses, framing might even be more time-demanding because we not only have to sell, but we also have to create the finished product.

I figured out years ago that I could not grow my business unless I got control of the problem—unless I could whittle away the time wasters. I've developed the T.W.Q. (time-wasting quotient). It is completely unscientific. It is for amusement only. Do not try this at home!

Score each of these on a scale of one to 10; 10 being you're very good at it and one being you really need to work on it.

_____ I know the difference between management and babysitting. I instruct, oversee, give feedback, and hold people responsible. Sometimes I have to tell employees something two or three times before they get it. I don't keep people that are *NEVER* going to get it. I don't spend a lot of time fixing other people's errors.

_____ I use the Internet for information, participate in some on-line business bulletin boards, and I have gleaned some good information from it. I seldom spend more than 15 minutes a day on the Internet, and sometimes it's just a therapeutic break.

_____ Whenever I have taken in a frame job that has taken a lot more time than I estimated and charged for, I make mental note of it. (Stretching that silk scarf with that straight line around the edge—could you possibly have charged enough?) I make sure that I charge enough now, taking into consideration the amount of time it's going to take, and accept that some customers are not going to leave the job. I have learned that sometimes the most important frame job is the one that you don't take in.

_____ I have equipment in good condition that does not require a lot of maintenance. I realize that it is far cheaper to buy a new piece of equipment than to futz around with a temperamental glass cutter, mat cutter or other piece of equipment.

_____ I know how to move customers along. I understand there is a thin line between customer service/building a relationship with your customer and being the local magnet for people that have time to kill.

_____ I have vendors that do their job. I expect occasional problems from vendors, but know the difference between occasional and regular. Sending moulding back, getting return authorizations, and calling customers because of the delay takes a lot of time. If my vendor cannot get its act together, I'll find other vendor.

____ I understand the role of salespeople who call on me. They are an important source of new product information, samples, and advice. I also know when it's time to get back to work and am comfortable telling the salesperson that I have to get back to work.

____ I understand the cost of time. Spending 10 minutes looking for that scrap of 8"x10", medium blue matboard is not cost-effective. I know how to use the garbage can and do not spend an inordinate amount of time sorting scraps.

____ I am up-to-date on time saving methods of doing custom picture framing. I read trade publications, go to educational seminars and pass on what I know to my employees.

____ I have a manageable inventory—which includes corner samples. Everything hanging on my wall is current and in-stock with my vendors. I don't have "more samples that I can keep track of."

Now tally your score and read on to find out where you stand.

Score of 90-100:

You are a framing machine. You are efficient, but you probably don't have a lot of friends. If you do, they know better than to call you at work!

Score of 80-89:

You love framing. Perhaps too much. You are doing well but can do better—if you want to. Can you love framing too much?

Score of 70-79:

You're probably better at framing than you are at running your business. A little more discipline could result in considerably more profit.

Score of 60-69:

You could make a profound impact on your business if you stay focused on the mission—if your mission includes making more money.

Score of 50-59:

If you're happy, I'm happy. If you are not making enough money, you need to accept the fact that you are not working hard enough as a business person. Loving framing won't cut it. Loving framing and respecting business realities is the road to success (time = money). You haven't hit your potential (if you care).

Score of 40-49:

Your life is blurred. The line between business and personal is indistinguishable. You're most likely either really laid back or really stressed out.

Under 40:

I'm surprised you have the time to read this article. ■

Jay Goltz, Business Editor, started Artists' Frame Service in 1978 fresh out of college. AFS employs over 80 people at its main framing operation in Chicago, IL. Goltz is also the founder of FramerSelect. He has received numerous business honors and is best known for his straight talk on how to succeed in business. He has taught at the National Conference.