

Square Pegs, Round Holes

By Jay Goltz



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In every business there is always the question of whether someone will work out in the position they were hired for. Someone may want to be a waitress, but they find the harried pace too demanding. Another wants to sell real estate, but finds the instable income intolerable. Someone else

wants to play professional baseball, but just doesn't have the necessary talent. All are square pegs in round holes.

The fact is, if people and jobs were as simple as matching square pegs to square holes and round pegs to round holes, then hiring would be a snap.

Unfortunately, it's not that easy.

In our industry, a lot of people like to work with art. They have an interest in it. They go to school for it. Perhaps they are artists themselves. All these things are helpful in an art-related field such as picture framing. They do not, however, qualify or predetermine someone to be an excellent employee in the picture framing business.

I've observed something that I call "The Tilt-A-Whirl Effect". To those of you not familiar, the tilt-a-whirl is a ride you see at a carnival or amusement

park. Four or five people squeeze into a cup-shaped car and, as the car rotates and tilts, it spins at various speeds until the ride is over. Hence, the name tilt-a-whirl.

What I've noticed is that when the ride is over, you see two different kinds of people. Some are smiling and exhilarated from being spun wildly, and others are sick to their stomachs. Same ride, different people.

I find the same thing true in working at a picture framing shop. On a busy Saturday, when you're stretched between taking care of new customers, answering the phone, and handing customers their finished orders, it can be a very stressful day. Some people will go through that kind of day and say, "What a great day! It went by fast." Other people in that situation will look as though they're having a nervous breakdown. Same job, different people.

This also applies to other jobs in picture framing that don't involve the customer – even mat cutting. Some find cutting a good mat and hinging valuable artwork to be a rewarding experience. Others find it frustrating.

After you get done with your interviews, hiring process, training, managing, and "coaching", there are some people that will simply be ill-suited for the position. It could be because they lack the skills. It could be their person-

ality. It could be a hundred other factors.

It takes a skilled manager, one who thinks intellectually, not emotionally, to know the difference between an employee who's not working out and never will, and someone that needs more time.

While I think this is true of all businesses, it's even more so in art and framing. Some people get into the business because they like art, and they soon find out, to their horror, that it's a lot like a job!

Putting all your energy and efforts into these



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“square peg” employees is worse than putting no effort into the “round peg” ones. You are not doing a good thing by keeping an employee in a position that they do not fit in. Simply telling an employee, “This job is not for everyone”, can take a lot of pressure off that person and can frequently result in an amicable solution (i.e. you don't have to fire them).

So remember, the next time you have an employee and you say to yourself, “Is the problem him or is it me?”, stop and think.

Maybe it's neither. ■

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.