



# GOLTZ ON BUSINESS

by Jay Goltz

## Rest for the Weary?

**R**etail business has changed drastically over the past years. Other than a convenience store, can you remember anyone being open on the Fourth of July, New Year's Day, or at eleven o'clock at night in the past? It used to be that being open Sunday was a big breakthrough. But now I know of stores that open up at 8 a.m. and close at 10 p.m.

The good news is, it's made it easier to shop. The bad news is, it can make shopping an unpleasant experience for both the customer and the employees. What do I mean? While it is hard enough to find someone in a department store that can help you during the week, it's even more difficult on Sundays and evenings when most employees are part-timers with little training and even less experience. Don't get me wrong. They might be friendly. They even greet you with, "Can I help you?" But the problem is they *can't*—they are not able to!

So let's talk about picture framing. Years ago, framing was dominated by small frame shops. It probably still is. The chain stores who do picture framing have long hours to accommodate their normal retail business. As a result, they have no choice but to run a 70+ hour framing operation.

A picture frame shop, on the other hand, doesn't have to be open every night and Sunday to compete with other businesses selling glitter balls and art supplies. I have always resisted keeping my business open on Sunday because not only did I want the one day of rest, but I had a hard time trying to get my full time, professional employees to work on Sunday. When I say professional I mean they have an art background, are trained, and are not the average "hire-whomever-will-take-the-job" type.

When I opened two stores in the suburbs years ago, I decided I could not get away with a suburban store being closed on Sunday, as I had been able to do in Chicago. Two years ago I changed my mind and decided to keep *all* of my stores closed on Sunday and here's why: I reasoned that I could give better service overall being closed on Sunday than I could trying to stretch out my personnel over a seven day work week. Sundays are particularly hard to staff because of days with either no customers or unexpected rushes. I found the number of customers affected by football games, nice summer days, and holiday weekends. I also believe that most of my customers that wanted to come in on Sunday would come in on *other* days we were open due to the fact they liked our service, selection, quality...

I felt that not only could I provide better service by closing, I'd have an easier time keeping employees, they'd be happier, and I'd be able to keep more of my sanity (that part hasn't worked). I won't tell you the decision came easily or without reservations. I figured that if I was wrong, and made a little less money because I was closed that one day, it was worth it. After a two year analysis I've concluded that my costs are lower, sales don't seem to have been affected, and my life is *definitely* easier.

Picture framing is far more service intensive than most businesses, and it does not necessarily make sense to try to be open 70 hours a week. Sometimes no service is better than mediocre service. If you look around, you'll find that other service businesses, like automobile repair or dry cleaning are closed Sunday. There's a reason.

Until further notice: CLOSED SUNDAY. ■