



# Goltz by Jay Goltz On Business

## *Plus One, Minus One*

In previous articles, both here and the Montana Project (yes, I'm the same Jay Goltz from the Montana Project), I've talked about the benefit of having a limited amount of corner samples. It frees up space on the wall for beautifully framed samples, it gives more volume to fewer vendors, makes ordering easier, and saves time. Three thousand corner samples is not twice as good as 1,500. The typical frame shop probably only takes customer orders from 500 to 700 different styles.

That said, there's something I haven't mentioned yet—how to get to whatever number of mouldings you're shooting for. Let's assume you decide that 1,500 corner samples is your magic number. It gives a great selection, covers the full spectrum of your customers' preferences, and leaves room on your walls for other things.

The first step is to get rid of mouldings that have been problematic. Framing is difficult enough without looking for trouble. Mouldings that are too thin to join, have shallow rabbets, or unpredictable finishes are the first to go.

Next step: Look for mouldings that are very similar. Compare their prices and take into consideration the reliability of the supplier. Number three: Get rid of mouldings that are never going to sell. I have been a victim of this many times. They look cool. They look interesting. They look different. In fact, they

are so cool, interesting, and different that there will never be a piece of art that will look good in any of them.

If you only buy through chop service, this might not have dawned on you. If you only buy length moulding, like I do, it's a very painful reminder when you take inventory and see nothing has sold. That's the big disadvantage/advantage to buying length moulding. It's a disadvantage because you are stuck with length moulding that hasn't sold. It's an advantage because you can become disciplined to only carry moulding that is going to sell.

Now, when you get your selection down to what makes good business sense (whatever that number is), you've got the hard part done. But it's not complete. As a matter of fact, your job is never done. On a regular basis you should be adding corners and subtracting corners, just like any good retailer. It keeps your selection fresh and up-to-date. Every time you add a moulding, subtract a moulding. This will keep your inventory where you want it to be.

I have just come back from the trade show in New York City. I'll say it again because I can't say it enough—trade shows are a great thing. You will be exposed to a plethora of interesting products that you may not have found otherwise. Things have changed significantly over the years and there are new mouldings out there that offer new looks, tremendous value, or both.

For instance, I have always sold a lot of

maple moulding. Over the years it has been increasingly difficult to find and when I do, cutting around the knotholes (even with a scrap allowance) has become quite significant. Framerica has a beautiful line of maple, cherry, and other finishes that look so good you will instinctively turn them over to see if it's a hardwood because you won't believe it's not. There are plenty of customers that want this look or will appreciate the economical price.

Nielsen has a new series of shapes and colors that takes metal to a whole new place. If you're buying from distributors, part of their job is to put together an interesting selection of mouldings from various manufacturers. Some of the most interesting moulding, though, is not available from the distributors and you have to buy it directly from the company.

The key is to have the "perfect frame" for 99.8% of the time. Yes, you read that right. I didn't say 100%. Why? Trying to have the perfect frame 100% of the time would mean having twice as many corner samples and it just isn't worth it. That's why "31 Flavors" isn't "102 Flavors." As painful as it may seem, you have to look at the big picture—no pun intended. Better to have three or four people a year walk out unsatisfied than have the other 99.8% of customers uninspired when they walk in because all they see is corner samples, and few or no framed samples. You're going to lose far more than three or four people; they just won't announce it.

We are not selling corner sam-

ples—we are selling custom framing. We are in the design business. As a rule of thumb, you should probably be rotating 20% of your corner samples each year. That would mean if you carry 1,500 corner samples, you would bring in 300 new ones annually.

It takes all of 10 minutes to look at a moulding supplier's samples and get a feel for the line. It might seem like a distraction, but it is one of your most important responsibilities.

So be nice to salespeople. At least for 10 minutes! ■

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Jay Goltz, Business Editor, started Artists' Frame Service in 1978 fresh out of college. AFS now employs 120 people at its main location 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