



Goltz

by
Jay
Goltz

On Business

It Takes A Village...

This year marks my 25th year in the business. My, how things have changed! I just came back from the West Coast Art & Frame Show and left with a very warm feeling of community with the people that came to the show and participated. And I do mean participated. Nearly 3,000 seats were filled in the variety of classes offered, which ranged from framing techniques to business, computers to gilding and restoration. I talked to many vendors on the show floor and many of them commented how the attendees they had spoken with were really engaged. This is a far cry from the trade shows I went to 25 years ago. Over the years, I've found that framers have become progressively more focused on what they want to achieve while at a trade show.

That said, this year's WCAF show wasn't all a "feel good." Two things were missing. Or I should say two people. The first is Peter LaMarche. He passed away in December 2002. If you asked me who the top five people affecting the industry over last 25 years are, he would absolutely be on the list.

Peter was one of the first people to bring a

higher level of design to the industry. Larger mouldings. Lacquer mouldings. Mouldings with unique shapes and finishes. Peter pioneered what would become the new look of the industry with his extensive line of mouldings. We all owe him a debt of gratitude for the advancements he brought to the industry.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the only void for me at the show. My old friend, Neil McGoldrick, also passed away in December suddenly at the age of 78. He had owned Arizona Picture & Framing Gallery in Tucson since 1964. I met Neil at a trade show about 20 years ago. We struck up a conversation standing at a booth and started to compare notes. I was only 26 at the time and was happy to get advice from somebody that had been in the business for 20 years.

Over the years, I went on buying trips with Neil, met him at many of the trade shows, and most recently socialized at the Atlanta Décor Expo. Neil gave me invaluable advice. He was a good friend and one of the first people I met in the frame business in a similar position with whom I could have frank conversations. To his credit, he did intelligent estate planning and left his frame store in the capable hands of his

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daughters.

As with most things in life, there is a lesson here. Going to trade shows is not just about buying moulding, supplies, and taking classes. If you make the most of it, it is also about community—sharing information with non-competitors, comparing notes, picking up tips and insights.

It's also about filling the void. You know that old expression, "It's lonely at the top"? Being in your own business can be lonely. Lawyers, doctors, and accountants have colleagues they can talk to on a daily basis. When you are in business for yourself, you end up talking to yourself—or worse yet, to people you shouldn't be talking to. Most hourly employees cannot relate, or help, with your problems.

Over the years, I have made friends with a few people in the industry that call me, or I call them, when we need moral support—or in some cases "moron support." Frequently, the answer to an admission is, "Oh, don't feel stupid. I've done worse!" Last year was a particularly challenging year, which seemed to require some commiserating.

My advice is this. If you don't know someone in the business that you can call for input, advice, or even just an ear to bend, find one—or better yet, several. If you haven't been to a trade show in awhile, you don't know what you are missing. Literally. You might have other business associates in your town that you talk to, but there are some things that are particular to picture framing. You might be surprised as to how much advice you can give as well as receive, and the satisfaction you can get in either case.

Las Vegas is a great place to go to a show and it's during a slow time of year for most of us. Plan on going next year—you have plenty of time to plan for it. "Can't afford to?" If it doesn't pay for itself five times over, then you weren't paying attention. Don't have the cash to prime the pump? Build in a dollar to every frame job from now until then. In your mind call it a "Framing Enhancement Fee." Better products, better quality, more sanity. Plus the trip is tax deductible. How much better does it get than that?

Whether you go to that show or one of the others, I wish you a great adventure that will last your entire career. You never know who you'll meet. ■

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.