

# The Guerrilla Framer



by  
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## *Customize Your Customer List*

**T**his month, we're going to look at ways to supercharge your customer database. By mining the information that you already have about your customers, you can create customized mailing lists that will increase your sales in the long run.

Chances are that if you have a computer, you've got a list of all your customers tucked away inside your hard drive. Keeping a customer list makes sense. After all, your best prospects for future sales are those people who have already done business with you.

Of course, having a customer list offers very little benefit unless you actually use it. As a general rule, you should conduct four to six mailings throughout the year to your prime prospects—your past customers. Unfortunately, in-house mailings are difficult to produce and can be very time-consuming. As a result, many mailing lists never see the light of day.

While it would be nice to produce a newsletter for your customers, you may find it difficult to come up with enough "news" to produce more than a few mailings. If creating a regular newsletter yourself proves to be too difficult of a task, I suggest you use "Framing Focus" which is published quarterly in this mag-

azine. (See page 32 in this issue.) *PFM's* newsletter offers advice to consumers on topics ranging from picture hanging to the latest trends in color and design. There is a spot for you to place your company's name and logo as well as space for any promotional information you may want to add. Have it printed and mail it. Your customers will be impressed, and most likely, will visit your store again.

While coupons and contests can also enhance your mailings and increase response rates, a simple postcard is enough to put the name of your business in your customers' consciousness. You don't necessarily have to run a sale or offer any special incentives. Last year, I sent a postcard to every customer on my list that had not made a purchase within the last

year. My message was simple: "We miss you." No discounts. No special incentives. Just a few words that let these people know that their business was valued and appreciated.

The response rate was about 10%. While this was not overwhelming, it was still very impressive, especially since these were "dormant" customers. Another thing that made this a successful mailing

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was that we didn't need to give away the store to get these people to come back. All I did was put the name of my business in their minds. Sometimes a gentle reminder is all that is needed.

This mailing was possible because I had collected data about my customers' purchasing habits. Knowing when your customer last purchased is easy and can be very valuable. If you use accounting software such as QuickBooks 2000 or any of the point-of-sale programs designed specifically for custom framers, you should be able to generate a report that will provide the information you need.

What additional information do I keep about my customers? I know which of my customers buy double mats, premium glass products, and even fillets. I know which customers only purchase

the most economically priced frames that I offer. I can tell you the average amount of each customer's purchases and whether they paid by cash, check, or credit card. Naturally, I have their name, address, and phone number. Recently, I've also begun collecting e-mail addresses which enables me to contact my customers instantaneously and without cost.

Having all of this information is useless unless you put it to work. Let's look at how each piece of information can be valuable in increasing the response rates and cost-effectiveness of an in-house direct mail program. If you're concerned about the cost of mailing to a list that may include thousands of names, knowing your customers' purchasing history lets you selectively target your very best customers.

The information I've collected also lets me custom tailor the messages I send and make special offers to specific customers. For example, I can send a coupon offering to include a fillet at a low introductory price to those customers who previously have not purchased fillets. The same strategy can be applied to premium glass products, fabric mats, and high-end frames. Your objective is to let your customers sample the finer things that custom framing offers. If they like it, and they probably will, they'll buy it again.

Custom mailings can be a successful and affordable way to increase sales and introduce more of your customers to high-end framing options. Give it a try. I'm certain you'll be impressed with the results. ■