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How to Maximise Sales from Existing Customers

Nobody likes the idea of cold calling. It's much easier to do business with people who have enjoyed being your customer previously – and it's more cost effective, so it actually makes a lot of business sense, particularly in challenging economic times.

In fact, the cornerstone of most successful businesses is repeat business. During good times, we tend to stay so busy serving the customers that walk through the door that we forget to keep in touch with the people who came before them. Then problems can strike when times get tough. If you haven't had recent contact with your customers, now is a great time to reintroduce yourself. Since such a small portion of the public actually uses the services of a custom framer, it makes perfect sense to vigorously pursue those people who have proven that they value what you do.

Frequent contact with your customers will also encourage loyalty, helping to insulate them against the possibility of being lured away by a desperate competitor offering big price cuts in an effort to drum up business.

Keeping an open line of communication with your customers is an excellent way to improve business and increase sales. Here are ten reasons to keep in regular contact with your customers:

1. Host a Cheese & Wine Party

Hosting an informal event is an excellent way to get customers into your shop and thinking about framing. It's also a great excuse to call them with an invitation.

2. Meet the Artist

Local artists are often excited to promote their work and what better venue than a local frame shop or gallery? This type of gathering works both as a reason to call and as a way of generating new business from whatever friends/ potential clients the artist might know in the community. To help get you started, the Larson-Juhl PR Toolkit contains a Meet The Artist event checklist, template press release and invitation.

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3. Update Your Files

Calling a customer to ask for their e-mail address is a good marketing tool. It allows you to keep in touch in the future without having to call repeatedly and is generally considered nonthreatening. You can then follow up with e-newsletters featuring pictures and specials.

4. Suggest a Framing Idea

Calling a customer to suggest an idea usually works well for special events. For example, "I just wanted to call and thank you for your past business and ask if you had any birthdays or anniversaries (graduations, new births, retirements, etc.) coming up. We just got in some great new designs." If you are organized, you can capture key dates for your customers – for example, when framing a wedding photograph, it's easy to ask for the special date so you can follow up with anniversary ideas.

If you can link it in with something they've bought from you previously, so much the better – "We've just had a really nice ornate decorative moulding in, and I know you like that kind of design from your previous purchases so I immediately thought of you and wondered if you'd be interested." It shows great customer service and a nice personal touch to single customers out in this way, and all it takes is for you to refer back to your sales history.

5. Sales Promotions

We all know customers love specials, so why not call and let them know when you're having a sale. Perhaps you can link in to a seasonal event, such as promoting Christmas gift ideas.

6. Trade Shows/ New Products

If you attend any one of the various industry trade shows you will often see new products. Call your customers and tell them you were at a show. Then, invite them to stop by and see some new, exciting design samples they might like.

7. VIP Call

Customers enjoy "special treatment." Call your best customers and let them know you appreciate their business and that you're having a VIP special. (Of course, make sure they really are your best customers).

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8. Annual Pre-Framed Art Extravaganza

Whenever you feel like off the wall poster/ art sales have slowed, hold a pre-framed art sale. Pre-framed art is often a good gift purchase so pre-Christmas could be a good time. This also works well in auction form and can serve to create an exciting atmosphere where people return with photos, memorabilia, etc.

9. Mirrors

Chances are every customer has an awkward space in their home where a framed picture just wouldn't work. Call to let them know about your versatile new selection of mirrors, which can be made to fit anywhere, adding light and design to any space.

10. Five-Year Check Up

Customers will appreciate a call letting them know that new conservation materials are available to protect their artwork. Remind them that it's been five years, and offer to update their frames. Perhaps when they see your new mouldings , they'll decide to go for an entirely new look.