



To avoid problems during what's often a frame shop's busiest time of year, take stock of every product and piece of equipment you use regularly and see what needs to be maintained, replaced, or reordered.

FALL PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

By Tom Moscato

It's the fall season mad rush, when everyone who comes in needed their order done yesterday. The frames are cut and everything is ready to be fitted, so you reach for your point driver, pull the trigger, and...nothing. You're out of points. You grab the box off the shelf, but it's empty.

You wake up in a cold sweat and realize it was just a nightmare. The goal of this article is to help you feel prepared to take on a busy holiday season, with enough backroom supplies to get you through without a glitch. Preparation is all about inventory and organization. Figuring out what you need to order by putting together a checklist of everyday items you work with is the best way to start.

Let's look first at the showroom. Now is the time to check out all your moulding samples, removing any from your wall that are discontinued or obsolete. Contact your

sales representative and ask for samples they have of any new profiles, and ask if they are willing to replace any of your samples that are scratched or tattered. Another way to keep your sample wall fresh and organized is to assign a row number to each sample as you take them all down, allowing you to put them back in the same spot and easily find them later.

Next, let's talk about matboard samples. Have you told a customer they could take a sample home to check and see if the color matched their walls, only to never see the sample again? What about the interior designer to whom you loaned your most popular colors on the promise they'd return them (which they never did)? Call the matboard company directly and tell them your situation—they will gladly send you a full line of matboard samples, usually at no cost to you. Take time to organize them the way you like to work with them, and by the

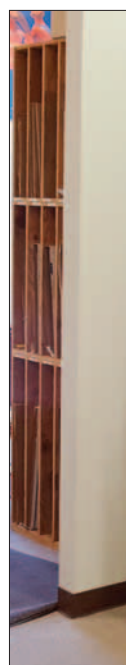




Photo credit: John Raney II

colors that are most in-demand. They're usually sent in numerical order, which is not always the best way to work with them.

If you display unframed artwork, prints, and posters in print sleeves and bins on your showroom floor, now is a good time to pull the cracked, scratched, and bent bindings of the sleeves and replace them with new ones to freshen up the artwork and the appearance of your showroom. Customers love to browse, and the holiday season is a good time to sell off inventory with a nice, clean, and organized presentation.

While most automobiles no longer run on all cylinders all the time, we want our backrooms to

be running on all "eight cylinders" every hour of the day. Time is money, and money is time, as the old saying goes. With that in mind, you'll want to make sure all your machinery is up to par. Check your mat cutter to make sure it is all squared up and ready to cut. Make sure the cutting head runs smoothly on your rod and bar. You don't want to be cutting a \$35 double mat, only to find a hook cut or overcut because your mat cutter wasn't squared or your stops weren't set. You'll also want to make sure you have an



I always kept a secret box of emergency items in my shop for when things inevitably went wrong.

adequate supply of mat blades. They are available in many thicknesses, but you really cannot go wrong with the .015—it's great for all types of mat thicknesses and density. No one wants to be cutting a mat on Christmas Eve with a dull blade.

For those working with CMCs, Wizard International's CMC maintenance schedule recommends you check blade plunge smoothness, belt tensions, and gantry belts for alignment once a year. They also advise you to do the following checks monthly, or after every 12,000 corners: examine the blade cartridge (and, if needed, replace it), check head wheel tension, clean and drain the air compressor, and make sure the CMC is still secure in the brackets/stand.

Is your cardboard and glass machine all set to go? Perform a check to make sure there is no wobble to the cutting

head. While you're at it, ensure you have enough glass cutting wheels and mat blades for sizing the glass and mats. It's always a good idea to keep a few extra of those tiny mat blade screws that hold the blades in place on hand. They always seem to disappear or get lost during hectic times, and that is not a screw you can get at the corner hardware store.

Perform any maintenance necessary on your V-nailer. Look for any air leaks or cracked nail heads that may need to be replaced, and keep enough nail sizes in stock. It's smart to keep an



While you're ordering new items and tidying your store, it's a good idea to pay some attention to your mat storage racks, as an excess of small scraps clutter up the bins and can damage larger sheets.



extra box of ¼" nails on hand, since you can always double stack that size for the bigger profiles in case you run out of any other size.

Is your dry mount machine or vacuum press all set for the busy season? Check to make sure that the temperature

settings are correct and that the thermostat maintains the proper temperature. Don't forget to order enough dry mount tissue to get you through the season. There are many different dry mount tissues available for specific materials, but a good one to perpetually keep in stock is a utility tissue, which will cover a vast array of materials in case you run out of any of the other films.

Any supplier will tell you there are a few key items they never want to run out of, and neither should you. Framers points for your point driver is at the top of that list. Nothing is worse than having everything cut and ready to fit and being out of points. It is so worth the extra \$10 to have an extra pack of points and, if feasible, an extra gun. So many guns are dropped and broken during the holiday season rush, so an extra could very well be a lifesaver. If you don't want to invest in a second gun, a few packs of glazier points kept on the side would work well. They can be pushed into the frame by hand with a putty knife.

ATG tape, ATG tape, ATG tape—a shop without ATG tape is like a kitchen without salt. We use ATG to hold our mats down, for our dust covers, and more. While most people use the tape with an ATG dispenser, the handheld ATG is still very popular. Most rolls are 60 yards long, which seems like a lot of tape, but it really isn't. With all its uses on a frame, you usually can get a maximum of 8 to 10 frames per roll. Always have a box of 12 rolls readily available, so you'll never be caught short.

Next, let's discuss hardware: everything metal you need to put your frame together and hold and protect your frame on the wall.

When I had my shop, I always kept a secret box of "emergency items." Whenever I got a shipment in from a supplier, I would skim off the top, so to speak. A couple of mat blades, a roll of ATG tape, a glass cutter wheel, a few stacks of framers points, a strip of V-nails, a couple of hooks and hangers—a little of this and that. I did it because no matter how prepared I thought I was, someone would invariably use the last box, accidentally throw away the tube of wheels, or just not plan correctly. I can't tell you how many times I was doing a rush pickup job on a Sunday afternoon and, at the last minute, was able to finish the job with the supplies I had in that box. Anticipation is key to having a successful holiday season. **PFM**

Picture Wire size 2, 4, 8	Braided, stainless steel, or plastic coated. Always wire pictures 16"x20" or larger.	Stainless gives the best presentation; size 4 is the most popular.
Strap Hangers	One- and two-hole regular, and one- and two-hole heavy duty.	The wire and strap hangers work together. Always be well stocked.
Giveaway Hangers	30- and 50-pound in brass. The most popular wall hangers.	Nothing says "thank you" like a free hanger for your customer.
Nailless Sawtooth	Great for frames under 16"x20".	Easy installation. The frame sits flat and stays on the wall.
Offset Clips	Variety packs available in sizes from 1/8" to 1 1/4".	Holds stretch canvas in place when placed in a frame—or that needlework from Grandma that reads "Home Sweet Home."
Metal Frame Hardware	Whether you use chop or length metal moulding, always keep some extra hardware around.	Never worry about moulding companies forgetting to send the hardware for your chops.
Kraft Paper, Kraft Tape	Used for closing the back of frames. Can also use ATG tape.	The back of your frame is just as important as the front.
Touch-Up Markers	Buy them in gold, silver, black, and any other colors you typically work with.	Crucial for the last-minute chop or length order that comes with a scratch for you to touch up.
Glass/Plexi	Order an extra case each of the largest size you carry.	How many times have customers come back with broken glass after they dropped the frame on their way home? Be ready.



Tom Moscato has four decades of experience in the picture framing industry. He served as general manager of United Mfrs. Supplies, Inc. for 37 years before joining Frameware, Inc. as its business coordinator in 2017.