

Creating a Moulding Display that Sells

Well-organized, nicely displayed samples can do half the work for you.

Every sale you make depends on your samples. With this in mind, the way you choose to present your moulding corner samples is incredibly important. Consider your display beyond its basic utilitarian function: it is potentially the most powerful selling tool in your business.

I've seen hundreds of solutions for displaying corner samples over the years, and have put together a checklist of elements aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of your shop's moulding presentation.

Location

Visually, your sample wall is the ideal way to convey the message of what your business is actually about—custom framing! A great wall is worth showing off, and should be visually identifiable not only from the entrance of your shop, but also from outside the building, so that passers-by can see and understand what you do.

Display Method

Most businesses dedicate a wall to exhibit their moulding samples in a conventional manner. A fabric wall covering hook and loop solution



like Velcro is versatile and easy to install. However, there are a few interesting alternatives to the classic sample wall using other fixtures, such as revolving display pedestals, sliding walls, drawers, and flip panels. Space is a premium for many businesses, and these alternative methods can help make better use of that space while also reducing the visual impact of an otherwise overwhelming range of samples.

Contrast

When it comes to the choice of covering, it's often best to use a black or very dark-colored fabric, as it provides a background that strongly contrasts with—and thereby flatters—your sample display. Gold and other colored sam-

The team at Chelsea Frames in New York City uses sliding panels for their sample display, and also configured their design counters to allow customers direct, unrestricted access to the samples. This is especially useful whenever there is a rush of customers; people can peruse the available samples while they wait.



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Professionally printed category header signs can help make a large range of mouldings more logical and easier for a customer to comprehend.

ples are more defined and will pop against a darker background. The only color that doesn't really work on a black background is, unsurprisingly, black. But when you consider that a black frame is usually a popular default option, this is a small sacrifice to make as all the rest of your samples will look dazzling.

Lighting

Effective lighting is essential and makes a huge difference. You want your samples to stand out and look vibrant. In conjunction with a contrasting background, some brilliant gallery lighting focused towards your display will achieve a flattering look.

Less is More

The goal is to have a wide enough selection that covers all necessary bases without offering too much choice. Carefully curating your selection of samples to reduce double-ups and "close matches" will save space and consulting time. For businesses that order moulding by length, fewer samples leads to better stock turn, better buying power, and higher profitability.

Categorization

Arranging your collection of samples in some kind of order is a challenge all framers face. While I've seen it done using a variety of methods—by size, by vendor, by convenience, and even by price—when it comes to selling, it's design and desire that drive a sale. Categorizing your samples by style, color, and design is conducive to this way of thinking.

Endless columns of continual top-to-bottom samples are difficult for anyone to digest, but if you can break your display into appropriate style and design categories with descriptive header signs to match, it can provide instant guidance and direction for your customer to understand the

stylistic theme allocated for any given selection. Categorization effectively breaks down the overall choice into digestible portions, and provides a more organized presentation and consulting process.

When writing your category signage, try to avoid using unfamiliar jargon and stick to standard terminology that customers will understand, such as Classic Golds, Traditional Golds, Modern Golds, Black and White, Country Classics, Colonial, Formal, Decorator, and Metals. Not only will signed categorization make the process more logical and comforting for the customer, but it will also make the consulting process (and subsequent clean-up) more efficient.

Framed Examples

Nothing sells a moulding better than a framed example. Inspirational framed examples are a great way to make your sample display more visually digestible, to help break up too much repetitive monotony. High-value framed examples can also be a useful consulting tool to help demonstrate value-add concepts such as fillets, V-grooves, shadowboxes, and float mounts.

Signage

In addition to category signs, other types of signage can also be inserted to help break up the repetition. The subtle use of signs can be employed to highlight "New Release" products, provide product education, or even create awareness about services you offer. For example, a sign worded "ask us about our native hardwoods," or "ask us about our hanging solutions" cues the customer to inquire further, creating the opportunity for you to showcase what you do.



Framed examples inserted into the display can break up the monotony of endless samples while featuring high-value frames.



Frame Up Quality Framing in Melbourne, Australia uses dedicated gallery lighting to dramatically enhance sample display walls.

Themed Vignettes

Rather than using a conventional moulding sample display wall, Eddie Hayes of Frame Design in Cairns, Australia, incorporates many of his shop's moulding samples into several themed vignettes throughout the showroom. Each vignette focuses on a different theme or interior design trend, which provides a focus for each display. These displays stimulate creative options to influence the design process.

Product Positioning

Your moulding display wall is valuable real estate. With hundreds of samples competing for a buyer's attention, product positioning can become a key tool used in effective retail merchandizing. One of the golden rules of merchandizing is "eye level is buy level." Ensure your most profitable and high-value mouldings are primarily positioned at eye level and easily accessible.

Your popular, everyday mouldings like basic black already sell themselves without needing to be promoted with a prime wall position. Use your best slots to push and promote what you want the customer to buy.

Breathing Space

The space between your samples is just as important as the sample itself. Corner samples can visually suffocate from lack of separation or breathing space. A wall of tightly bunched corner samples creates a continuous blend of color and texture, making it difficult for a consumer to visually determine where one sample starts and the next one ends. Comfortable breathing space is critical for quick and clean appreciation of each sample. I suggest giving a distance the width of your little finger between each sample.



Eddie Hayes of Frame Design in Cairns, Australia segments a selection of moulding samples into several themed vignettes focusing on a particular style to highlight different trends.

Open Access

Many design counters are traditionally configured in a way that restricts direct customer access to the display wall of corner samples. This prevents a customer from being able to follow a desire to touch and feel a sample that catches their eye, without asking for permission.

By positioning your design counter to create a more open dynamic, customers can better access your samples, providing them with a freer and more tactile consultation. When customers can intimately explore the different textures, styles, and finishes of mouldings, it adds an extra positive dimension to their experience.

Go Big

The most difficult challenge for a customer is to imagine how their framed design will look. Do we expect them to do this based on a small corner sample? In some cases, especially with wider profiles, a standard 6" chevron is simply not going to help with this obstacle. Bigger is better when it comes to samples.

Amanda Preston of Pictures Plus in Perth, Australia fabricates jumbo-sized corner samples to assist customers with visualization. "This is especially helpful to customers



Susan and Joe Lipiner of Frame Dimensions in West Hartford, CT leave their shop lights on at night so passers-by can see inside.

with larger artworks,” Preston says. “It also provides us with a unique point of difference to other frame shops, which only carry standard-size samples.”

Selling Features

Educating customers about the unique features of a moulding creates interest and appreciation, which helps sell the beauty and craftsmanship of your product. Information such as the type of finish, style, and even the country of origin can be useful elements to enhance the appeal of a

moulding. For example, being able to explain the difference between a hand-finished gold leaf frame and a standard foil finish can add value to a product—which in turn helps your customer justify the cost.

You may want to record some of this information onto a label adhered to the back of the sample for customer convenience. Some manufacturers, such as Larson-Juhl, provide labels on their samples that describe the distinctive details of the moulding as well as suggested match-ups. You may even have your own backstory to relate to a sample, such as a famous person or location where it was used—which can also accent the appeal of a product. Just avoid putting any labels on the face of your samples, as they can become very distracting when viewed closely during the design process.

Keep it Fresh

Consumers are always looking for something new and different, and your sample wall should serve as a key source of inspiration for them. It’s vital that your display reflects current styles and new ideas. Consumers find trends appealing and are happy to pay more for furnishings that are on-style and on-trend.

Make the effort to update your samples and actively cull any dated ones that aren’t working for you, creating



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room for newer, better selling samples. What sells today doesn't always sell tomorrow, so stay ahead of the trends.

Know Your Top 20 Percent

There's an adage in business that 80 percent of your sales comes from 20 percent of your products. Find a way to generate a moulding sales report and analyze your figures to identify which mouldings your business sells most. From this, see if you can recognize any noticeable trends that may be worth exploring further. This analysis can also help you discover which samples are not working for you so you can confidently cull and create fresh space for new mouldings. Given that trends and styles change seasonally, it's a good idea to do this at least twice per year.

Damaged Samples

Your moulding samples generate sales, so treat them with the respect they deserve. Damaged samples damage reputations. Chipped, scuffed, or worn corner samples won't do you any favors regarding presentation and selling, and could easily allow a customer to misjudge your quality and workmanship. If a sample is damaged or worn, immediately remove and replace it.

Stacked Combos

Stacked frames can be a unique and profitable design tool. For most businesses, there are usually some common formulae of stacked combinations that work. Consider pre-assembling some of these popular stacked frame combinations so these can be removed from the wall as a single sample—as this will help overcome the customer's fearful perception of "double frame = double cost."

Maintain It

Your sample wall is a primary source of inspiration for your customers and your single most important tool in the consulting process. Keeping it presentable and organized takes constant work. It's not something you can clean up once per year and expect it to work well for you. When you realize how much your sample display can optimize your sales potential, it is not difficult to justify a small amount of time daily to maintain it.

The key to transforming a sample wall into a powerful selling tool is adapting it to suit your customer, rather than yourself. The more you can reduce your customer's obstacles, the smoother it makes the process—and satisfying customer experiences lead to more profitable sales. **PFM**

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