

# Dealing with busy times

Frame shop tips for getting more done in less time to restore a sense of calm and order.

During your busiest time, you want to make sure that your customers are well looked after and happy with the attention and service they receive from you. While this is easy at most times, the real test of character comes when you are tired, run off your feet, dealing with delays, supplier problems, and have extra people wanting your attention.

There are two areas where you can make time-saving changes. First, in your FrameReady software and secondly, in the management of your shop.

## In FrameReady

- \* Enter all the defaults you can on the WO default screen to save a few minutes and not miss standard entries. Eg. Wire, wood fitting, Conservation Clear glass, etc. These will automatically appear on each work order when it is created.
- \* Set the print defaults to be automatic for both work orders and invoices
  - set "Show print dialog box" to "No" and print automatically after previewing.
  - set "Pause on Preview" to "No" and it will print after a brief flash of the preview
  - set "Pause on Preview" to "No Preview" and it will print as soon as you click the printer icon (*Fastest option*).
- \* Have the Art ID tag print automatically after each work order. Yes, you will have some extra scrap paper later but it can save you some time now.
- \* Fill in MORE information. Yes, "more". It is when you are in a rush and intend to do it later, that information that gets missed or creates errors down the road which will take more time to correct.
- \* Be sure to identify all time-sensitive orders as RUSH in the priority field. (In the Incomplete List view, click on Priority to have all Rush orders appear at the top despite their due dates.)
- \* Use the completion email when the framing is done to let the customer know they can pick it up. It's faster than dialing and you won't find yourself saying at the end of the day, "*I meant to call her/him but I got busy.*"
- \* Send the invoice by email. It's one less item for the customer to fold and file away at your counter.

*Each minute you save by putting the above items into play can add up to make a difference at the end of the day.*

## Need help but don't have time to do a lot of training?

Follow the lead of Radio Shack in Canada. They realized that, at their busiest time, their best sales people were overwhelmed. So they hired additional people but not sales staff!

Unlike other stores where the new staff are quickly trained to attempt to do the same job as the seasoned pros, Radio Shack hired assistants for the already qualified staff. These assistants enabled the top sales people to effectively deal with more customers.

For example, when a customer was looking for an unusual product, the sales pro sent the assistant to get the product while continuing to answer questions and make the sale. When a customer came in to pick up an item, the assistant would get the item while the sales pro talked about how to install it, operate it, and which additional products could be purchased to go with it.

When the sale was agreed to, the assistant would ring it in while the sales pro assisted the next waiting customer.

### **This model could also work for a busy frame shop.**

Your assistant could:

- \* Answer the phone while you are with a customer. Give a standard professional greeting. Answer simple questions about hours, days open, Christmas deadline, etc. If they have detailed questions, they can get their information and have you call them back.
- \* Place the art (which you put into it's protective sleeve) in the drawer, shelf, etc as indicated on the printed work order while you take the deposit.
- \* Put the samples back on the wall or in the mat rack and clear the design area while you address the next customer.
- \* Let waiting customers know that you will be with them in a few minutes (it is a proven fact that people are more patient waiting once they have been acknowledged and given a time frame.)
- \* While customers are waiting, write their name and description of art on a piece of paper for you so that you have a jump start on the next order. Have them collect any information that will help you speed up the process. Eg. Needed before Christmas or after? Previous customer? If not: phone number, email address. Delivery or pickup? Etc.

**TIP** - Have a standard 1/4 sheet printed paper for this purpose as an Info Sheet identifying the things you would find helpful. Include the time it was written to let you know how long they have been waiting. Your assistant can place it in a designated spot (near your design area or cash till) for you to address when you are ready.

The image shows a sample 'Info Sheet' form with the following handwritten entries in blue ink:

- Info Sheet** (printed title)
- Time:** 11:34 am
- Name:** Mary Smith
- Return Customer:** ☐ Yes ☒ No
- Phone:** 628-4681
- Email:** msmith42@gmail.com
- Art:** family photo
- Before Christmas:** ☒ Yes ☐ No
- Other:** wants wood frame
- (green coat & pink scarf)

- \* Have them memorize a few informative sentences. Eg. We require a deposit of... If you need this before Christmas... This row of moulding is available in stock...

When a customer is picking up work, your assistant can:

- \* Bring out the finished product while you take the payment and mark the order as picked up.
- \* Re-wrap the kraft paper after the customer has inspected the finished frame.
- \* Carry the finished product out to the car for the customer or at least hold the door for them.

**TIP** - before your assistant starts each day, show them the list of all of the customers with completed orders which are 'Ready' but have not been 'Picked up'. They should scan the list to become familiar with the customer's name and the piece or pieces being picked up. They may think of it as a Kipling memory game, but the simple nod of recognition when you ask them to get A0235 for Mrs. Smith and as they remember the name, "ah yes, Mrs. Smith" tells Mrs. Smith that she is known and confirms her importance in your shop.

### On what days do you need a part-time assistant?

Take a look at last year's work orders and invoices and search in FrameReady by day (Eg. Fri) to see which days brought in more orders for the month of December. In the Work Order screen click Find and enter 12/2011 Fri in the created date field. [Learn more...](#)

In closing, here is your chance to have an assistant do the repetitive, time-consuming tasks while allowing you to focus more of your time on your customers and the incoming sales. Take this first step to being a manager in your business.