

The Importance of the 'New'

By Dave Rosner

Having spent virtually all my adult life in the art and framing industry, I have seen ups and downs in the market, the coming and going of trends, the proliferation of large retailers, the explosion of hospitality framing, the love affair with everything black and white and "Stainless," the low cost producer country of the day (Taiwan and Mexico then and China now, to name a few), excitement in retail framing and shadowboxes, great marketing, incredible expansion, can't-miss trade shows (and those where you feel like you're the only person in the building), and on and on. It's by no means an exhaustive list, but you get the idea. I probably haven't seen it all, but I have seen enough to know that this can be a great industry, with great potential both now and in the future.



Dave Rosner, senior vice president of marketing for FramERICA, has more than 30 years' experience in production, sales, and marketing in the art and framing industry. He has also served as chairman of the Art & Framing Council.

During my tenure I have learned that "new" is incredibly important (although sometimes overlooked in the supply chain). "New" generates a buzz or acts as a spotlight that highlights your company and its products or services. The concept is everywhere. Automobile manufacturers, for example, launch "never-before-seen" designs each year like clockwork, regardless of the economy. At the same time, television manufacturers launch the latest technology and design forward offerings each holiday season. Cell phone companies pile on the features and colors. All of this is done with the hope that consumers will trade in the old (or slightly less than new) for the latest. One home appliance company is now offering its microwaves, blenders, toaster ovens, etc., in more than 20 "exciting" colors as accents for your new stainless steel kitchen. Why are they doing so? Because they believe that "new" provides the best opportunity to consis-

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tently generate more business.

While new is important, I've also seen that the concept alone is not enough. It has to be "new and great" or "new and relevant" to the customer. In challenging times we are all looking for the next new item that will turn it all around. The great new idea or product just might do so. They need it; we need it.

The benefits of "new" can be amazing. Excitement over new products is tangible among customers and consumers. At the same time it permeates companies internally. Now you have another reason to see your customer. After all, no one wants to see a salesperson offering yesterday's designs.

Constantly reinventing your product or your company and being fresh and relevant and innovative isn't easy. In fact, it is becoming more challenging every day. That makes it even more critical to let the whole world (or at least the portion that may buy something from you) know about your offerings and their benefits.

Effective marketing is critical. It has also become incredibly complex, albeit much more effective and opportunistic than ever before. What once involved picking up the phone and telling a customer about your terrific new design has become three e-mails, two photos, a special catalog page on your website, and a follow-up call to someone's Blackberry so they can listen to you on the way to the airport. And that's just to get their attention. We're all better for it, though. Our industry and consumers are better informed, and our capabilities are incredible. Catalogs, prints, magazines, computers, telephones, fax machines, and travel are all better. The landscape has changed, and we have had to change with it. We all have incredible marketing opportunities at our fingertips. Let's use them together.

As I have witnessed the ups and downs in the economy and in our industry, I have also witnessed, firsthand, the incredible continuous growth that is attainable by offering great service, quality, and value. But you still need to market the new and exciting. New gets you noticed, good gets it sold. ■