

The Guerrilla Framer

Because It's A Jungle Out There

by
Paul Cascio



Have You Hugged A Basement Framer Lately?

It's that time of year when the activity around us is often so frenetic that it's easy to forget about those around us who are less fortunate. I'm speaking not about the homeless and the poor, but rather about that neglected and ostracized group of struggling underground wannabes known as "Basement Framers." Yes, that's right, Basement Framers, whose very existence threatens the fiber of our industry and strikes fear in our hearts.

Yeah, right!

I always laugh when I hear other framers complain so vehemently about the Basement Framer. "Why," I ask, "don't you spend your time worrying about the large chain stores such as Michael's or Hobby Lobby or Home Depot rather than some peanut-sized operation?"

If you were going to waste precious hours worrying about your competition, I would highly recommend that you focus your concern on the behemoths. After all, a large chain store—with its virtually unlimited supply of advertising dollars—is much more likely to cause your business' demise than are John and Jane pushing

five poster frames out of their cellar each week. Why is it that we fail to recognize this simple truth?

Why do so many of us resent the Basement Framer in a manner and intensity that is truly disproportionate to the threat they pose?

My extensive research shows that the prejudice we direct at basement framers is both unfair and misguided. What many of

us in the industry are not aware of is that statistically (with a margin of error of +/- 3%) both Attic Framers and Garage Framers (particularly the two-car garage variety) pose a much more serious threat to our industry than do Basement Framers. Yet, we as an industry, contin-

ue to single out the lowly Basement Framer as our target of wrath.

Wake up, folks. The basement framer is a mere gnat, a nuisance to be pitied. Many are hardly worth the attention we, the legitimate retailers, pay them.

In almost every instance, Basement Framers help the "legitimate" retailer more than they hurt them. Basement framers introduce custom framing to new cus-

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years ago.*

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tomers. Eventually, as their tastes improve or their framing needs expand, you'll have the opportunity to make them your customer. In addition, Basement Framers themselves, if they fail, may become your next valuable, already-trained, employee.

I started out as a basement framer in a business I began about 13 years ago with my ex-wife. We were planning to start a family and my wife wanted to work from home in order to raise our children. We started a small framing business in our basement. A few months after our daughter, Jillian, was born the software company I worked for went out of business. Basement framing became my fulltime profession and that is why I hold a special place in my heart for basement framers—unless of course, they are within a 10-mile radius of my retail store.

Like all prejudices, I believe that much of the hatred directed at Basement Framers stems from ignorance. When you understand the sad and difficult conditions that Basement Framers must endure, I am certain you will find sympathy and forgiveness in your heart.

Working conditions for the basement framer are terrible. I know from experience that being a basement framer is lonely and dangerous work.

As a Basement Framers, you find yourself constantly combing cobwebs from your hair or stepping around puddles that result from leaking walls or floors. You live with the constant fear that the next rainstorm will mean the end of your business.

Basement framing is a hazardous occupation. In addition to the constant threat of a drive-by shooting from a crazed retail framer, many Basement Framers, including myself, suffer permanent brain damage from bumping their heads on low ceiling beams.

Basement framing is lonely work. With only mice to keep me company and crickets to converse with, I often felt like Gilligan. Actually, it was far worse. At least Gilligan was stranded with Ginger and Mary Anne. I was trapped in the bowels of a damp, cavernous picture framing hell with only rodents and roaches to bide my time with.

However, the worst part of being a basement framer isn't the health hazards or the loneliness. It's having to re-open a frame to remove insects.

Sure, the dead ones are pretty easy to extricate, but the live ones can be real tricky. Especially since they leave stains when you squish them. I once had a frame that had so many insects crawling around inside that it looked like an ant farm.

Guerrilla Tip: When squishing bugs on a picture, try to lure the invading insect to a spot on the picture where any residual stains will blend in. (This is where a color wheel can come in handy.)

If the picture is a Monet or Seurat, your work is relatively easy and entails little risk. However, one deceased mosquito on an Ansel Adams landscape and your career could be over.

I've often considered introducing a line of framing products geared to the special needs of the basement framer. I'm fairly certain that Zip-Lock backing paper could become a huge bestseller. And what basement framer wouldn't pay top dollar for dry mount tissue that could double as flypaper? ■

Editors Note: Gentle Reader, we hope you've read this not as a manifesto or condemnation, but as the humorous view of a potentially controversial topic that it was intended to be.

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