

Laser start-up

Planning your first laser purchase?

Helpful advice and tips from Tom Buzz Bernard at LaserBuzz

I am excited for you! You are planning your first laser purchase. The first thing going through your mind is which laser should I purchase? What options do I need? Size, power, and how much is it going to cost me? Truthfully, as you shop around you will get more information that will cause more confusion – that is normal. Sales people are interested in wanting you to know everything about their machines and why you should choose them.

So what is the magic answer? Which machine will make you the most money? What machine has the least repairs? Which machine has the most features? What's new out there? Do I need a rotary attachment? Do I need a vector table? What is the best value? How much power do I need? Is air assist necessary? Should I get an exhaust filter? I could go on and on! These are legitimate questions and should be asked. Each of us who are seasoned laser owners will give you some bias in our reasoning, mostly because of what we do with our lasers. Don't fear though - there is some common ground in everyone's selection.

Before we get too far into this I must say shopping for a laser at a trade show is **very smart**. You can go back and forth to compare options and most times get a better price. Price should not be your only reason to purchase one laser over the other though, but I do understand the reasoning.

I just came from a trade show and got to speak to several individuals ready to purchase their first laser. They had so many questions. They know we do not sell lasers but we get a chance to run many brands. We also get to work with many laser distributors. Deciding which laser to purchase can be confusing and scary. Yes, scary is

one topic I have never talked about, but something that is normal for a newbie. We will get to that later.

In my opinion the most important issue for a laser is POWER. Get as much power as you can afford. I know some will say I plan to only raster something simple. I don't need a lot of power. Why do I need 50 watts when this substrate rasters with 25 watts? Let's be truthful. No matter what you plan to do with your machine today, you will be asked to do (or want to try) something that will require more power later. A 40 to 50 watt machine will raster just as nice as the 25 watt, but will also cut thicker substrates after it has rastered them! More wattage will also allow you to increase production when needed. Now if you cannot afford a lot of power, get a minimum of 35 watts, although more would be better.

My next issue would be table size. Never get less than a 12" X 24" table. I want everyone to get into the laser business, but I believe you will be disappointed if you get a smaller table size. If you can afford a larger table, great!

Also a 'vector table' is a must have. The laser can cut through many substrates so you will need a good vector table to do that.

An 'air assist' system is a must have! Some salesman will tell you if you get your focus right and do this or that you don't need an air assist. I say BULL! You need air assist to do so many things. I believe it is safer for your machine when cutting substrates like acrylic, paper, rubber stamps and many other materials! Those who say you never need air assist have not run a laser for manufacturing. It is hard for me to take a person seriously who believes you don't need air assist on your laser.



Options like rotary attachment or the air-purified dust collectors are used for specific products or locations and I would opt to put the money towards more power unless you had a reason for needing these.

Here is the way I would make my selection. Price would be a primary factor, but not the final reason. I would want all the bells (power) and whistles (accessories) of the Lexus, but at the price of a Yugo! Of course, just like everything in life, I will probably spend more money than I had hoped, but will be thankful down the road when I am able to work on the products easier and faster. I will certainly look at any new features that might help me. I would absolutely call technical support to see if they are courteous and helpful with my questions, along with how long their response time is for my needs.

With that said I want to talk about the next stage of laser startup. This mental hurdle comes with almost any large monetary purchase and I see it all the time. This can be the obstacle why some never become an entrepreneur – it is called fear!

I spoke with a lady at our last trade show who wanted to purchase a laser. She had made up her mind to get a laser and had narrowed it down to two choices. I helped answer questions and gave her advice – both machines were good, the price was right, and she could afford either. But I saw her hesitation – why? It was her fear of making the final decision; she was thinking: "Will I fail? Can I really do this? Will I make any money?" Basically it is buyer remorse before the purchase has even been made.

It was funny when I started to talk to her about this; she lit up and said: "How did you know?" She went on to say: "I came to the show to buy, but now I am having second thoughts. I know which machine I want but now I am scared."

I assured her this is normal for a new entrepreneur and can still happen with seasoned business people when it is a large investment. There are no guarantees to success, but I can guarantee no success if you never try. The laser industry has so much potential if you choose to go into it! I then related a true story of fear and success from one of our customers.

This husband and wife team purchased their laser prior to me ever meeting them. They then purchased one of our LaserBuzz programs filled with product designs from a distributor. They had a question and called the distributor who told them to call us. For some reason they were upset and when I got on the phone with them they were very agitated and started yelling at me.

My goal is to help laser owners make sales and to keep their lasers running all day and I am truly interested in seeing everyone become successful. I want you around for many years; nobody wins if you go out of business. My only hidden goal is for you to need a second or third laser to keep up with your success. I could not understand why they were yelling at me. It turned out to be a very simple issue and I was able to give them the information they needed. I could tell they were new to the industry and their voices almost sounded

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desperate. I told them if they ever have a question call me before they get frustrated again. I also showed them our 10-part series on 'Success Tactics' on our website to give them some ideas.

The very next day the husband called to thank me for all the help we gave him, but he also told me his story. He is in his late 50's and was in the construction industry doing flooring - rugs, ceramic and wood. This was a few years ago when the building industry first took its nose dive with the economy. Besides the economy being an issue for finding something new, his back and legs were killing him from that type of work and he knew he had to change professions. They still had a mortgage and were extremely scared about their future.

They invested most of their savings into this new laser business. They were under pressure to make money and had tried a few ideas but the momentum just wasn't there yet. Basically, they were second guessing themselves, scared they had made a bad decision.

I ask: "Who hasn't been there before?"

I do want to make this point. EVERY sale can lead to another sale. You have to start somewhere and if you can make a product that causes emotion, it becomes impulsive to buy. Once someone (a woman usually!) has bought an emotional product they will show it off, which makes

the next person say: "If they can make that for you I wonder if they could create this for me?" Or they might just say: "I want one". Either way it led to another sale. New product ideas come from these sales as well. You have to give exposure to what you make.

So what happened to this couple you ask? Four years later and many conversations, their business has blossomed into needing a second laser. They also bought a diesel pusher motor-home and trailer to take on the road with them. They run many of our product designs but have diversified into other items and machinery. He loves to sell and talk to the customers and she loves to make the products that get ordered. Perfect combination! They have prospered in this economy just like many other laser owners.

No matter how bad the economy may get, we will still buy gifts for our loved ones for those special occasions. You have the ability to make laser products that can bring tears of joy and smiles of laughter with personalisation. The first time I saw my father cry is when I gave him a Marine Corps design with the war he fought in, his name engraved on it and the years he served for our country. Go make a loved one cry and see how that motivates you to creativity and success!

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