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Getting Started in the Crafting Business

Topics Covered:

Beginner Basics: Ten Things You Should Know Before Opening a Craft Business

Stepping Stones: Ten Steps to Starting Your Own Hand Made Crafting Business

Don't Commit Yourself! Steps to Determine if a Handmade Craft Business Is Right for You

Labor of Love: Enjoy Your Hand Made Craft Business

Mail Order Works for Brides: Why Not Your Hand Made Crafts?

Mind Your Business: How to Change Your Outlook From Hobby to Profit

Selling Crafts Online: Ten Easy Steps to Create and Promote Your Website

Shipping Dilemmas: Getting Your Crafts into the Hands of a Buyer

Start Small and Market Big: Keeping an Eye on the Bottom Line In Your Craft Business

The Art of Self-Promoting: How to Expand Your Crafting Opportunities

Six Crafty Venues to Promote Your Hand Made Craft Business

What a Tangled Web We Weave: How-to on Marketing Yourself Online

The Friends and Family Network: The First Step to Marketing Your Crafts

Five Basics of Supply and Demand in the Hand Made Craft Business

How to Price Your Crafts: Five Ways to Boost Your Bottom Line

Getting Started in the Crafting Business

Beginner Basics: Ten Things You Should Know Before Opening a Craft Business

1. Don't Do it For the Money

It is important that you don't go into the craft business for the wrong reasons. If you are hoping to make a quick buck, then you've chosen the wrong industry! It usually takes months to see a return on your investment and years to start to see major profits from your hand made craft (if you ever do see major profits). Crafters do this because it is their passion, not because they expect to make a lot of money from selling their products. That's not to say that there isn't money to be made – it just takes a lot of time and perseverance on your part.

2. You Need to Start Small

When starting your new craft business, you should try to borrow very little or no money at all from lending institutions. Having to meet monthly loan payments can under tons of financial stress to your new business. Try to rely on your own savings for purchasing initial supplies and then try selling your products at local shows and to family and friends so you do not have huge operating costs right off the bat.

3. You Have to Do Your Research

To have a successful craft business you need to be prepared and take the time to research your product and your market. You have to know what kinds of crafts you are going to produce and what supplies you'll need. Because this is a business, you need to try and keep costs low and you want to spend as little as possible on your craft supplies. You might have to shop around a bit before you find the cheapest supplies.

Next you need to figure out your market. What kinds of crafts are popular right now? Who is buying there? Where are they buying them? It is important to figure out who makes up your target market and what the best way to connect with them is.

4. You Have to Find Your Niche

Making a splash in the crafting industry usually means setting yourself a part with a really unique craft that still has wide appeal. As a hobby turned business crafter, you face more competition now than ever before. Having a really original and unique product will put you ahead of the pack.

5. You Will Have to Market and Sell Your Product Yourself

It may sound obvious, but many excellent crafters aren't the best sales people. Remember that when you start out, you are most likely going to be selling your craft yourself at local shows.

You have to make sure that you are comfortable talking to people about your craft and make those much needed sales.

6. You'll need a Strong Support System

When you first start out, you'll really need to rely on your family and friends. They will probably be your first customers and an excellent way of spreading word about your new project. When you start showing your products at local craft shows they will also be able to help with manning your booth and with setting up and tearing down your display.

7. Find the Little and Personal Touches that will Make All the Difference

Most people enjoy going to crafts shows because they have a chance to meet the artisans face to face and learn the story behind the craft. This gives the purchase a much greater meaning. That personal touch makes all the difference. Little touches like gift bags or gift wrapping also have a positive impact on your customers and they'll be more likely to be repeat buyers if they are impressed with your professionalism.

8. The Industry is Fickle at the Best of Times and Often Seasonal

There will be rough patches. The crafting industry is fickle even at the best of times. The amount of sales you make is also often seasonal because there are more people looking for unique crafts around the holidays. You need to prepare your stock for these surges in demand, but you also need to be prepared financially for any lulls.

9. Other Crafters are Your Best Friends but They Can Also Be Your Worst Enemies

Other crafters are your best resources. They can give you lots of tips and help you out of a difficult situation. Meeting other crafters and learning from their expertise can be really beneficial. They are also your competition. There is only so much money that people are willing to spend on home made crafts so you need to set yourself apart from other crafters and try to steer clear of those crafters who are eager to copy your ideas for their own gain.

10. It Takes Time

Remember: good things come to those who wait. Don't get discouraged if your new home made craft business is not a success right away. It takes time to establish your reputation and your customer base.

Stepping Stones – Ten Steps to Starting Your Own Hand Made Crafting Business

Starting your own craft business is a huge step to take; it can even be a little bit daunting. One of the biggest hurdles for any new business is actually getting the ball rolling and knowing where and how to start. Below are ten steps to help you on your way to starting the dream business you've always wanted.

1) Concepts:

The idea stage to starting your business is a very important step as it is where all of your ideas come into play. Before you start delving into any steadfast plans ask yourself some questions like:

What sort of crafts do I want to create and sell?

Will they be jewelry, statues, kits or something else?

Has my craft been done before, if so how can I make it something people want to buy?

Will my products be something another would like to buy?

What type of people will be my primary target, adult, children, teenagers or all of them?

Will you be willing to take bulk and consignment orders?

Stabilizing these ideas will help know what sort of market you want to get into, and will help you know who to target to sell your items.

2) Where and How:

Where you have your business is important because with each way you will have different set of circumstances and customers. Do you want to have your business at home, in a shop, studio, on the Internet or do you want to sell your crafts through a craft show? If you choose to work through craft shows, will you have the ability to travel regularly? If you decide to work through a shop or your home you will have to consider if the place is easy for you customers to find and for you to work in. Another thing you need to take into account is what sort of layout and display you want and need.

3) Finances:

Once you have worked out what sort of business you want to run and where, you will have to figure out if you have the finances to support it.

Will you have to keep your current job to fund your business until it takes off or do you have the funds already?

Will you need to borrow?

Have you taken your living expenses into account or any unexpected costs?

How much will it cost for the initial materials and production?

Getting an idea of your financial situation will help you in the planning of your business immensely.

4) Registrations, Licenses and Legal:

The next step in the process of starting your own business is to register your business name and getting all the licenses and permits necessary. There will be different types of permits and regulations depending on what type of business you are running. Ask your local business registration office as they will be able to advise you on what you need.

5) Insurances:

If you are running your business through your home or a shop make sure you get all the necessary insurances to cover you. The three main types are:

- Business insurance, to cover any accidents and injuries.
- Public risk insurance, to protect yourself against claims of negligence.
- Income protection insurance, to protect your income if you cannot work for some reason.

Another insurance you should take into account is health insurance, if you are no longer working for someone else.

6) Taxes:

Before you start your business seek advice on taxes that you need to pay or what products and services are tax deductible. An accountant will be able to help you make a friendly tax strategy and inform you on information that you may not be aware of.

7) Business Plan:

Having a good business plan will help you and your business growth immensely. It will help you outline your goals for your business and what you want it to become. A business plan will also help you keep your business on track and how you wish to operate it now and in the future.

8) Marketing:

Marketing is a necessity for any business so having a marketing strategy is a must. Consider how you want to get the word out on your business. This can be done in numerous ways like:

- Advertising through the paper, television, the Internet and in magazines.
- Flyers and pamphlets that host regular product updates, shows, demonstrations or specials.
- A newsletter, offline or online, that has information about your upcoming products and projects, fact sheets that the readers can learn from.
- Or through everyday things like your letter heads, envelopes, stickers on your car or t-shirts.

9) Production and Materials:

Consider how much time it takes to make your crafts that you want to sell. Setting up a

partnership with a local company where you can get your materials from, when you need them is something you should look into doing. Ask yourself how much time you will need to complete orders and if there is anyway that you make your crafts quickly without losing quality. Organizing your production times and having materials on hand will help you keep everything on time and running smoothly.

10) Selling:

The fun part! Once you have products ready to sell consider their overall costs and take everything into account like labor and materials before adding a profit. Taking this all into account will make sure you are making money not losing it. Having the ability to take all types of payment is always handy as different customers will want to pay by different ways. Always have a friendly and helpful attitude when selling your products to a potential buyer.

These are just some steps to help you on your way to starting your own craft business. As you go there will more steps that you will need to take and learn to aid in the growth and success of your craft business.

Don't Commit Yourself! Steps to Determine if a Handmade Craft Business Is Right for You

Starting your own business in anything or in handmade crafts in particular, takes a lot of time and commitment to start. When deciding whether to start a handmade craft business, there are several different perspectives to look at to determine whether you will be making the right step. By taking these different things into consideration, you will know what to do before investing your time and money in your own career.

1. The personality. Running a handmade craft business means working from home. It also means managing inventory, order sheets, taxes, etc. You not only have to be organized, but also be able to commit and invest without knowing the outcomes of what your craft will be. Often times, beginning a business will include perseverance, chances, and different types of management skills. Discipline is also required to finish projects and to carry out with setting up craft shows and online businesses.

2. Business skills. It is important to consider whether you have the right business skills for a craft business. Marketing, finding the right customers and going to the right places for business are all vital factors for success. At the same time, organization and filling out the right paperwork is important to be able to do.

3. The Business Plan. This not only includes writing a business plan, but also carrying through with everything on this plan and being able to finish the tasks at hand. This also often times means doing research on potential target markets that are available for you.

4. Effects on the Family. Because of handmade crafts being your own business, as well as it being in the home, there will be a change in family pace. This is partly because of hours you may need to commit, as well as finding spaces in your home that will not interfere with the

family. It may often be hard to separate work from home, depending on what the business is demanding. Unless there is undivided support from the family, it will be hard to commit and invest into a handmade craft business.

5. Finding the Right Space. Because handmade craft businesses are often in the home, there needs to be sufficient space that you can call a work area. Things that need to be considered deal with how much of an area you need, how this will interact with the family, and how to remain organized in your own home. It also involves being able to separate the business from the home when need.

6. Time Commitments. Time commitments will change for you internally as well as from an outward perspective. There will be many times where you will be required to work long hours to prepare for a craft show or to meet the demands of certain customers. At the same time, those around will see that you are home all day, and may begin to demand more from you socially or for support. Knowing the limits of your timing is important before starting.

7. Benefits. All of the things that a full time job at a business offers will not be available to you with your own business. Insurance, benefits, paid time off, sick days, etc. become non-existent with the craft business. If these different parts of a job and stability are important to you, it may be hard to invest in starting your own handmade craft business.

8. Social contacts. The regular work area is an easy way to find friend and acquaintances to talk to. Often times, owning your own business will have long periods where networks and socialization is absent. If you are in need of being more social on a consistent basis, it can make the craft business difficult.

9. Crafting as more than a hobby. If you decide to do handmade crafts, it means making the same product more than once, as well as moving it from a hobby to a job. If crafting is not something that you can see yourself doing for four to eight hours a day, it may not be the right avenue to take.

10. Investing. It is common knowledge that it takes about four to six months for a business to begin to profit. At the very beginning, investments for making the products, etc. will have to be made. It's important to not be risky with the investments that have to be made in the beginning. Because of this, sometimes the best way to invest is by using your craft business as a part time job on the side. If you decide to invest with money or with time at the beginning, it is important to know that you can do at least one before committing.

If you decide to start a handmade craft business, and desire to do so, there can be many benefits over a longer period of time. However, as in all businesses, there are downsides and problems that may occur. It is important to recognize the different features of a handmade craft business before beginning.

Labor of Love - Enjoy Your Hand Made Craft Business

If you began your own hand made craft business, then odds are you started it because you

enjoyed crafting and hoped to make some money from your hobby. To survive in the craft business you absolutely have to love what you do. If you started your business just to make money and not because you loved your craft, then you won't have the dedication and staying power to make it in the craft industry. A person's passion for crafting shows in the end product as well as in all the little touches.

But perhaps you did start your business out of love for the crafting. Since then though you've lost some of that original spark and you're finding it difficult to muster the same enthusiasm about your home made products. This can be a disheartening experience and you may reach the point where you consider giving up your new business because the enjoyment just isn't there anymore. How can you keep that original joy in crafting alive when you make the switch from hobby to business?

Start Small

It's important to start small when launching your new hand made craft business. Try out your crafts at local craft shows or through family and friends. You should borrow little or no money to get your business started. Monthly loan payments can cripple a small start-up craft business – an industry that is fickle at even the best of times. Not depending on your new craft business for all your financial income will take some of the pressure off and allow you to just enjoy the process of crafting and selling.

Manage Your Time

With any small business, people have difficulty keeping traditional working hours. When starting your new craft business you will most likely not be working 9-5 at it. Odds are you'll keep your main job and just devote time to your new start-up in the evenings and on weekends so you have enough money to make a go of it. You need to be realistic in terms of what you can accomplish.

If there are four local craft show that you want to participate in all within a two week span of each other, are you really going to have enough time to create enough stock for all of the shows? You have to figure out how much you can produce and stick to that. Running yourself ragged is one of the quickest ways to lose the enjoyment of crafting. Remember you also need to keep a life-work balance. Even though you enjoy crafting, you can't do it 24-7. You need to make time to relax and see family and friends.

Experiment

Some times it is important to away from the business end of things and concentrates on the crafting itself. Experiment with new techniques and materials. This process can refresh you and you might even come up with some really unique new products for your next craft sale.

Talk to Others

It is really important to have a support system in place when starting a new venture like this. Family and friends can be a huge help with your new hand made craft business, but a lot of time they lack experience and expertise in the industry itself. It is important to develop your

own kind of crafters' network – other crafters who you can turn to and learn from. The best way to meet other crafters is at local craft shows. You can also join or start a local crafters' group or guild.

This can be a monthly group that meets to share stories and learn from one another. This group could also develop into a means for all of the members to market and sell their crafts. Many craft guilds hold yearly sales where all of the members showcase their work. You can start small by hosting a craft show in one of your members' home or renting a community center or church basement if everyone contributes a bit. Feeling part of crafters' community will make all the difference when things get rough.

As with any new start-up, starting your hand made craft business will be difficult and at times frustrating. The most important thing is to keep your passion alive however you can so it truly is a labor of love!

Mail Order Works for Brides – Why Not Your Hand Made Crafts?

Mail order is a popular way to send several different types of items to a customer. Because of this, it is a potential way for you to market and sell your crafts. In order to do so, you should know some basics of what you will need in order to get mail order to work properly. This advice can be used in both Internet mail order materials or in sending out catalogs to certain customers who are interested in buying.

When organizing mail order for your crafts in your home, there are several different things that you need to set up. One of the first organizational tools that will help you is a data system that will help with inventory and accounting. This way, you can keep track of the mail that you send out, and what comes back in and with how many orders. This will help not only in inventory, but also in keeping track to see if mail order is efficient for selling your crafts.

You will also need to set up a way to take credit cards and checks over the mail and through the Internet. It is best not to send your crafts out until the money that is being sent to you is cleared. Order entry and processing is another one of the tools to organize before you start mail order so that you can remain organized in your hand made crafts.

Consider who you are going to distribute to when setting up your mail order business. One way to do this is to begin a network of contacts. If people who have bought your crafts would like to be set on a mailing list, then you can send them things through the mail by their request. Another way to do this is by having potential buyers sign up on a website that you may to request a catalog to mail order. It is also possible to set up a website and have customers order through filling out all of their information online.

If you decide to make a mail order catalog, or if you are using mail order on a website, it should contain several different elements. First, it should catch the customer's eye. This means detailed descriptions as well as pictures of your crafts that look professional. Next, is to be specific as well as brief about what you are offering. Letting the customer know what materials you are using, the size of the craft, etc. will help to let them know what they will be receiving.

You should also include a brief description of who you are and how long you have been making crafts. Many times, reviews on your craft products can be included as well. This will help in making you look professional, and will give customers a way of respecting and trusting you and your product.

Another aspect of mail-order is including your information. A fax, e-mail or address of where to send their order for the crafts should be supplied. You should decide about whether you will have a minimum order requirement, or not. You should also decide what the shipping order costs will be, and how they will be shipped. One way to do this is to measure how large the packages will be and do an estimated weight cost. Then, you can look into places such as UPS, FedEx, or regular mail for some options. It is always best to let the customer know which way they will be receiving their order by.

You should also supply an order form in the catalog when you send it out or on the website. This, as well as a different list of all of the crafts that you offer with the prices on another side can help a customer decide what they need through mail order. If needed, there are often times software that can provide a guideline for creating a unique look and help put in the information that is needed for the development of your catalog.

Whether you are setting up mail order on the internet, or sending out catalogs directly to past and potential customers, it is best to have a layout of how the mail ordering will work and be beneficial to you, as well as ways to provide customers with the best service and options possible.

Mind Your Business - How to Change Your Outlook From Hobby to Profit

If you're a crafter who has recently switched from doing your hobby for pleasure to doing it for business, then you might be having some adjustment issues. Though you're still creating the same kinds of products, you have to treat every decision as a business one and remember that your goal now is to make money from doing something you love.

When starting a craft business, it is important that you love your product and the type of craft that you're working on. If you hope to make your living in the craft industry, you have to be really passionate about the work you're doing, because it can often take a lot of time and dedication to see a return on your investment. If you don't love what you do, you probably won't be able to make the commitment that the craft industry demands.

Even though you may perceive yourself different than other entrepreneurs, the challenges you face when starting up your craft business are the same. Should you start small or try to go national with your craft? Should you borrow money to help get your business off the ground? Where should you sell and market your products? What is your target market? These are the kinds of things any new business owner needs to consider, and so do you!

When starting a craft business, you should think small. Try going to some local craft shows to see if your product is as popular as you expect it to be. You can also market your products to family and friends who in turn will tell their family and friends. You'll get some great feedback

and you'll quickly discover that word of mouth is an important tool in getting your craft business off the ground.

Most people do not go into the craft business to make a lot of money; they work in the field because they love what they do. It's their passion, not a guarantee of financial security. You cannot expect to make a lot of money from your craft business and it will take a lot of time to start seeing a major increase in your profits. You could start by working on your craft business in your spare time or wait until you have saved enough money to have some financial backing. You may be lucky and experience success right off the bat, but for most crafters it takes time to build up enough experience and a good reputation.

As with any business you need to keep your costs low and your profits high, and you also want to have as little debt as possible. When you are just starting out, it is probably not the best idea to secure a loan. The craft business has a lot of high points and low points, but your monthly bank payments are due every single month and if a craft sale doesn't go as well as expected, you might be struggling to pay back that money. This can put a lot of stress on you and your new business. If you can avoid borrowing money to start-up your craft business, then that's what you should try to do.

You also need to consider how you're going to market your product and where you will sell it. For crafters just starting out, local craft shows are a good option – as are local crafters' marketplaces where you can rent a small space and display your products, but the store looks after the selling so you don't have to be there all the time. Craft shows are often a good way to contact with your customers. You can find out more about what your customers are looking for and how to improve your product.

A lot of customers will want to know more about your product from you, the crafter, and that personal touch can make all the difference when selling your product. You can also check out your competition and learn lots of handy tips from crafters that have been around for quite some time.

The most important thing is to remember why you started your business in the first place. Crafters are lucky in that they have the chance to do something they really love as a career. Keep your passion for your work alive and it will start to pay off with a little bit of time and some hard work.

Selling Crafts Online – Ten Easy Steps to Create and Promote Your Website

One way to consistently advertise your crafts and business is to build and promote your own website. Websites are becoming a more popular way to conduct business and allow exposure for sales and knowledge. Here are ten steps that you can follow when building your own website.

1. Concentrate on how your website looks. This is one of the most important factors when building and maintaining your website. When one is browsing through the Internet for crafts, they want to see the crafts, and not a lot of description. Having links for different areas

on your web will help in getting the customer what they need. Having the front page to draw in the attention of the person browsing through your site is also important. If you are unsure of how to use the several different types of software available for your own website, you can always hire a web developer who can design and establish your site just the way you want it.

2. Find the best host or domain to put your site on. This may mean paying a yearly fee for a domain and professional hosting rather than building your own website using this name. This is usually best for more complex websites. There are also several places that offer free web pages and can help you to design a basic and simple site. These are best if you do not need a complex site. If you have your own domain name, you are often seen as more professional with your business.

2. Keywords and Phrases. With the descriptions that are offered on your site, make sure to use the keywords that will draw your target market to your site. This will allow those that are using search engines through the web to be directly linked to you and your crafts.

3. Creating a Gallery. This is going to bring in the most traffic to your website. Your gallery should be professional looking and have several different types of crafts that you offer.

4. Payment Methods. Always offer more than one payment method. In the design of your website, it is best to offer an option to pay online and have a shopping cart available. There are several different places where you can transfer money safely and securely online. If the person interested in your crafts does not want to use this method, it is best to offer varieties of exchanging information for payment.

5. Craft Directories and classifieds. There are several places on the web that have places to advertise your website as part of their directory. These are often at a low fee, and some can be found for free.

6. Online Journaling and networking. Connecting with others on the web is an important way to build relationships and networks. Journaling on certain sites will create a personal relationship with other craft oriented people, and may allow room to direct potential customers to your site. The more you get in touch with others that are on the web and seem to be interested in crafts, the more traffic you will have coming towards your website.

7. Building Links. Beyond the journaling and networks that you are building on the Internet, you can also build links to your website. This means that you can go to web rings or other places on the web and place your website on that link to direct traffic. You can also provide links to other websites that are selling other types of crafts. These are often referred to as cross-links and may include online craft malls, galleries, etc.

8. Building outside Networks. If you are visible in your community as someone who does crafts, than it is possible for you to easily build a network, which can bring traffic to your site. Updates, promotions and newsletters can be sent via e-mail to these members, as well as a way to direct them to the updates on your site.

9. Build Your Rankings. There are several options to see what your rankings are on the Internet. You can use software or developed online sites to help build and support your

website. Through this, you can alter whatever is needed in order to ensure more success for your site.

10. Continue to Update your Site. Even when your website is completely built, it is never finished. Adding promotions, drawing more of your target market to your site, as well as continuing to network over the internet all need to maintain consistently to help to sell your crafts.

Building a website and promoting your crafts through them is a worthwhile way to improve your business. Through following these tips, as well as understanding the Internet market, you will be able to be successful in selling your crafts online.

Shipping Dilemmas – Getting Your Crafts into the Hands of a Buyer

It doesn't matter if you run your business offline, online or both you still come up against shipping dilemmas from time to time, but there is always way to prevent it and increase your shipping times. Here we will look at some ways you can prevent yourself from shipping problems and get your products into the hands of your buyers quickly, efficiently and without hassle.

Before you sell:

Sometimes things can go wrong before you even get to the post office, and can result in some very unhappy customers. Here are some ways to prevent it happening to you.

The first thing you should do is make sure you always have the item in stock so when a person does want to buy your item it is ready. This will save the shopper the inconvenience of having to wait for the item, if they were not aware of the delay in shipping before they committed to buy.

If there is a delay in shipping, always tell your customer before hand, especially if the buyer is overseas.

If the item is an order, give your customer an idea when the item will be finished. Once you have finished creating the item, send it to your customer the fastest way possible and through a reliable source.

Always give your customers a rough estimate of how long it will take for the item to reach them.

Preparation and shipping:

This is where most things go wrong with shipping as many times packages tend to get lost, are sent to the wrong address or become broken and damaged while they are in transit. Here are some ways to prevent these sorts of things when it comes to shipping your items.

Always take a second look at a customer's shipping information to make sure it is written down correctly. When you go to ship the item to your buyer make sure that it is always on hand and ready to go.

If the item is breakable or fragile take all the necessary actions to ensure that it won't be broken or damaged while in transit like adding extra packing and attaching warning labels.

With all items, no matter how inexpensive they are, take out postage insurance. This way if the item gets damaged or lost while in transit you and your customer have cover.

Another thing you should do when you ship your item is use a tracking service, you and your customer will be able to keep track of the item while in transit with the number that is supplied.

Using a courier:

Many craft business owners tend to use a courier more often than a normal postage service as it is a safe and reliable, especially when most of the crafts are valuable or fragile. Using a courier will set both your mind and your customer's mind at ease. Here are some ideas when and why you should use a courier, if you aren't already.

You should use a courier when the item is too big to send through the postal company.

Also use a courier if the item that you are sending is expensive, very fragile or too awkward to send any other way.

A courier is able to take your shipment almost anywhere in the world and deliver it safely to your customer's door.

You are able to track where your item is in transit.

If you do not usually use a courier, use it as an option for your buyers as some prefer to use this service instead of a postage service.

Once your item is in the hands of your customer:

Always try and get feedback from your customer once they have received the item they bought as this can aid you in future shipping arrangements with other customers. You should ask for feedback on shipping times, packaging, and the shipping method and ask if they have anything they would suggest making the whole process faster and efficient.

The whole process of shipping your craft items to your customers is very important, from start to finish, before hand and beyond. Always take the best care when packing and shipping your items and receive feedback from your customers so you can better the time and the way you ship to all your future products to your buyer.

Start Small and Market Big - Keeping an Eye on the Bottom Line In Your Craft Business

When starting out in the craft business, you need to keep one thing in mind: this is a business, not a hobby.

Obviously, you started your hand made craft business because you loved crafting and hoped that you can turn your hobby into a successful business. Making that transition from hobby to business can be difficult though. You need to remember that you are a business and that like every business you have a bottom line. Your goal is produce your project for as little money as possible so you can maximize your profits. Here are a few suggestions on how to keep your costs low.

Supplies can be one of your biggest expenses. In order to keep your costs as low as possible you need to spend as little on supplies as possible. Start that by doing your research. It will take some time, but research different suppliers will make all the difference in the long run. You need to shop around to make sure you are getting the best deal possible. You might even consider checking your local discount stores.

Often these large chain stores have very reasonable priced craft supplies. If possible, you should consider buying wholesale. This will involve obtaining a Retail Tax number, but if you are serious about your homemade craft business then you should apply for one anyway. You can also buy your supplies in larger quantities.

With the cost of gas and hotels, one of your other biggest expenses will be out of area craft shows. To start, just try selling your crafts at local shows. This will give you a chance to see how popular your products really are and how much stock you might need for a two day show or a week-long show. Once you're ready for an out of town show, do a bit a research.

Considering the show fee and your gas and hotel costs, will you really earn enough money to make it worth your while? What kinds of hotels are in the area? Have the show organizers arranged any kind of discount with local hotels? Can you carpool with another crafter in your area to reduce costs? Is it possible to combine two out of area shows on one trip rather than heading out twice in one month?

Marketing your craft doesn't have to cost a lot of money. You can start by spreading word about your new venture through family and friends. You'll be surprised how many sales and orders you get just through word of mouth. You can try to have your work featured in an article in your local paper. This way you are marketing your product without having to pay for advertising space in the paper.

There are also ways to sell your craft without spending a lot of money of table or space rentals. Many gift stores accept products from local crafters on consignment. You may have to pay them a fairly large percentage, but you will not have to pay the store any money right up front. You can also think about holding a craft sale in your own home, rather than renting a table somewhere else. If you know a lot of other crafters, you can all hold a sale together, charging them a smaller fee that other shows might. You will have a lot more control and also keep your costs really low.

You must also know where to draw the line in terms of freebies for friends and family member. Whereas you were happy to complete projects for free or just for the cost of supplies when you're crafting was just your hobby, you need to establish different rules now that you run a business. It may difficult at first, but it will make things much easier for you down the line.

Finally, it is important to establish a realistic price point for your products. You'll probably never make enough to even charge minimum wage for the time you put in to making a craft, so don't try to set your prices that way. You want to make a decent profit, but you also want to be able to sell your crafts and no one will be buying if your prices are too high.

Remember it takes time to see a real return on your investment. As long as you can cover your costs, you're off to a good start, and the rest will come with time.

The Art of Self-Promoting – How to Expand Your Crafting Opportunities

There are many that are making crafts and art in their own home, but when the time comes and when many things have been made, it is often difficult to find different areas in which to sell the work. One way in which to sell your own things is through your own self-promotion. There are several different ways you can promote yourself and your own work, allowing the opportunities for making and selling your crafts to grow.

One way in which you can self-promote your crafts is through the Internet. Because the Web offers graphic and has a textural nature that can have layers added to it, it is easy to represent the crafts that you make. Galleries of work, information on the crafts, and ways to pay online and get the craft mailed to them are all parts of a website which can be included to promote your own craft.

When building a website, there are several things to keep in mind. First, it is important to know how to get traffic to your site. There are several different tools that are used to get you to be in one of the higher rankings on search engines. Including keywords, search phrases, building Meta Tags, and finding where you can rank on the web is an important factor to keep in mind when building your site. Other things that need to be considered are how to manage an online shopping cart so that those interested in your crafts can buy online.

Another way to self-promote your self is by joining online forums and daily journals as well as chat rooms. This will let others know who you are and what kinds of things you do. This is a great way to network and to establish relationships with others for the promotion of your crafts.

If you don't have time to build a website or build a daily journal or chat, there are always several places online that allow you to be a part of their gallery to sell your things. For a small fee, you can post some of your crafts on their site and allow others to browse around at your things. This is one alternative to marketing and working on your own self-promotion.

If you are more interested in promoting your crafts in person, there are also several options in expanding your craft opportunities. Many localities will have art and craft groups that meet in order to support each other and to network with the selling of arts and crafts. By beginning to

network and provide others with some representations of your work, you will be able to build a local network and support system with your crafts.

In local and regional areas, one is also able to attend craft and art fairs and shows. There are usually several of these that take place throughout the year, especially closer to the holidays. You will most likely have to pay a small fee for borrowing a table or booth, but can then set up whatever you like and promote yourself and your crafts, as well as sell a good amount of material. There is also the possibility of having your own craft show or open house in your home or a rented studio in order to sell your own things. You can invite the community or friends to sell things that you have been making.

If you decide to network from person to person, it is usually important to be prepared with your information for those interested. Business cards as well as brochures can help you to promote your own work and can help others to understand what types of crafts you are interested in. If someone is interested, but can't get your materials at the time, they will have a place to refer to in the future. Product descriptions of your crafts are also an important tool to have on hand when promoting your own work. This will help any that you are networking with to be able to refer to whatever they were interested in at that time.

There are several possible avenues that you can take when promoting your crafts, from the Internet to networking in person. No matter which route you take, promoting your own crafts can always be successful.

Six Crafty Venues to Promote Your Hand Made Craft Business

You are the creator of lovely and impressive hand made crafts that always draw their share of glances. So you've decided that you want to start selling your hand made crafts and launch your own business, but you aren't sure where to start. Here's a list of six crafty venues to promote your craft business:

1. Get started with home parties. By far the easiest way to get your feet wet is by hosting a home party to promote your hand made craft business. Start by inviting close friends, family members, and co-workers who are supportive and have previously expressed an interest in your craft. You might want to consider putting on a demonstration, if this is feasible. Most people enjoy watching craftspeople at work, and this is no exception.

A home party is a good way to unofficially announce that you are in business. Enlist the help of your guests by asking them to spread the word about your new endeavor to anyone who might be interested. Create or purchase unique party favors, and attach your business cards to them.

2. Craft or Street Fairs. Another great starting point to launch your hand made craft business is by renting a booth at a local craft or street fair. Craft fairs generally receive a lot of street traffic, and are a great meeting point for individuals who like and appreciate handcrafted gifts and items. Have business cards printed up and give them out during the fair.

If you are just starting out, you may want to avoid the craft fairs that are aimed at more established businesses, as their booth rental fees can be quite high. Instead, focus on smaller fairs where you'll receive an equal share of attention, and where fees are generally more manageable.

3. Nonprofit agencies or local charities. Consider donating some of your crafts to your favorite nonprofit agency or local charity. This allows you to meet new people and make important contacts while doing something positive for your community. Donating your crafts can also boost your confidence in your work. Knowing that someone is enjoying your craft can add a whole new dimension to your business.

4. Set up your website and online store. These days, almost all well-established craftspeople sell their wares online. Setting up your own website is easier than ever. Provide potential customers with descriptions and large, clear pictures of your crafts. Be certain that your website is updated frequently.

The Internet is also important in connecting with other members of the arts and crafts community. The Internet has been instrumental in perpetuating a vibrant community of craftspeople. Websites dedicated to crafts and the business of crafts are innumerable, with busy bulletin boards and e-mail newsletters always going in full force. Become familiar with these valuable Internet resources, and learn to use them to your advantage.

5. Brick and mortar retail stores. If you're serious about promoting your hand made crafts business, consider visiting a retail crafts store that carries items similar to your own. Make an appointment to meet with the store manager. Discuss your burgeoning business, and ask if the store would be willing to help you by carrying your products.

If the store personnel seem hesitant, try to reach a compromise. Ask them to carry your product for a limited run, just to see how customers react to your work. Even if the store decides not to carry your crafts, you will have received invaluable feedback on your work. Always be courteous and professional when dealing with store personnel—you're craft business depends on these kinds of professional relationships.

6. Open your own retail store. Yes, this is a big step, but if you're serious about your craft business, and you seem to be steadily growing, you may come to point where you will consider opening up your very own retail store. Remember that a large percentage of small businesses fail in their first year. You'll want to consider this decision very carefully, and make sure there's a market for the type of crafts you produce. Selling your homemade crafts on a part-time basis is one thing, but running your own store full-time is quite another.

What a Tangled Web We Weave – How-to on Marketing Yourself Online

The Internet, just like every other aspect of the business, you need to market yourself, your business and your products. Marketing on the Internet is not hard to do and is cost effective as well. Here we will have a look at what you can do to get your internet marketing up and running so you too can have a good amount of traffic on your business website.

One of the first and most important things you should do is think who your target buyers are. You may have already done this in your business plan but if not here are some things you should take into account.

Who is your product for, is it gender or age specific?

Is your product for a certain type of person or occupation, like home businesses, executives, and students or stay at home parents?

Will your target consumer be able to afford your product?

A good way to find out what your target consumer spends on products and services are to get a hold of and have a look at some reports that detail such information like:

What your target consumer income is.

How much they spend on services and products.

How much they can budget for with products like yours.

How much they spend on the Internet.

Once you have worked out who your target consumers are, it will be easier for you to find that group of people through specific marketing routes.

Below are some ways you can market your business effectively online.

Make your website search engine friendly. When a person looks for something on the Internet through a search engine, that search engine sends out robot spiders. This robot spider goes through pages to find and index the user's keywords and places a link to those websites that have those keywords on the search page. You achieve this by having rich keyword content related to the products on your website. Have these keywords in your title, headings and all related content that you can fit them in, and construct Meta tags and descriptions. Once done submit your website to all the search engines that you can find, many host this service for free.

Linking to and from other websites will help you boost your search engine ranking as well as bring in more traffic. You can achieve this in a number of ways; the most popular is by joining directories. The best ones to join are the ones that are closest to your category of product and service. Another way you can link to other pages is to set up a link page on your website; it will contain links to websites who also host a link to your website. You could write articles for online newsletters that will give you a link at the end of the article, or have an article on your website that other sites will have interests in linking to.

Use your email to your advantage. When you write emails it is easy to include a signature, this can display your website link and a little of what it is about, but remember to keep it short. Another thing you can do is compile a newsletter of your own. This is easy to do and is a great way to build trust with potential clients.

Consider putting in your newsletter things like new products, information that will benefit both your business and your reader and what is coming up in the future like sales. You can get people to sign up to your list by having a 'subscribe to newsletter' form on your website. Remember not to spam. This service is usually free but you can always rent an email list, this is a list of people who agree to receive commercial email and offers.

Other things you can do in marketing your website are banner exchanges, promote in forums, discussion boards or online journaling, and ask visitors to bookmark your website.

You can always step up a notch and go with advertising; you can do this a number of ways like buying text ads in newsletters. Newsletter's ads are cheap and can be placed in newsletters that suit your target buyer. Affiliate programs, this works by someone having your link on their site and being paid a commission every time someone clicks on your link and buys a product. Pay per click ad programs, these are run by search engines and you only pay when someone clicks on your link. Listing your product with shopping comparison sites or with auction sites is another option you can take. They work by comparing your product and prices with other products.

The above is just some of the ways you can go about marketing your business website, there are others. Remember getting potential buyers to your website is only half the battle, next you got to them to buy a product.

The Friends and Family Network – The First Step to Marketing Your Crafts

You've always had a knack for creating charming homespun crafts, and now you've created something highly original that always gets a good reaction when you show it off to friends, family, and co-workers. In fact, your friends and family gush about your work, and even encourage you to sell your crafts. In short, you've got a passion for your craft, and it shows.

You want to start selling your crafts, but how do you start? The easiest way to begin is often one of the most overlooked. Start at home! Using your friends and family network as a stepping stone, you can begin to make contacts that will allow you to market your craft to potential buyers.

Put on a Home Show

If you're starting from scratch, a good way to reach out to potential buyers is by putting on a home show. Invite a few close friends and family members, and ask them to bring along another person who has expressed interest in your craft. Organize the show as a very casual, no-pressure event, providing your guests with light refreshments and games.

You might want to prepare a theme for the show. For instance, if you specialize in creating ceramic pumpkin pots, a good idea would be to organize a 'Fall Festival' theme show. You should always try to schedule your home show around a holiday. The most obvious choice is to put on a home show around the Christmas holiday season, where the interest and demand for handmade crafts is always high. But don't feel restricted to market your craft during the

winter months. Competition is high around Christmas, so you might do even better by putting on a home show at a less busy time of the year.

Compile a List of Contacts

Your friends, family members, and co-workers are an invaluable source of information on potential clients. If your friend simply adores your hand-crocheted scarves, does she know anyone else with similar taste who might be interested in purchasing one? Does your co-worker's sister happen to collect animal figurines? By all means, don't be shy to ask your family and friend network to help you in compiling a list of contacts. Even if you don't intend to contact the people on your list right away, this is invaluable information to have in case you ever expand your business and decide you need to market more aggressively.

Sell Your Crafts at Local Events

Do you, or does someone in your family, attend a local church? Are you, or maybe a friend, involved in local community festivals? Church bazaars and other community-sponsored events are great venues to begin marketing your crafts. Ask friends and family members who belong to local organizations, clubs, or churches to see if there might be any upcoming events where you could sell your craft. You'll probably be surprised at the number of local events where your craft would fit right in.

Tap Into the Power of Your Own Personal Sales Force

If you're lucky, your friends and family will be your ultimate support network, your cheerleaders in life, if you will. If they believe in the promise of your product, they will probably be happy to act as your own personal sales force. Enlist friends and family members to take samples of your crafts to work.

Make up high-quality flyers for them to take to work and put up on the bulletin board in the worker's lounge. Make sure to include pricing information, and maybe you'll want to include a sales order form for ease of ordering. Remember, it's especially important to complete all transactions as smoothly as possible since you're dealing with your friend's co-workers.

The last thing you want is to make any transaction difficult or uncomfortable for your friend or family member.

Just Like Martha

The most important thing to remember when you're just starting to market your craft is that everyone started out small. When Martha Stewart got started, remember, she worked out of her basement. The best and easiest way to get your feet wet is with the invaluable support and help of your family and friends network. With a good product and a good support system, you can begin to build the foundation for a successful crafts business.

Five Basics of Supply and Demand in the Hand Made Craft Business

Like any other business, hand made crafts consist of being able to make certain products according to what the customers want and need. However, because it is hand made crafts, and your own home based business, knowing the meaning of supply and demand on how to meet it is essential for reaching your financial and business related goals. Supply and demand means knowing what customers want and need, and being able to reproduce your items for them. Here are five things to look for when finding what the demand of customers will be and how to supply them with the right hand made craft.

1. Know the Trends/Customer Need and Want. Often times this means creating your own products, and knowing which ones that your customers like. If you have your own niche and style for products, then you can create a large inventory to make last a long time. You can not only find trends through observing and keeping track of what your customers buy, but also through things such as organizations that are consistently networking and providing information through a variety of sources about the crafting business.

As in all businesses, trends are usually short lasting. Because of this, your niche should be your focus, and trends should be there to simply compliment those items.

2. Have Plenty of Extra Inventories. There are several ways that you can determine how much inventory you need to have. When taking orders at home or over the internet, it is easier to meet the needs of a customer. If you are going to a craft show, you should always have extra available. You can talk to those in charge of the craft show or others who have sold their items the year before.

Beyond this, make sure that you have an idea of what your best sellers may be, according to what other customers or you like. If it is a certain time of the year, always make sure to stock up on items that are popular for the season. While this will fluctuate from year to year, over time you will be able to see what the needs from customers are.

3. Stay ahead. No matter what niche, always keep an extra supply of whatever may or may not sell. This makes it easier to meet the needs of customers, and will offer faster turn around time when needed. By having extra crafts available, it will make you look more professional as well. It is best to not be in a bind when you have potential customers asking you for an item that is becoming fairly popular.

4. Record what You Sell. The easiest way to catch on to what inventory will be needed most is by keeping track of what you are selling. You can do this not only by keeping records of online products, but also different records for craft shows that you have gone to and what was popular that year. Because customer demand often grows through networking and word of mouth from other customers, it is likely that the crafts that sold the best the year before will also be a strong sale the next year.

5. Do Your Research. If you are starting out in the crafting business and are unsure of what the supply and demand will be from customers, then find other places that will. There are plenty of organizations who will help you with placing how much you may need. There are also several other individuals who are willing to provide information. If you still are curious about

what your estimates should be, there are places to go online, in magazines and newspapers, etc. that will be able to give you information on various aspects of the business of hand made crafts.

No matter what your types of craft, what niche you decide to use, and where you decide to sell your crafts, the most important thing is to be prepared with extra inventory of your products in order to reach the demand of customers. If you look into trends and know your most popular items, you will always be able to walk away from a sale successful and looking professional because of your preparations.

How to Price Your Crafts – Five Ways to Boost Your Bottom Line

Deciding on how to price your crafts is an important factor when beginning your crafting business. The price of your crafts will increase or decrease the amount of customers who will buy your crafts. The price can be determined through several different factors, including your own calculations, as well as the environment in which you are selling them and how this relates to other craft businesses as well as customers. Here are five ways to help you determine the prices that you can offer when determining how to price your crafts.

1. Do the math. The first step to this is estimating the amount of time you spend making the craft, first by hour, then by week. Decide how much you would like to make per week from your labor. If you want to be specific, you can add in factors such as what you need to make a living comfortably. The next step is to add in the total cost of supplies that you use. Add this to how many products you are making per week. Divide the number of products produced in a week by the total cost for labor. This will determine how much you should sell each product for.

2. Research Your Craft. It is always good to find out what other similar products and craft businesses are charging for their products. Because they are hand-crafted, however, you should be able to go either a little above their price, or may decide to go a little under and offer your customers a discount. If you have a craft that you cannot find anywhere else to compare to, then find an average of similar products to average out your costs with.

3. Find Inexpensive Craft Supplies. If you have determined your pricing and it is above what you would like to sell your crafts for, there are ways to cut costs for what you are making. One way to do so is by changing the supplies that you are using. Discount stores often offer the same brands and quality of supplies at a lower price. You may also want to look into places that are going out-of-business. They usually have large sales for you to stock up your supplies with. You can also use wholesalers or can browse through the Internet for those wanting to sell craft supplies at a discounted rate.

4. Make sure you are listed as a business. By considering yourself a small business, you can apply for a tax ID that will cut taxes off of your supplies. You can apply for a tax ID through the government website. You can then either save your receipts for tax time or see if certain places will take the tax ID and automatically cut off the price.

5. Know your target market. It's good to determine how much the customer will be willing to pay in relation to how much labor time and craft supply costs are going to cost you. If your target market is centered more on families or lower income families, it might be important to lower your prices and your craft supply costs. If you are selling certain items at a certain time of year, it is also important to determine the discounts and sales that you are willing to offer, such as during Christmas time.

It is always important to remember not to undermine your costs because you want it to sell. Remember that you are putting the labor and supplies into the craft. You should always at least make a little more than your money back. It is also important to not over price your crafts because they are hand made or because there are not as many available. This will turn customers away. Despite what you know about the product and the value that is in it, customers are usually looking for a good deal.

By doing the proper calculations and by knowing what resources are available to you, it is easy to determine the amount that you should be selling your crafts for. By using the right math and knowing what to look for, you can find the right pricing for your crafts and let customers believe that they are finding a good deal for what they are getting.

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