



# *Crafty \$elling*

*By Wal Sherman*

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## Why Sell Your Craft?

There can be many reasons why you want to sell some of the craft items which you produce:

- ❖ To get back some of your expenses
- ❖ To pay for new or better equipment
- ❖ To make some extra income
- ❖ To produce, over time, a full-time income
- ❖ To raise money for a cause that you support or a group that you are a member of.



Whatever your motivation, you will have to make some adjustments in the way you operate. This could include changing how you think about your craft work, the items which you produce, the records that you keep etc.

There is no way that I can cover all of the factors which may affect your efforts to sell your particular type of craft work in fine detail, but I've tried to cover as many areas as I can.

I've provided tips and suggestions based on my own experience and also that of the many friends I have around the craft world. I've learned a lot also from the comments of my customers and personal friends about why they purchase (or don't buy) from particular crafts outlets. Those remarks have sometimes proved very eye-opening, even after my years of experience – the sort of comments they would probably never make in the hearing of the craft sellers concerned.

## First Steps from a Hobby to a Business

There's no doubt that people that earn their living from doing something which they enjoy are among the happiest of all.



Selling your crafts could be a great way to a healthier life with less hassle even if you find that the monetary rewards are less than you might get from a regular job in an office and subject to someone's else's direction.

I'll assume that you have a good knowledge of your particular craft(s) and probably get unprompted, but very welcome, compliments about the items you create.

With that standard achieved, and the desire to persevere when small or large obstacles inevitably appear between you and your goals, there's no reason that you can't make money from your crafts.

Let's get you started.

### ***Selling is Simple But Not Always Easy!***

It's great when you see people smile after you give them a useful or decorative item which you've made just for them.



But, that same person could be much harder to convince if they had to pay their good money for it. Though your item is good quality and very useful, it has to compete with all the other demands on the potential buyer's budget when you offer it for sale. And, you're also competing with every other product which the customer could use to do what your item does.

Of course, that fact also increases your satisfaction when people not only buy your craft but actively seek it out and recommend it to their friends!

That's the point I will help you to reach with the least time and frustration possible.

## The 'Boring' Basics

Musicians most enjoy performing but the musician that skimps on their regular practice and study will quickly find their opportunities to perform, especially for pay, becoming limited and their reputation suffering.

A craftsperson that offers their product(s) for sale has the best chance of success by taking equal care with the business details; records, stock, customer support and research on new trends in their craft area, as they do with the creative work, which they probably enjoy more.



Setting everything up in a professional manner at the start will save you hassles and valuable time, as well as making your future customers and suppliers more willing to deal with you and recommend you – word of mouth is the best and least expensive type of advertising there is.

I'm not properly qualified, so I can only cover the area of tax and other regulatory requirements in broad detail. These vary greatly between countries and even between cities.



## State and Local Rules

You need to ensure that your craft activities, especially if you sell any of the items you produce, are within your city's by-laws and regulations.

### **You should check that:**

- ❖ You are permitted to operate the equipment you use for your craft in your home (noisy or commercial-sized equipment may require a special permit, if allowed at all). Make sure to stay on good terms with your neighbors!
- ❖ You may sell your items from your home (if that's what you intend to do)
- ❖ You comply with any other regulations and bylaws.



If your craft is related to food of any kind, then you will probably need to check with your local health department about any regulations and standards that you must meet regarding the equipment you use, the area where you prepare it and the storage and labeling of the products.

## Taxation

Get professional advice – your accountant's fee is tax deductible in most jurisdictions and the peace of mind that comes from proper records is priceless.



Even if you only intend to sell the odd item to try to keep your expenses down, you need to keep a record and declare the income. You'll probably find that, if you make just a few small sales annually that your activity will be classed a hobby but do not assume that – put the figures in your tax return in the manner your accountant advises so that you can be seen to be complying with the tax rules in your area.

If your activity is classed as a hobby, you will not be able to claim the expenses involved as a deduction against your other income.

Some wholesale suppliers will not supply you if you are not a registered business.

Keep a record of all related expenses. As well as making it easier to claim against your income, it will help you to realize whether or not you are charging enough for the products you sell. Many craft workers find that they are making less profit even as their sales rise because they have not properly costed their expenses and their time when deciding what price to sell their products for!

## Legal Issues

I've mentioned some of these points in the relevant sections of the book but they are important enough to be repeated here.

### ***Your Work Area***

Check with your Council and other regulators that you are allowed to use the equipment which you produce your items with in a residential area.

If you produce a food item, check with your Health Department that your equipment and the area where you prepare it complies with their rules.

### ***Selling from Your Home***

Your local authorities may restrict or simply not allow you to sell items from your home or conduct workshops there.

Even if it is allowed, you should also check as to what signage, if any, you may use.

### ***Your Products.***

Use only designs, pictures and text which are your original work, or for which you have proof that you have been granted the right to use their material for your items for resale by the rights' holders.



Get your own business name registered. Do not use one which is too close to any that are used by more established crafters.

Buying a copy of a picture does not necessarily give you the right to use that image in whatever way you wish. Be very careful about this.

Do not buy collections of pictures from Internet auctions or download pictures from sites offering free pictures unless you are sure enough to bet

your bank account that they come with the rights you need to be able to re-use them in your projects.

Many people have used Internet search engines to search for pictures on particular subjects, then downloaded them and used those images in their work. That's very risky because those images may be subject to copyright and getting them through a search engine does not confer any rights to you.

All products which are supplied to children, or intended for their use, are subject to regulations in most areas. Check with your Consumer Protection or Product Safety regulators. Areas which are most often regulated include safety and size of components, age-specification on the package, clear details of all the components etc.

Always attach appropriate labeling to your products with your contact details and instructions for caring and cleaning the item.

## Pricing Your Items

This can be a trap for many people who are just starting their business of whatever kind.

You need to invest some time and care to ensure that the prices you charge cover ALL your expenses, a reasonable profit and also some contribution toward the expansion of your business.

As well as the cost of the materials you use to prepare your items, you must include some margin which will help you to:

- ❖ Get new equipment or repair what you currently use
- ❖ Replace the supplies you've used and also buy different items to vary or improve your products
- ❖ Contribute to your overhead costs; heating, lighting, car running costs, advertising, website hosting and Internet connection
- ❖ Pay you a profit
- ❖ Pay relevant taxes on the sale

Make a mistake with your sums here and you could be getting further behind with every sale you make!

## Basics of Selling

If you have no experience with selling, or are nervous just thinking about it, please realize that everybody sells; we all try to persuade someone else to do something with or for us every day.

You're offering useful or decorative, quality products at a fair price and without pressure. You believe that your product will help your customer to do something better or more easily.

### ***"What if they say NO?!"***

Some will, and some of them may be very abrupt in their manner, but that's the worst that can happen – it's not the end of the world! Accept their response, whatever it is, and wish them a good day.



Remember, "**Some will (buy), some won't ..... NEXT!**" This cliché reflects the truth that nobody makes a sale every time. If someone rejects your offer, they are not rejecting you. There could be several reasons that they don't buy from you at that time. A rejection should be accepted as part of life. Take any lessons which you can learn from it and move on.

Never show any disappointment you may feel from someone not buying. It's likely to discourage them from wanting to look at other items you offer in the future. They may have decided they could not afford that purchase right now but could return another time. Any negative statement or action from you could destroy that chance of future sales and reduce your professional image in their eyes.

One Sales Trainer I know said that he found that there was a ratio between the number of sales to the number of knock-backs in any particular area. So,

he suggested that every knock-back should be looked on as bringing you closer to your next sale!

## Advertising and Promoting Your Craft

### *Your Best Advertisement*



How you present yourself when you deal with customers and all the other people that you meet in the course of your business is at least as important as the care that you put into the presentation of the items you offer.

You should aspire to be your own best advertisement.

### *Qualities of Successful Sellers*

My friend, the Sales Trainer, says that the main reason that people buy from one sales person rather than another is always, at least partly, because of the impression that the successful one makes on them as a person.

- ✓ They listen more than they talk so that they can focus what they say on the needs, circumstances and desires of their customers.
- ✓ They don't smoke, eat or even chew gum when they are selling, even if almost everyone else at the venue does.
- ✓ They never push (well, not so it becomes obvious).
- ✓ They never pretend to have all the answers. If there is any question the customer asks which they are unsure of the answer to, then they say, "I'm not sure of the answer to that but I will find out and get the answer for you as quickly as I can." And they do!
- ✓ They keep their word every time.





- ✓ They accept "No" with good humor, which leaves the door open for them to approach that prospect again at another time.

My definition of **promotion** is providing information that will help, or at least inform, your readers while including low-key references to you and your craft.

**Advertising** is mostly paying for your selling message to appear in a publication or other media.

### ***The Best Advertising***

The best advertising is good 'word of mouth' from happy customers – it's



also the cheapest! Happy customers are great prospects for other products which you develop in the future too, so make sure that you get their contact details. Also remember that you can get good word of mouth recommendations from suppliers and organizers of events where you have set up.

If you get a new customer, ask them how they heard about you and your craft work. You may be surprised who is promoting you!

With most of the traditional media, the cost of an effective advertisement is likely to be beyond your budget, at least when you are starting out.

The first rule is to get your ad in front of the people who are most likely to buy your product. A newspaper might have thousands of readers whom you can reach at a relatively low cost but you'll probably get better results by paying the same amount for an ad in a specialist magazine or newsletter that is read only by the sort of people who would really be interested in your craft work.

Advertising in Yellow Pages and similar directories is expensive and, usually, the largest ads in each section get the most eyes and enquiries.

## The Internet

You probably already have found some benefits from your own personal use of the Internet but it really is every small business person's best friend.

Like almost everyone else, we can use email to contact and get quick response from suppliers and other crafts people almost anywhere in the world.

If you need to phone long distance or overseas fairly often, you can probably reduce those costs significantly by taking advantage of the rapidly improving V.O.I.P (Voice Over Internet Protocol) online phone systems which are available from many companies. With your account at a V.O.I.P provider and a simple headset and microphone, you can phone other people with similar equipment for free and most people that have only regular phones at much lower rates than regular phone companies charge!



If you set up your own website, then you can produce a full-color catalog of all your items and write them up in as much detail as needed. Then, just pop it on your own website (which probably costs you only a few dollars a month), where your potential customers can check it out at whatever time of day or night suits them.

That catalog might cost you hundreds of dollars if you had it printed and you'd probably not use as much text because each page costs so many dollars. Many copies might be discarded unread and, if someone discovered an important error in it, then you would have to pay more to have everything fixed and reprinted.

But the people that visit your web catalog will almost all be interested in what you offer. And, you can change your online catalog as many times as

you like. If someone wants a printed copy, they'll just print it out at their expense on their own printer!



How do you get people to visit your website? Include the address of your website with everything you sell, on your business cards and even on the side of your car (I was surprised how many people actually read the sign I had made for my car and contacted me!)

Write your web pages as if you were telling a friend how your products would brighten the home or maybe make great gifts, or whatever. Avoid hype and don't make any claims which you can't deliver on.

Pictures don't have to be high resolution but they must show all the important and attractive features of your items clearly.

Make sure that your web pages include the relevant hot-button words that people who might buy your craft would search for. You may get enquiries from other countries or from the other end of your own country, but you will also almost certainly get some enquiries from your own area at a cost much less than putting a classified in your local paper – and that paper will be gone forever in only 24 hours while your web pages will be online as long as you maintain your website account!

Another obvious benefit that the Internet brings you is the ease and speed of researching new trends in your craft and also looking for ideas, both new and old, that have perhaps not been seen in the area where you are.

But, I'm not suggesting that you simply take other people's designs and ideas which they display on their sites – that's unethical and probably illegal. Let yourself be inspired but don't rob them of their creations.

You must be aware that any of your original material which you put on your website will probably be the basis of someone's new product or article within a few days.

## Press Releases and Articles

Writing a press release or an article and getting it printed may seem unlikely but the truth is that newspapers and magazines need enough material to fill the gaps between the advertisements in every issue – a problem that starts all over again with each new issue.



The main thing about a press release is that it is not an advertisement – you tell your story in terms that will interest the readers of the newspaper or magazine.

The second thing is to make the press release appeal to the person that decides whether it will be used or discarded like probably 90+% of press releases are.

Write it in the form of a very short article like you see in that magazine or newspaper (you must know the media as well as you must know your customers).

Write the best twenty or so headlines that you think of, but only use the very best one for your release.

Put the facts; who what, where, when and why in the first couple of paragraphs and keep the rest very short.

Put your contact information on the release (double-check it!)

Enclose any pictures in padding to avoid damaging them. State that you are the copyright holder or licensee and the photos are legally able to be used.

Most publications like pictures of suitable quality because they fill space and attract the readers' eyes.

Articles must focus on the needs of the publication's readers; give them new information and include stories about people like them wherever possible.

Then you've just got to get your products into the center of it without making it one big advertisement.

When you see your first article or release in print, study how it was reduced in length and edited, as will almost always happen. That's a free lesson in tightening up your writing that would be worth paying for.

If you like writing, then think about collecting your articles as a book or using them on your website. You will need to be sure that you still have the right to do what you want to with the material you wrote.

Many publications, newspapers and magazines (even some that don't pay writers that supply them with articles), copyright the content themselves.

The best way to deal with this is to state on the cover page of every article you submit what rights you are offering the publication and check their editorial policy before submitting anything.

## **Put a Blog about Your Craft on Your Website**

On your website, you can publish the articles you've already written, or anything else you write, in a blog (web diary). This type of presentation has increased greatly in popularity over the last few years. While many of the blogs still are full of the personal thoughts and activities of the website owner, there many which are used to promote the writer's business, hobbies (including crafts) or just about anything else.



Unless you really want to fiddle with the technical side of setting up your blog, the easiest way to get started is to sign up and set up your blog at <http://www.blogger.com>. The company is owned by Google, the giant Internet search engine, and many blogs which are set up there seem to start appearing in Google's listings more quickly than they might be expected to if they were set up elsewhere.

You can include your own pictures and even arrange links (feeds) so that people who are interested in your craft related news and information can have the information sent to them every day (or however often you update your blog.)



## **Craft Clubs and Courses.**

Join your local craft clubs or societies and be an active and supportive member.

Volunteer to help where you feel you can but avoid at all costs any club politics or infighting – that's never got anyone anywhere!

Be prepared to share some of your ideas and techniques with the other members. Some craft workers don't do this because they fear that their ideas and designs will be stolen.

That is a real risk but, for me, the advantages of participating in an enthusiastic group of people that are all interested in your type of craft has many advantages which outweigh the downside.

Check the local paper, and with your council about craft courses, both commercial and community based. These can be helpful even if you are fairly experienced in your craft – the instructors may share techniques which are new to you and you'll meet like-minded people who can become friends, or even customers, later on.

If there aren't any related courses in your area, you might investigate whether it would be worth setting one up yourself.

Check the "Other Money-Making Craft Methods" section of this ebook for more information.

## Competitions

Craft competitions are becoming more popular than ever as more people live longer and many retire earlier from full-time employment.

Many are run by local or even national craft organizations but there are many others which are conducted as part of large events such as agricultural fairs.



Many of the competitions bring well qualified judges from other states and their feedback and advice can be of great value to the entrants, whether or not they win any prizes.

Competitions are a great way to get publicity for the items you produce and you may also get a few direct sales where the items are permitted to be sold after announcement of the awards and presentations.

While the certificates or plaques that you might win will help to build your reputation, the greatest plus about entering competitions is the great number of people that are truly interested in the type of craft you sell who will see your work during the course of the event.

You will probably get sales enquiries from both individuals and probably also from retailers who might be interested in selling your work.

Competitions are also a great time for trying out new ideas. Do that and your entries are likely to stand out from those of entrants who stick to their regular items.

You will also get invaluable feedback just by watching the expressions and listening, without reacting if possible, to the comments of the visitors and other competitors who examine your entries.

## **Where to Sell Your Craft.**

### **From Your Home**

You may be able to sell items from your own home, but check whether your City Council will allow it before doing anything at all.

They may require that you fill in forms, pay a fee and get a permit. There will also be restrictions on the signage, if any, which you are allowed to put up, even though it's your property!

If your craft sales are accepted as part of your income, you may be able to set up a room, garage or outbuilding as your business premises for tax purposes. This needs to be carefully checked in advance with your accountant. Also check that your accountant has some experience in this area.

### **At Someone Else's Home.**

But you might prefer to ask someone else to host a demonstration in their home in return for a commission on sales that you make which they may, either keep for themselves or donate to a cause they support or group that they are a member of. This can be held at any time of the day which suits you and the group.

That's right, your own Party Plan on a small scale.

Prepare your items and sketch out the main points of your demonstration carefully in advance. You'll need to have change and, if you have a Merchant account and the necessary portable equipment, you may want to offer credit card sales.

You must provide suitable wrapping and padding for the items and a nicely wrapped gift for the person who hosts the event.

Ask the hostess (women are the best people to organize and host craft and other party-plans) to provide some finger food but to keep everything simple – you want everyone to be able to concentrate on your demonstration, the items and to actively participate in the fun.

Yes, make sure that everything is kept light-hearted and present some little gifts to some of the most fun people at the event (don't base everything on how much you sell or what individuals buy.)

You might want demonstrate some of our simpler techniques and maybe get a couple of guests to try to do something themselves.

Always remember to hand write a thank-you note the next day and post it to them as well. Do not email it as the minimal extra effort is a small personal touch makes a powerful impression in this computerized, Internet age!

Hosting this sort of demonstration/sale in return for a commission on your sales may also interest community groups who are always looking for ways to raise money. Your council or local library probably has a register of these organizations with their contact information.

## **In Your Office**

My sister is not interested in selling her craft work on anything like a full-time basis. She has a well-paid and interesting job.

She put a small item she had made on her desk a few years ago and was surprised when someone asked her where they could get one like it.

She just said quietly, "I make them myself. Just tell me what color you'd like and I will bring you one." She had no thought of charging for it but her co-worker insisted on paying and suggested a figure that my sister was very happy with.

Since then, my sister has sold quite a few items and some of those customers have put other people that they know outside their office, in touch with her as well.

It's important to not try to sell to your co-workers – after all, you're there to do your paid work. But, it is usually okay to let them know about your craft, in between listening to their stories about their pets or children.

You probably won't charge these buyers what you charge other people that you don't know so well, but it's not a good idea to charge so little that your don't get at least a little above your cost of production.

## Fairs and Markets

I'm addicted to markets and fairs and can't pass one without stopping even if I'm not working there.



I like working at them too, though there are sometimes a downside to some of them, like everything.

Most of the fairs, and some of the smaller markets, in my area are operated by community groups; schools etc. and many of the sellers are people selling the contents of their attic.

The bigger markets are mostly professional businesses where many of the sites are operated by full-time traders who book their site for months at a time.

This may be different in your region (I know some fairs are h-u-g-e!) but I'll use the names to describe the sort of event which I am most familiar with.

With all events, you need to check in advance about:

- The set-up time and the finish time
- Whether you have to pay in advance (in full or a partial deposit) or on the day
- Is your advance payment refunded if the event is cancelled. You will rarely be able to get a refund if you cancel after paying a deposit.
- Where you can park your vehicle. It may be some distance from your site, so you may need to carry a trolley with you to transport your equipment and stock from one to the other if you cannot leave your vehicle next to your site while you are setting up or packing away. If that happens, you will need to have someone else with you who can

either watch your site while you bring your goods in or to bring them in while you start setting up.

- The exact size of your site and whether you are required to leave an access lane at the sides of the area allotted to you
- An under-cover alternative venue at outdoor events if there is heavy rain
- Any rules about the sort of product you may offer.
- Any other rules of the committee or local authorities which you must observe

It's always a good idea to have another person with you at all-day events. You will have to leave your site at some time and other sellers, while usually willing to keep an eye on your site, will simply be too busy to be an effective deterrent to any sneak thieves.



That extra pair of eyes can also be useful to check whether there are other people selling products similar to yours or even supplies which you could buy for your future projects.

For the fairs that are mostly run by community-based organizations, things can be relatively casual. You may even be able to just roll up on the day and pay for a site, then set up. But it's best to check what's required as much in advance as possible, like with the bigger, professional events.

You may not be asked for your insurance certificate but you should get the coverage for your peace of mind and future financial stability (the size of judgments for what we used to describe as unfortunate accidents would blow your mind!).

The organizers may rent tables or trestles which is convenient but you should gather your own equipment if you intend to do these events regularly. Then you can work out where to put each item or piece of equipment and stick to that "floor-plan" at every event.

If your craft items need special display stands or fittings, you can set the fittings permanently in place on your own table.

You can also fix clamps, non-standard legs and fittings for your canopy to your own bench.

And you don't have to wait for the committee members to turn up and collect their table when the event is over.

A canopy may seem an unnecessary luxury but it provides protection for the craft items you display and will encourage people to stay longer at your site which improves the chance that they will buy from you. It also makes your site more visible from a greater distance.

Always put bright covers on your tables and have your own display tags with your contact details.

Some people display the price of every item, while others don't. My preference is to show the prices because some people will drift away rather than ask.



## Security

Security is important at even the smallest and friendliest local event. I never spread items out wider on my trestle than I can reach by spreading my arms at 45 degrees from my sides.

I carry my immediate cash in a pouch which is locked to my belt – it has a screw lock, not just a plastic catch or piece of Velcro™. Large bills and extra coins are locked inside my traveling case which is never unattended.



I always place the same type of items in the same area of my table at each event so I can quickly see if something that has not been sold is missing.

Fragile and particularly valuable items are in a locked display case – these cases often turn up for sale at these same community fairs for very low prices.

This sort of event in your area can be more important as a networking opportunity than for the sales which actually occur on the day. So, have plenty of business cards and maybe some other giveaways with your contact details on them.

The larger and more organized events will almost always require that you book and probably pay in advance of the day of the event. Bring your Insurance certificate too.

If you use lights, sound equipment or anything else that needs electricity, you must check in advance that you will be close enough to an outlet which you are allowed to use. Also confirm in advance that all cords and other fittings which you use are of the standard required by the organizers and the local regulatory authority.

If your products have any food content, check to see that you comply with the local Health Department's rules at least a couple of days before the event (and preferably before you book your site.)

A canopy and a professional-quality of presentation are essential.

If you want people to linger at your site and examine your items, try to provide at least some space for them in the area allotted to you, rather than have a crowd build up in the walk-ways or obstructing someone else's display.

Don't reduce your prices unnecessarily. Part of the appeal of quality craft items is the quality and people that judge everything by its price ticket probably won't buy at even the reduced price.

But, you may find them ready to buy your 'seconds' if you have any – just make sure that you point out any imperfections before accepting their money so there can be no recriminations.

### ***Action Attracts Attention (and sales!)***



It's a great advantage if you can demonstrate some of your craft while you're on the site. It shows that you actually produce the items you sell and the activity will draw people to your site from nearby sites where there is no action to draw the visitors' attention.

In fact, you need to be active through the whole time of the event. It can be hard to maintain a bright, happy disposition if sales are slow or the weather or other factors are causing problems for you but you simply must. The visitors don't know or understand your problems and don't want to be bothered about anything – they are there to have a good time and they'll leave their money with the people that help them do that!

Another thing which may help to increase your sales is to encourage the browser to hold the item or put it on if it is a piece of clothing or personal decoration.

## Is it a Profitable Venue for You?

You need to work out your costs and a minimum target for your sales, so that you know at the end of the event whether or not to book for the same event again. If your set-up costs are \$100 for a one-day event and you sell \$600 of products which cost you \$400 to produce, then you probably won't rebook. That's because you've invested \$500 cash plus your time preparing the items, traveling to and from the event and the time on site for a whole \$100 (less tax!)

Sometimes, you might decide to re-book a site at a venue where you made less than expected if you believe that you can do better on a second visit. Maybe there were one-off conditions that affected the number of visitors (weather, competing events etc). You must decide if it's worth a second try.

Perhaps you, as a first-time visiting seller, got a site which was out of the best traffic flow or next to some very noisy display which affected your ability to sell the amount you expected.

In the first year that I worked small country events, I was placed next to a stand where they were demonstrating and selling chainsaws and, on another memorable occasion, on a site beside a very large refrigerated truck. My voice was no match for the roar of its equipment which never stopped for more than a couple of minutes.



The position of your site can affect your sales. Corner sites and those near well-presented food sellers who have tables for their customers to consume their food can be among the best locations. Near entrances and exits are other coveted positions. Sometimes these spots attract a higher rental than other sites in the same area.

## **Essential Supplies**

As well as your canopy and trestle(s), you'll need your own chairs, food and drink, umbrella, cleaning and drying cloths, rubbish bags, broom, first-aid equipment, spare battery for your phone and map

Be prepared for sudden changes in the weather. Work out how you will protect your craft items and the best way to gather them up quickly with minimum risk of damaging them.

Newcomers to outdoor events always worry about rain but strong winds can cause as much, or even more, damage. They can carry away or wreck your stock and also your tables, umbrellas and other equipment. Those lovely, big market umbrellas look great but they, and the rest of your set-up, need to be secured so they aren't propelled into an innocent bystander or someone's expensive vehicle by a freak wind gust.

I've covered insurance in more detail in the next Chapter – this is another reason to get the best coverage you can afford.

## Dealing with Other People at the Event

Most people treat their potential customers well but it's equally important to do your best to get along with the other people who are selling their products at the event and also the staff, organizers and other officials.

Be self sufficient to the greatest degree that you can. Everybody else that is working at the event is likely to be at least as busy as you are. Don't take up their time with idle chat.

Never try to use more space than you were allotted or have any part of your gear in another person's space or the walkways.

**Side-note:** There's reason why the walk-ways at some events are real narrow and there is also a (much better) reason why most professional events have wide walk-ways. The narrow aisles crush people together and are supposed to encourage them to buy more. Those events which have wide walk-ways usually set them up so that, if there is an accident or other emergency, first-aid people and others can get quickly to where they are needed.

Never let anyone you don't know and trust behind your displays. N-e-v-e-r!

For all events, it's a good rule to bring your own trash can and garbage bags, then gather and dispose of all the trash which accumulates on your site during the event, whether you caused it or not. That sort of thoughtfulness will be noticed and appreciated by the professional organizers and also the overworked, volunteer committee members who are left with cleaning up all the trash from the other sites at small community events. You'll be very welcome at their future events!

Obey any instructions you get from the officials as promptly and with as much good humor as you can.

## **Selling To and Through Shops etc.**

If you can produce good quality items in fair quantity at a price which the shop-keeper or gallery owner will pay you, then add their usually generous mark-up and resell, then you might find this way very profitable.

There's more pressure because the shops want quantity and demand a consistent standard. With many types of craft, they'll want maybe a dozen or even a hundred identical items – no creative flourishes allowed. To keep the connection, just grit your teeth and concentrate on what you will do with the extra money.

Make sure that you have a clear agreement with the reseller about when you will be paid for the items and whether they can get a refund for any which they do not sell.

They may only accept the items on consignment where they only pay you for items which are sold. They should accept responsibility for any which are stolen from or damaged while on their premises.

You may want to be flexible if the outlet is a particularly busy one where you can expect to sell plenty of items over a period. Make your own boundaries, just make sure that both you and the reseller are clear about and in agreement about all the points I've mentioned.

You may find that two stores sell your products at different prices though you charge them the same amount. They know their customers and will probably have different overhead costs and profit expectations.

Packaging and presentation is particularly important in stores. You should have tags or labels on your items with your business name. Some products must also carry details about the materials used in the preparation and cleaning instructions.

## **Mail Order**

Even in the Internet age, this way of selling your craft is worth consideration, especially if you live in an area where the potential for local sales is limited.

You need some personal qualities and your craft items have to be suitable for distribution through the mail.

If you are a thorough, well-organized person and able to produce a quantity of quality products (so that you can promptly fill orders) and have some funds to buy the necessary craft and mailing supplies that you will need to supply your first orders, then you're a good candidate to become a mail-order success.

Your products should fit standard postal packaging, be tough enough to stand the bumps they will encounter in the postal system and not be so big or heavy that the mailing cost makes them too costly for this method of distribution.

Some craft items are unlikely to be good sellers through mail order where the potential buyer is unable to check the quality of the work or other factors.

There are laws in most jurisdictions which impose strict requirements on mail order sellers. You must be able to dispatch whatever goods are ordered promptly.

If, for any reason, you cannot then you must advise the buyer without delay and be prepared to refund their money in full.

You should always require that the buyer pay for insurance as well as the basic postage cost.



Using a Post office Box address will probably discourage some people from buying from you but it maybe a good option if your own letter box is not secure.

When you send an item to a buyer, make sure that you enclose an offer for one or more of the other items that you make.

## ***Online Auctions***

The comments about mail order apply in large part also to selling your craft items through online auctions.

Each auction site has its own rules which you must comply with on top of the rules of postal and other authorities.

It's worthwhile to study those areas of the sites where the sort of items which are comparable to your products are offered. The bids which you see will give you some idea of the sort of price range that you would get back though, the auctions charge fees which must be deducted from those prices.

You should check the sort of terms which sellers of those items require with regard to acceptable payment methods, and how they charge for insurance and other incidental but important costs.

## Insurance

If you sell your crafts from your home, you will need to arrange insurance, either as an extension of your home policy or, more likely, a separate policy.

Don't try to run your business under your home cover without discussing it with the agent first. Most companies can legally refuse any claim where full details are not disclosed to them when the policy is taken out, renewed or there is a change in use of the items insured.

For this reason, don't hold any significant details back in the hope of getting a lower premium when you discuss your proposed business with your current insurance company or other possible suppliers.

If you sell your products from any other location, you will need to get insurance cover for the period of the event for yourself, anyone that helps you (whether in a paid or unpaid capacity) and for third party risk or public liability (damage to other people and their property).

Many public events such as fairs, markets and exhibitions will not let you set up to operate at their event unless you can show a current certificate of insurance or cover note. The organizers have to have their own insurance, of course, but they still require you to have your own cover.

Check that your vehicle or other insurance will cover you while you travel to and from the event because you are using it for commercial purposes, if your vehicle does not have a commercial registration. With insurance, never assume anything will "work out okay" – double-check it in advance and get it in writing.

## Other Money-Making Craft Methods

You can use any of these ideas to supplement what you make from your craft sales. Some of them can be handy additions if your craft output is seasonal or if your income from direct sales drops at certain times of the year for any other reason.

They can also help to promote the craft items which you offer – free advertising!

### Craft Kits

You can package enough supplies to make the sort of product you sell as a kit for the do-it-yourselfer. A good kit with clear, original instructions and quality components can be priced at several times what you pay for the parts, especially if you buy them at wholesale.

The additional income from the kits can make it easier for you to get better discounts by buying your own supplies in larger quantities at a time from your suppliers.

### ***'Simple' Instructions can be Hard Work.***

Writing instructions is not as easy as it may seem. As we develop our knowledge and skills, we tend to do the more repetitive parts of our craftwork almost without thinking. That can cause us to skip over the bits which "everyone knows" when we start writing them down.

Write out all the steps and assume that the person who will use the kit knows almost nothing about the task of making that particular item.

You may think that you've put everything down as clear as anyone could want. Find a patient friend or family member that does not have your level of knowledge about the craft work, put the materials in front of them and then ask them to please read your instructions carefully.

Ask them if there is any part of the instructions which is not clear to them? I would be very surprised if there weren't at least a few questions from them after they read your first attempts, unless you have taught people before.

You will almost certainly need to illustrate your instructions. Whether you use photos or line drawings is not as important as how clearly you show each of the steps. The pictures should be from the point of view of the person who is making the item.

Put the text that relates to the pictures next to them so that the buyer can follow each step without having to put their material down and turn to another part of the instructions to see the details in the relevant picture.

Writing instructions for children's kits requires special care. Make sure that everything is very easy to understand, but never talk down to your junior customers. It would be a very good idea to trial your junior kits with your own or some friend's children before finalizing your instructions.

### ***Kits for Children***

If the kit is to be used by children (this is a big market!), make sure that you specify a recommended age range that you think will be able to handle to work involved.

I think it is also a good idea to specify that the kit should only be used with adult supervision.

You should also check if there are any regulations in your area which restrict what items may be included. In my city, the Consumer Protection Department requires that any item sold to or for the use of children:

- Does not contain any sharp items such as needles.
- Has no items which are below a certain size (potential choking or inhalation hazard)

- Has a warning label that specifies a recommended age range (not below either 3 years or 7 years, depending on the parts in the kit).

I also suggest that kits should not include glue or paint unless it is a kind which is approved for supply to children.

### ***Supplying Kits Wholesale***

This is a way to make good money more quickly if you can price your products sufficiently low to allow for tax and still let the shop to add their margin (40% to over 100%) and make sales.

See the section in this ebook about 'Supplying Shops' for other factors which you must consider.

## **Teach Your Craft**

This will be a very brief coverage of a subject that I might write an entire book about later – there are so many aspects to it.

I've taught simple projects to groups of children, the elderly and people with disabilities of some kind. The demand for courses aimed at groups like these seems to be steady even increasing. All of them were very rewarding though not as profitable as the courses I've prepared and conducted for groups of adults who have a definite interest in the crafts I show them.

Check first whether there are people already teaching their methods of doing the same craft as you in your local area. Even if there are, you might find there is a higher level of demand than they can cope with.

## **Where to Teach**

The next important factor is finding the right location for your course. You might be able to teach people in your own home, provided the local bylaws permit that.

If you have business premises, you might want to set up courses there, outside of your regular hours of trading.

Operating the courses at your home or commercial site will mean providing suitable amenities with added cleaning required, coffee and possibly snacks, upgrading your insurance and checking that there is suitable, well-lit parking available close by for your students.

You can hire a hall or large room at a public or private venue. You will be responsible for setting up, locking up and everything in between. You will need insurance even though the operators of the venue have their own cover.

You don't want or expect that something will be broken or someone might be injured but, should something happen, you want it fixed as fast as possible with minimum fuss and worry. Arguments, or even court action, about who pays is likely to be extra trauma and expense that would damage your reputation as well as your finances – even if you won!

Anyway, most venues won't let any space under their control unless they site your current insurance certificate or, at least, a cover note.

### ***Teaching at Community Centers***

The next option is to conduct the course under the umbrella of a local community center or similar organization.

This can reduce the potential hassles a lot. It's an ideal way to test the water (potential demand) if you are thinking about running your own courses in the future.

You can make money from the fees paid by your students, less whatever percentage is retained by the organization. You may also be able to offer materials which they will use in the course. These may be paid for as a levy on top of the course fee or as an option obtainable directly from you at the first lesson.

You need to prepare your own original instructions and diagrams and a list of items which the students will need to complete the projects in your course.

You also must check whether the equipment and supplies required to do the craft projects in your course will be supplied by the organization, the students or will have to be arranged by you.

Be prepared for students with almost no knowledge of the craft right through to some whose skills in some areas may rival your own.

These community-based courses attract some students who are mainly there for the chance to meet other people and learning something new is a secondary consideration to them.

Teaching adults is quite different to the way we were taught in school. While you need to supply carefully detailed instructions, the course will, in part, have to be focused on those areas which most interest the particular group of students you get and the rate of progress geared to what is comfortable for the majority of your particular group.

You will find that some students are very slow in picking up details which most of them find easy. You may need to give some extra time to these students. Sometimes, you can group everyone in small teams and the more knowledgeable members will help those who need it in their team. This is a good way to maintain everyone's enthusiasm and help them all to get the best results of which they are capable.

If anyone gets left behind, they will stop coming and may ask the organization for a refund. This, of course, may affect how willing the organization is to have you conduct another course for them.

The best way that I have found to keep a check on how much your students are absorbing is to ask questions and also welcome questions from them. One person that asks a question possibly could represent a fair number in the group who also do not know the answer but may be too shy to ask you themselves.

When you have set up a class, ask the organization if they will approach the local press or permit you to submit a press release. This can be a great means of promoting your own skills and services.

You will probably find that you can publicize the course through local craft suppliers, public notice boards in shopping centers and community



announcement pages in your newspaper or on radio community announcement programs.

When your course is over, don't throw away the instructions and diagrams you created. You can, of course, use them for future courses but also for articles which can spread your knowledge and profile further afield.

### ***Timing Your Courses***

There are always people around with an interest in any particular craft activity, but the general level of interest in a particular craft (learning it and doing it) will fluctuate from time to time.

You need to watch the trends so that you can be fairly sure that any courses you invest time and money in setting will be successful.

I did silk screening courses for a while, then interest in my local area seemed to dry up – perhaps because of the ready availability of computers and printers which could produce professional standard transfers for T-shirts etc.

But, I've seen a resurgence of interest in that craft lately and know someone that has good advance bookings for a couple of courses they will conduct later this year.

So, don't put all your hopes of making a good income on running these sort of courses forever unless you are charging better rates than most community based teachers do.

## Acknowledgements

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Wal Shermann

## There's No Limits

It's true that the only limits to where your craft business might lead you are in your own mind.



in Craft, your age, race, education or background are less important than, "Can You Produce the Goods?!"

You already have the skills and enthusiasm. Now, you have the methods laid out that I and my colleagues have proven can help almost anyone to produce a comfortable income from our craft items.

You just have to take those first steps and keep going.

Make this year YOUR Year for Success!

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)