

A CRAFT FAIR GOLDMINE

HOW TO SELL YOUR HANDCRAFTED ITEMS AT CRAFT SHOWS

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Finding Your Product	4
Saving Money on Supplies	7
Mistakes to Avoid	8
Marketing and "Your Story"	14
Finding the Best Shows	21
Getting to the Show	22
Setting Up Your Space	26
Making Each Show Your Best Show	35
How Much Inventory Do You Need	38
Setting the Right Price	40
Necessary Bring-Alongs	43
Safety at The Show	45
After the Show	47
Where the Shows Are	48
Online Craft Shows	53
Shopping at Craft Shows	54
Conclusion	58

INTRODUCTION

It's been a tradition for me, my mom, and my grandmother for years. Ever since my grandparents moved from Wisconsin to Arkansas, it's has become an annual pilgrimage. We make the 7 hour drive to their house where Thursday, Friday, and Saturday is filled with activity.

Every October in Bentonville, Arkansas, the whole town – neigh the whole area – turns into a huge craft fair. There are so many craft shows, you literally have to sit down and make a schedule in order to see the ones that you really want to see. Otherwise, you'll get sidetracked and end up at a non-eventful show when everyone tells you the other one across town is the place to be.

We plan well in advance not only where to go, but what we will wear, where we will eat, and what specifically we are looking for. Every year, my Grandma has one thing she is relentless at finding – one year it was a quilt, one year it was a fall vest, another year it was a purse.

I've looked forward to these shows each year because not only is it a way for me to spend some quality time with my family, it's also fun to find new crafted items and show them off once I get back home.

Now when I talk about craft fairs, I mean "real" craft fairs. The vendors are everyday people who have found a unique product to sell and make that product themselves. I'm talking about hand personalized, unique Christmas ornaments, hand-sewn golf towels, and candles made on someone's kitchen stove.

Some craft fairs concentrate on the fine arts – paintings, fine jewelry, furniture, etc. I don't go to these types of shows – mostly because I can't even afford to look at these

beautiful things. Where everyday people can make the most money is at local, homegrown craft shows in the local park or civic center. If you're shopping, these types of shows will also be where you'll find the best talent anyway.

Selling craft items, I think, naturally follows shopping. After years just being a buyer at shows, Mom and I ventured into selling for a brief craft show at which we made a good amount of money but were extremely burned out at the end of two days. It was fun, but shopping is more satisfying.

This book is generally geared toward the craft fair vendor. If you make something you think you want to sell at a craft show, this book is definitely for you. We will, however, include a section with some tips and tricks for the craft show shopper.

Inside these pages, you'll get checklists, advice from those in the know, how much inventory to bring to a show, how to market yourself, how to find the best craft shows – and so much more. We have compiled information from some very reliable people who have found success, and we are including our opinions from the perspective of a buyer. Yes, I do consider myself somewhat of an expert!

You can make some serious cash selling your hand made items at craft fairs. It could even be a gold mine! But first, you need information, and we're here to give it to you!

YOUR PRODUCT

So you think you've got a great idea for something that would sell like wildfire. Maybe you do. However, just because you think it will sell doesn't necessarily mean it will. There are a number of factors to take into consideration when you decide you want to sell at craft fairs.

First, do your research about the product. Find out if there's a niche for it. Even though you might be absolutely crazy about one of your creations, this about your future customers? Will they like it as much as you?

It's easy to get attached to your work and think everyone will have the same warm fuzzy feelings about your products as you do. Think again. The biggest mistake crafters can make - is to make what they want to make and not what people want to buy. As with any new product or service, test marketing is important to any crafter's success.

How can you test market something if it's just little old you? There are many ways. For example, if you create jewelry, wear a piece when you are going someplace public. See if you can get some comments on your pieces. If you do, it's probably going to be a good seller, if not, just accept the fact that you might not have such a great idea after all.

If you are already a crafter who sells at craft shows, try putting new product out with your old product. The way it sells can tell you a few things. First, if it goes quickly, you can count of one of two possibilities: either you've priced it too low or it's a hot item.

Either option isn't such a bad thing. If you can sell at the price you've set and still make a profit, you will be making money although you could probably make more if you upped the asking price just a little. If it's a hot item, you know it's worth your time and effort to marketing vigorously.

Obviously, when choosing a product to make and sell, you have to take into consideration what it would cost to make the item and what you can realistically expect to sell it for. One part of your craft business should include finding a wholesale supplier for your craft supplies.

We have some great tips about finding cheap craft supplies in the next section.

Product quality is most important -- don't scrimp on materials as it is reflected in the final product. Also the majority of your sales will eventually be from repeat customers who are familiar with your work. You do not want to have a reputation of having poor quality. "Word of mouth can be your best and WORST advertising.'

Most people, however, already have a product that they have been making for pleasure or gift giving for some time that they have gotten good at producing. Let's face it, most people who start selling their handmade creations have already been crafting for years. Craft shows don't usually provide the lure of big bucks to the vendors.

People get into crafting because they love doing and have realized that all the time that they have been making stuff for people they know, they could SELL that same stuff to people they don't know.

So if you don't have a product, chances are, this type of money maker probably isn't for you. You can, however, find some really cute craft ideas online. See what's out there, make a couple items for yourself and see if anything really tickles your fancy.

If a craft item excites you, then let that passion grow until you just can't deny it anymore. That's when you should begin looking into selling your crafts. When a product is exciting, you'll know it. People will talk about it, ask you to make them some, and expect you to do it for free.

By all means, give away a few freebies. But when you start thinking to yourself something along the lines of, "I've made so many of these for people, I should be charging

them for it” maybe it’s time to figure out how to sell them yourself.

Making your product is so important. When you can buy your supplies cheaper than your competitor, you can either make more profit, or sell the item cheaper. How do you find cheaper supplies?

SAVE, SAVE, SAVE

Shop around for the best deal. Prices can vary greatly from vendor to vendor. Once you find a low-cost supplier, don’t stop there. Over time, prices change. It’s a good idea to always keep an eye out for another distributor who might have a lower price.

Buy wholesale and save big. Many supplier offer discounts to qualified buyers. Qualifications differ, but usually a Retail Tax ID number will suffice. You can get a business tax ID number by calling your local courthouse and going from there. Sometimes, your social security number will be your business ID number.

Once you have that identification number, ask suppliers if they offer wholesale discounts. Have them outline to you how you can qualify for this discount and don’t hesitate to take advantage of that discount.

Buying supplies in bulk can save you huge amounts of money. Of course, you’ll need to know what you’ll need, but buying more of your supplies at one time can save you big cash! When you are shopping for supplies, ask the vendor if quantity discounts apply and, if so, what the amount of savings would be.

Don’t be afraid to use recycled materials. You may be able to save quite a bit by using recycled woods, paints,

plastic, metal, and so much more. Of course, all your supplies cannot come from recycled materials, but you might be surprised at where you can cut costs if you give it some thought.

Of course, you should always check at discount stores for supplies. Many large chain stores offer comparable prices on certain supplies. If you intend to resell the product that you produce and you have a business tax ID number, you can avoid paying sales tax. This would entail talking to the store manager, but it is well worth it if you can save money.

Maybe you're afraid to start. That's understandable. There's a lot to consider when you take a leap like this. You don't want to make a mistake and fail – heck who can blame you? Not many people. The fear of failure is huge and can hold most people back when taking a drastic step in life.

Let's start this book out by looking at the most common mistakes a crafter makes when starting to sell their crafts.

TO ERR IS HUMAN – MISTAKES TO AVOID

We all make mistakes. It's part of being a human being. You are not perfect, and you will never be perfect. Still, the fear of erring can be huge – at times keeping you from doing what you know you really want to do.

Often, the most powerful weapon you have against failure is how to know what NOT to do before you begin. When talking about a crafting business, there are some mistakes that are made over and over again that can stop your small business before it even starts.

First and foremost, the novice seller will price their product too low in hopes of selling it quicker thus insuring success. Unfortunately, this has a backwards effect on the business. You end up working yourself to the bone to sell your product for just a small profit and saturate the market with your work.

Remember, you should not only make sure your pricing includes your materials, but there are other factors to work in as well. These include marketing (flyers, show feeds, traveling expenses, etc.) and your labor. After all, you want to make money and this IS your business. You should expect to be paid for your time.

You should have a solid business plan to refer to at all times. You don't need to hire a professional business planner, all you need is to have a well-thought out strategy as to how and where you will be selling your crafts.

Think about what shows you plan to attend and the costs associated with being at those shows along with pricing supplies and your marketing materials. When you think these things through and write them down before you start selling, you will be more apt to stay on track and keep you from over-extending yourself throughout the course of a year.

Of course, there are times when a business plan needs to be modified, so prepare for this as well. You may hit on an amazing product that sells like wildfire, and you will have to adapt to meet your market and customers. Look at your original business plan often and make changes as needed according to your needs.

Don't bite off more than you can chew. Starting off too big is a huge mistake that many beginning crafters make. Many will borrow thousands of dollars in anticipation of

being able to pay it back quickly. This very rarely happens, so keep your initial investment low and grow as your business does.

Buying the best of everything might seem like a good investment at first, but when the "salad days" come, those loan payments can break your business in a hurry.

On the same note, you should begin selling your crafts at local craft shows to begin with and move your way up to the top-rated shows. Local craft fairs will have more reasonable booth fees and increase your profit margin. Once you've succeeded in a local market, then you can look at the bigger shows.

Be wary, though of attending the wrong shows, especially if your craft is fine art. If people are paying out the nose for hamburgers and hot dogs, you would tend to think that they won't complain about the price of your high-end crafts. This is completely and totally wrong!

Fine crafts and artwork belong at shows where customers can appreciate the work involved. This show is not a street fair; it's more a showcase of professional artists.

Most people hate to make budgets. I know I do. This is mostly because they can be constraining and difficult to follow. Because they hate to even try to put a budget together, many people just don't.

A budget is not some elaborate financial statement that takes days to write. It's simply a way for you to tell your money what to do instead of your money telling you what it is going to do.

At the end of each month, plan next month's budget based on your performance. Start with minimum expenses, which are things you must have to function like show fees,

supplies, etc. Then work your way down the list to thing you would like to do if you make enough money.

When planning your budget, be sure to allow for savings that will get you through the lean times – and there will be some lean times. That amazing show you attended last year might not be as profitable this year. This can put a huge dent in your profits and expenses and make you upside down.

If you have funds available for emergencies, you will be able to stick it out through the times when you don't make enough money to meet expenses.

It's best to keep three to six months of operating expenses in savings. Sure, this could be a substantial amount, but having this type of savings readily available, in times of need, can mean saving your business.

Some people will like your product, and some people won't. It's a fact, so get used to it. There are all types of people out there, too. Not everyone will be nice when looking through your wares.

Two comments you can almost count on hearing at nearly all events are:

"I can get that for half the price at Wal-Mart."

And

"I'll just make it myself."

I have come up with some snappy comebacks specifically for these rude comments. You may choose to say them or think them, but they seem to work pretty well. Try:

"I can get that for half the price at Wal-Mart."

"Say Hi to the greeter for me"

And

"I'll just make it myself."

"But will you?"

Unfortunately, there are obnoxious people in the world and it seems many of them like to practice their offensive skills at craft shows. It's important that you not take any negative comments personally. Put very simply – Don't listen!

Seriously, if these people had the creativity, skills, and dedication that you do, they would be at home making their own crafts instead of making rude comments to you. Pay attention to construction criticism (such as adding a color), but do not beat yourself up because of comments from someone who has nothing else to do than harass crafters.

Be careful of following trends. You decided to go into the crafting business with a product that you love and are good at making. Too often, new crafters will see a fellow crafter sell their product like wildfire and think that they should follow suit with the same product at a different show.

Remember that trends come and go. Craft business owners who follow those trends come and go too. Of course, you should create a product that may be trendy in the interest of your business. If snowmen are "in" for the holiday season, create some to complement your other items, but never ever change your product line completely to follow the crowd.

Having a business means you will have to pay taxes. Like it or not, Uncle Sam will get his cut of your profits – and you need to plan for that. One of the number one reasons

for small business failure is poor tax planning. If you want to stay in business, plan for those taxes.

It's always best to have an accountant, but you can use QuickBooks or some other money management software to do your taxes. The main thing to remember is that when you make money, there will probably be taxes due. Don't wait until April 15th to try and find the money that will be due. Plan to have it on hand.

Keep a separate checking account for your business. Keep any tax savings in this account for easy transfer. Believe me, you'll be glad you have it there and won't have to worry when tax filing time comes.

Finally, don't spend too much on your new business. Do you really need a brand new trailer to haul your display and inventory from show to show? Go for the used trailer instead or buy a larger vehicle like a van.

The same goes for equipment and supplies. Used equipment does the same job at half the cost. This includes anything you invest for your booth like a canopy or cash register. Scout out the Internet for discount wholesalers for your supplies. There are plenty of places out there who can save you money on everything you need to make what you will sell.

Remember, you're in business to make money, not spend it!

When you start a business – and this will be a small business – there are many things to take into consideration. You will definitely need to figure out how to market your product, so you'll need to devise a marketing campaign. One unique part of an effective craft marketing campaign is telling your story.

MARKETING AND YOUR STORY

The definition of *craft* is "to make by hand", so it's only natural that buyers of crafts are interested in hearing the story behind the hands that make crafts. Every crafter has a tale about how they got started making and/or selling their particular product. These stories are not only interesting, but can also prove to be a powerful marketing tool for craftspeople.

So, what's your story? Of course you have one. Remember that what may not seem interesting to you may be very interesting to someone else. Here are a few questions to ask yourself when coming up with your story as a marketing tool.

- What initially sparked your interest in creating your craft?
- How did you learn your particular style of craftsmanship?
- Did anyone mentor or encourage you?
- Have you always "had a knack" for creating things?
- Do you do this as a full-time job?
- What else do you do besides crafts?
- Did you just begin selling your crafts? If so, what made you decide to start your business?

Ask yourself these and similar questions that someone might want to know about you. Over time, you will get a feel for the questions that customers ask over and over. If you

pay attention to your clientele, your story will evolve quite well on its own.

What's the best way to tell your story? This is where marketing comes in. No one way is any better than another, but you might consider the following tips.

When you are selling at craft shows, be sure to always greet browsers. Often, people who may be interested in buying your products will eventually ask about the story behind your crafts or yourself. This is when you tell your tale!

Not all of us are natural salespeople, but after you tell your story several times, it will get much easier. You're really just telling a story about you and what you enjoy. Remember, no one knows your products like you, so you are the best salesman for your crafts!

If you have decided to create a web site for your crafts, be sure to include a section titled "About the Crafter" with a page that tells your story. If your craft itself has some type of unique history, tell this part of the story as well.

You can also include pictures of you in your workshop/work area. This will help to bring the customer a little closer to you. Be creative and remember that sharing your story online is only a little different than sharing it in person.

If you don't have a website, consider a creating a blog. There are tons of free places out there where you can post an online diary or a blog (short for web log). This is an online diary of sorts, but many businesses use it to showcase their products/services.

One of the most well-known sites that offer blog space along with so much more is "My Space" (www.myspace.com). On My Space, you can share pictures, information about you and your craft, send and receive

messages, even sell your product. It's free to sign up and can be very valuable in the end when it comes to selling your work.

Always, always include any web address you want to direct customers to on any business cards, flyers, or other advertising that you might do. It does no good to have these addresses if you aren't going to use them!

Use your personal computer and print up a simple one or two page flyer with a few pictures of your product along with pricing information and the story behind you and your crafts. Have these readily available when you have a booth at a craft show or anyplace someone might have interested in your work.

Be creative with this and make these fliers eye-catching and interesting. You can generally do this quite cheaply on your own printer, but you can also get some good results going to a discount office supply store such as Office Depot or Staples.

It's imperative, again, that you include all pertinent contact information on these fliers and don't hesitate to hand them out every chance you get. If you find yourself with a small mail order business, put these in all packages that you send out. Include a part on the flier that offers a discount (such as free shipping or 10 percent off purchase) when the flier is mentioned.

When it comes to a small craft business, really the best place for you to sell your product is at craft shows and fairs. A good marketing plan for a business would normally include advertising in various places such as the local newspaper or radio station. But it's a bit different with a craft business.

Because of the nature of your business, doing advertising like this probably won't help you sell your wares.

You shouldn't really spend the money unless it's on an occasional classified ad, and we wouldn't even suggest that.

In fact, there are many opportunities for you to market your product at little or no expense. There are all types of buyers out there who are interested in buying crafts. Consider some of the following overlooked, but lucrative marketing opportunities:

1. Home Parties/ Private Showings -- These are well-suited to crafters who want to sell their work on weekends or weeknights. Offering a "Feel Free to Come Anytime All Afternoon and Bring a Friend" approach is irresistible.

Think about sending attention-getting invitations to friends, family and acquaintances on fluorescent paper, providing information sheets that entice attendees to host parties in the future and packaging products in seasonally decorated gift boxes or bags.

2. Holiday House Boutiques -- Holiday house boutiques involving special craft shows ordinarily offered twice a year (Christmas and spring) offer opportunities for those who want to work part-time.

Thousands of people are drawn to these types of boutiques, which are held in all types of locations from school gymnasiums to historical houses.

3. Catalogs -- Last year American shoppers spent more than \$1.5 billion on mail-order merchandise from catalogs. We buy more products by mail than consumers in any other country in the world. As one might expect, crafts are big sellers in this arena.

Approach a catalog buyer whose products are in a

similar category or type as yours. Be prepared to pay for your supplies and labor up-front, and show that you will be able to meet the demand for catalog sales.

4. Internet Stores – Hundreds of thousands of people are online shopping every day. Don't miss out on their business. This is where a website or blog comes in extremely handy! Be sure they can find you by registering with Google Keywords and tell everyone you know about your website and products.
5. School – Think about where your child attends school. Will they let you put your product out in the teacher's lounge with an order sheet? It never hurts to ask. Teachers are notorious for loving hand-crafted items. This can be a wonderful place to make a huge amount of money and all you have to do is provide the product!
6. Work – Surely you know someone who works. Ask your husband, your mother, your best friend, your sister, your brother if their place of employment would be willing to have your crafts displayed in their employee lounge. Just like having them at a school, many people who have careers have little time to shop for the crafts that they love. Bring it to them!

As a note here, if you have a product that fits a certain business niche, concentrate on those places. Do you make really cute cell phone holders? Talk to the storefront for your cell phone company and ask if you can place a small table in their showroom. Figure out where your product will fit and try to put it front of the customer's eye.

7. Small Shops – Do you live in a high tourist area? Do they have many "touristy" type shops and boutiques that attract travelers? Ask if you can give them a portion of sales in exchange for a showcase for your

product.

Tourists are much more eager to part with their money while on vacation. There's no reason why their money shouldn't come to you!

8. Hospital Gift Shops – These venues are especially profitable if you have a craft that would fit the niche that the hospital fills. These would include baby gifts, get well gifts, and baskets filled with items like magazines, crossword puzzles, and ways to pass the time.

Print up business cards and give them to everyone you see. This can seriously be the most profitable way for you to show people you are serious about your business and draw them to your website (if you have one)!

Attach a business card to every single item you produce. Some people will throw them away and never look at them, but others will keep that card and possibly be repeat customers.

You don't necessarily have to have your business cards printed up professionally. While they will look better, you can still use your home computer and printer to create business cards that express the essence of you and your crafts.

Buy pre-cut cards at any discount store like Wal-Mart or Office Depot, and use the templates that are provided by the company who provides these blank pages. The most popular producer is Avery. You can visit their website at www.avery.com and find templates that will print up the cards easily and quickly.

Of course, being at craft shows is the best marketing strategy out there for new craft businesses. You have a booth; you need to concentrate on making that booth attractive to potential buyers.

Think in terms of visibility. Remember that you want to draw people to your table. If you can get them to stop and browse, this will increase your chance of a sale, and that is, after all, the idea.

If you lay all your items flat on a table, many people will walk right on by. You need to get some items up and more visible. Small items could fill a nice basket and then secure one item to the front of the basket.

Wire racks can be used, the sort sold for use in kitchens look nice and work well. Small boxes, in varying heights under the table covers make excellent upward displays. All the time you are working on this, think view. Your booth should provide ease of view to the customer and be pleasing to the eye.

Once the basic setup is decided come table covers. An exception here would be if you are not using tables and have racks set up to hang all your items. Then think backdrops if needed.

Covers or backdrops should somehow reflect what you are selling. Some suggestions include lace, muslin, burlap and flannel, even silk scarves. Your choices are as endless as the items you are selling.

Prices need to be clearly in view. Display should be kept neat and orderly. If an item sells, replace it if you have extra inventory left. Be attentive and friendly and lastly, have fun!

Craft fairs and shows are truly the best place for a new craft business to be. Why?

You are paid in cash and you get to meet your customers face to face. You can do market research for new products and talk to other people to see what is a good seller for them and why. Plus, you get to travel!

There are many, many things to keep in mind when attending. While we've already touched on some aspects of your booth design that apply to marketing, we're about to cover a huge amount of information regarding attending craft fairs and maximizing your presence there.

FIND THE BEST SHOWS

There are times of the year when it seems like you hear about craft show after craft show. If you wanted to, you could attend every single one of them and end up like a stress doll that has been squeezed one too many times. Of course, that's just a bad business decision. What you need to do is pick and choose where you will go, and that involves some very specific criteria.

Of course, nothing can guarantee a great show, there are some things to take into account that will increase the likelihood of your finding and having a good craft show.

First and foremost, identify your own personal market. Apply for shows that fit with your product. Different products sell better at different types of events. As we've mentioned before, if you have high-end artwork, don't try to sell at a local show. You'll sell more products at a quality event, so don't waste your money. If you sell handmade Christmas ornaments, don't try to sell them at a craft fair in July.

Figure out where your product niche is and go for the shows that best fit your needs. Crafting magazines list

hundreds of opportunities for crafters to attend events. Also, search the Internet and ask people who attend craft fairs which ones they like the best.

Ask other crafters what shows they go to. Some of the greatest shows are the ones that aren't advertised big but those which your colleagues attend too. Once you attend your first craft fair, the opportunities for making contacts with people just like you have just begun. Talk to them and keep in touch. Help them and they will help you.

As we've said before, the Internet has a wealth of information about craft shows, events, fairs, and festivals. Take advantage of these resources to find different marketing for your products.

There are many magazines and publications that are helpful in rating and reviewing craft-related events. It's a good idea for a crafter with a business to have a subscription to one or two of these magazines so you can use them as a tool when searching for shows to attend.

Call local and area Chambers of Commerce to see if there are any craft fairs in your area that are held annually. Ask if they will be sponsoring any events where crafts are sold. This can include Fourth of July celebrations, Memorial Day events or local festivals. Also, check with area craft stores like Hobby Lobby. They will most likely know about an event happening close by that you can attend.

Once you've identified a few shows you want to go to, there are some steps you will need to go through before you can actually show up and begin collecting your money.

GETTING THERE IS HALF THE BATTLE

You heard about a great craft show in your town that you want to attend. What do you do next? The following steps apply for local shows as well as out of town shows.

First, contact the host/promoter and request an application for a booth. Be sure you ask how much the booth will cost and what is provided with that fee.

For some small, local shows, you won't have to fill out an application, but for some of the bigger ones, you'll not only have the application, but you'll also have to provide a sample of your product for the hosts to assess in terms of sellability.

Believe it or not, for some shows, HOW you fill out your application means just as much as what you are selling. Take note of the following suggestions for your craft show application:

- Read all of the fine print before starting.
- Complete the application form in its entirety. For very popular shows, promoters use a simple rule to make the first cuts from possible vendors: any omitted information automatically disqualifies the application.
- Be sure to meet all deadlines.
- Some shows require applications more than a year in advance; other shows ask for applications only a few months in advance. Know what requirements the shows of your choice ask for.
- If at all possible, type up your applications. If this is not possible, be sure that the application is very clear and readable.

- If you need special arrangements, be sure to negotiate these up front. Do you need electricity or special lighting or special access? Do you prefer to have a particular location or table arrangement? Will your displays conform to the show's expectations, requirements and limitations?
- If you will be doing demonstrations, will all your equipment and tools meet show requirements or not? Do you need to be on a corner?
- Consider whether or not this is a juried show? A juried show is one that will have items judged in terms of their uniqueness and quality. Sometimes, juried shows will charge a fee of \$5 to \$50 for this service or requirement.
- Are there additional costs besides the booth rental, such as required advertising expenses, parking fees, electricity fees, tables and chairs, insurance requirements, and the like? This can be important in terms of budgeting.
- Find out if there are there any restrictions as to the type of merchandise allowed, such as a requirement that all merchandise be hand-crafted by the artist.
- Some craft shows provide promotional items to their exhibitors including brochures and/or postcards. This can be a HUGE benefit to you.
- A timetable is very important to know prior to showing up at the event site. Know what time you can begin setting up your booth, when you have to be ready and fully set up in your booth, and what time you can take down your booth

- If you must provide slides or pictures to the event promoter, be sure each one is clearly labeled and numbered. It should be obvious to anyone not familiar with you, your slides and your work, which way is up, so to speak

After you fill out your application, fair promoters may ask for a deposit on your booth. If you are approved, the deposit will be applied to your booth rental. If you are not approved, the deposit will be refunded. Generally, the remainder of the fee will be due upon your acceptance into the show.

Include this deposit with your application. Deposits are usually accepted in the form of check or money order. **DO NOT SEND CASH!** Too many things can happen with cold, hard, green stuff. Have record of what you've paid and when you've paid it.

You will need to think about where you will stay while at the show. Many craft shows are multiple day events. Even if they aren't, they usually start early, so it's a good idea to get to the location a day ahead of time to allow yourself the freedom to take your time getting set up.

Call for hotels and secure the best rate you can. Many professional crafters have their own recreational vehicles that provide lodging as well as storage for your product and supplies.

You will need to make sure you have enough inventory on hand for the show. We'll cover this subject specifically in a separate chapter, but it's important to have enough products to sell.

Plan for your booth display and have all items ready for transport. It might help for you to draw out how you want your booth to look and then plan way ahead of time to make

sure you have what it takes to make that vision become reality. Do a dress rehearsal if you have to.

It might help to devise a checklist for you to refer to often when planning to attend a craft show. On your checklist, detail what needs to be accomplished and when it will need to be completed. Keep it at hand at all times. Pre-planning is a must to insure less stressful and more productive ventures!

Once you get to the show, you'll need to check in with the promoter and begin setting up your space. This is where we feel the need to tell you not only how to design your booth space, but how to be a good neighbor at the show as well.

SETTING UP AND FLYING RIGHT

Your booth space is your storefront at the craft show. How you set up your space can have a huge impact on sales. You want to convey an inviting, professional, and attractive look.

If you have the space, it's a good idea to set up your display cases or tables in an "L" shape, where people can have a sense of "walking into" your temporary store, or an "interior box" where people can walk all the way around your displays.

With any set-up, be very aware of "traffic flow" – how will your customers maneuver around your space, so they are comfortable, and can comfortably examine your wares. The trick is to make your booth, functional for your customers to be able to view everything and reach everything without fear of breaking something, or causing something to fall.

Most spaces at craft shows vary from 8'x5' to 10'x10' for single spaces. What you now need to do is find an area where you can mark off 8'x5'. This will help you plan how to set up the space you've been given. You can use something as simple as cans for the corners of your space, but don't trip on them or move them around. You can also use masking tape on your floor or carpet.

Decide whether or not you want everything on a table or if you want to give your display some height. We cannot stress enough that you should not make your display boring by just throwing some items on a table and sitting back to collect the money. Remember that your customer's eyes will wander and you want to be able to keep them engaged while browsing your product.

There are many ways for you to get some height to your display.

You can buy plastic take-apart shelves that will look good and be easy to carry. This will give you some heights and if your items will work on a shelf that will be great.

If you need a back on the shelf you can get a piece of plywood cut to fit and then connect it to the shelf so that it will not fall. If the items that you might want to lean on the backing are light weight you can use a piece of fabric cut to fit and place under the bottom to make it tight.

Another way to acquire height is to have a small peg board made to fit on the ends of the table, screens in frames, mesh wire in frames or metal grids. What ever you use you will want to make it safe so that it will not fall over onto your customer.

There are so many ways to make heights and it really depends on your crafts as to what you want and how you want to display these items. You can even go to the boxes

that you carry your items in and place them on the table to make a riser and then you will want to cover this with fabric.

There is one very important thing to remember here. Most craft shows will want you to look professional and cover your table to the floor all the way around. You can buy professional covers made for your table or you can get very reasonable fabric to cover your table with.

You will have to make sure that you do not have anything on the floor to trip your customer. If you choose a plain color of fabric you will not have problems with your items showing up. Some people even use plain white sheets with the ends folded in so that the sides also look professional.

Now that you have a table set up, see if this is how you want your items to show. You will play around with this at several shows before you are really happy with your set up and even then you will keep changing as your craft changes.

Always keep in mind that you can always change the way that you display your items. You may find ways that others use to show off their items that might work for you also and choose to do something similar.

If you try a set up at home first you will have an idea of how much space you will need and how to set it up when you arrive at the show location. Practice at home with your set up and then after you have your space set up the way that you think you want it, leave the room and rest awhile from it.

Now come back into the area with a fresh view and think of yourself as the customer. How does your space look to you now? Are you happy with your idea or is it lacking something? You usually do not have the time to do all of the playing around when you arrive to set up.

There are several large items that you need to set on the floor. Now what do you do? Move your table around (on the side or back of the area) and place the items where you want them on the floor.

This is the fun part, while you are at home and under no pressure to hurry and set up. With practice at home you will be more relaxed when you arrive at the location of the craft show.

There are so many different ways to set up your booth that working it out at home first is really a must. Remember, that you can always change things around and your set up is not set in stone.

Don't over-fill your booth. Too many items are distracting to potential customers. Keep some product back to re-stock – especially if you are at a multiple day show.

If you find a crafter close that you become friends with you can also ask for suggestions. Most of the crafters will be more than happy to help each other, all you have to do is ask.

If you have a slow period during the craft show you can recheck your set up. You need to remember that everything will need to fit into your vehicle and that is another place that you may want to practice.

At most craft shows, a minimum of equipment is provided for your use – a table and 2 chairs. Sometimes, you will be given nothing at all.

Most standard tables are lower to the ground than optimum. You can get PCV pipe at a local hardware store, in a width that will slip over the legs of the table.

You can cut pieces in 1 foot or 1 ½" foot lengths, and raise your tables before you set up. In this way, your

customers won't get sore backs and have to stand in uncomfortable positions while viewing your merchandise.

Don't forget to bring a couple of chairs, if these are not provided. Lawn chairs are perfectly acceptable and they fold up making them easy to transport and store.

When planning your original display or improving on an existing display always keep in mind your product as well as the image you wish to project to your potential customers.

Everything must be consistent with your business image or your customers will get confused. Are you country, Victorian, or High Tech? Be sure your image is cohesive; this includes the color and texture of your display, the lettering and material of your signs and even down to the type of promotional material, your business cards and flyer.

Remember the purpose of a great display is --- TO SELL PRODUCT! If a prop does nothing to enhance the product and encourage sales then don't spend the time, energy and money on it.

Use the KISS principle when creating your booth --- KEEP IT SIMPLE SILLY! The amount of time and money you spend on your booth should be in direct proportion to the number of shows you plan to do in a year.

Part of your booth planning should include a credit card machine. Credit cards are the common currency of shows and fairs, and if you don't accept them, you're going to lose sales to vendors who do.

You also face the risks of dealing with bounced checks from strangers who may be hard to track down after the show. Especially if you're selling work priced in the hundreds of dollars, credit cards are a must.

It is a huge advantage when you accept credit cards. If you are just getting started, you may not be able to do this at first, but getting a merchant credit card set-up for your business should be an item high on your list.

When accepting checks, be sure to get the person's Driver's License number and their phone number. Verify that the preprinted address on the check is the current address.

Don't accept starter checks -- those checks people get when they open a bank account, and which don't have preprinted address/phone information on them.

Checks are numbered consecutively. For those with a number less than 300, you should be cautious in accepting these. You are a business, and you owe it to yourself to be cautious – even if a person gets upset with you.

Have a sign-up box for a free giveaway. Not only does this drive traffic to your booth, but it helps you build your mailing list. Shows are a great way to develop your customer database.

Try putting a fishbowl on your table and offering people a chance to win something in return for giving you their contact information or business cards. Giving away promotional items with your company's name and logo works, too.

This way, you can send out postcards inviting prospects to your next show or providing them with a catalog or link to your website.

Don't forget to collect e-mail addresses, too! It's a lot cheaper to send out 100 e-mail messages than it is to pay for paper and postage.

Make your display cases, if you use these, portable. There are many easy-to-assemble systems you can

purchase through a fixture/display store, catalog or on-line business.

If you will be outside and need a tent, you can get a great 10' x 10' or similar sized tent at a reasonable price at many discount stores, like Sam's or Costco's, or on-line. These tents are compact, and pack up into a very manageable bundle.

It's useful to have panels on each side that can roll up or down, depending on the weather. Determine how well the tent will perform in wet weather and in high winds. Determine if you can hang things from the tent's frame, or if you will need to set up separate display panels.

Be sure you practice assembling and disassembling the tent prior to the show. Determine if it will take one person or more than one person to do this.

By all means, include a sign with all of your pertinent information. This information should include your business name and location along with a phone number and website.

Signs should generate interest and help sell your products. Don't use "superlatives" like *best*, *most*, *cheapest*, *largest* and the like. In as few words as possible, tell the customer how your product will solve his or her problem, or meet his or her needs. Be positive and diplomatic in your wording. Writing "unruly kids will be sold as slaves" makes the point much better than "No Kids".

Explain that which is not obvious. What's it made of? When using the product, what must be avoided – such as getting it wet? Are there any disclaimers or conditions? What are the advantages of your product over others?

Use colors, typefaces, and images on your sign which have the same feel as your merchandise. Don't overdo your signage, so that the signs overwhelm your inventory.

Be sure you have a clear, prominent sign that includes the name of your business. If your booths are numbered, this number should appear on the sign.

Now that you have your area set up, did you remember that you will want to sit down and have room for a money box or something to keep your money in? To start with you can buy small cash boxes.

You will not want to be fumbling around in a shoe box or cigar box like you may have done at a garage sale. Later you may want to buy a small cash register. If you use a money box, you will want to keep it away from hands so you may want to get a box fixed to hide your money box in.

Do not forget that you will need to have bags on hand for your items. Your customers can not carry everything around and if they do not have bags you will not be able to tell if they bought the items or not. If your item is too large for a bag you may want to place a bright sticker on the sold items so that you know that it was purchased.

There are many times that a person will get discouraged, but keep in mind that you need to do more than one or two shows to really know if craft show selling is for you or not.

Spring shows are a good place to start as they are slower than the fall shows, but this is where you can get discouraged since the sales are lower. Remember, at this point you are practicing.

Summer shows are mostly outdoors. And then you have one day shows to four day mall shows. Do only what you feel that you can do and do not extend yourself too far.

There are certain items of etiquette that need to be addressed for both you and your fellow crafters. When attending craft shows, there are some simple things to keep

in mind that will make you a better neighbor. Remember that there are others at the event who are there, like you, to make money. To make the best of things you should try to acknowledge the needs and rights of your fellow crafters.

The number one rule is to stay within your allotted space. If your display needs that extra "couple of inches", buy it from the promoters before the event. Often you will need to purchase a "double" booth or at least an additional half space.

Check with the show promoter to see what options you have regarding measurements. If you do not want to incur that added expense, you may need to redesign your display so that it will fit in the space you purchase.

Whatever you do, do not extend your display into your neighbor's space! The quickest way to make an enemy at a show is to steal space from a fellow exhibitor. And it is stealing. When you put your display into another crafter's booth, you are taking space that someone else has paid for, which is theft, not to mention, rude.

Design your booth in a way that makes it accessible without infringing on your neighbor. While this relates to the guideline above, it is actually a little different.

Sometimes, a display layout may need to be accessible on two sides. In most cases this would require a corner or end spot, and they cost more too. Check with the folks in charge of your event.

If you are side by side with two other exhibitors, your booth will only be accessible from the front. Don't expect your neighbor to redesign their booth so customers can get to an extra side on yours.

By all means, talk to fellow exhibitors, but don't be a pest. Talking to other crafters is a great way to network and

make new friends. But don't stand around talking if a customer walks in.

Remember, they are there for the same reason you are – to make money. Just like you, they have less of a chance to make a sale if someone is continually visiting or blocking customers from viewing their product.

Make time to set up before the show begins. Setting up your booth takes time – more for some than others. Whether it takes you a few minutes or several hours, make sure you allot enough time to finish before customers arrive.

Boxes blocking aisles keep customers from visiting other booths. Even if you are not in the aisles, setting up a display in your space while the show is open distracts customers – not only from you, but from the adjacent booths as well. This can hurt sales – for everyone!

Be acutely aware that there are others attending craft events beside yourself. Be courteous to fellow craftspeople and keep in mind that what may work best for you may infringe upon other exhibitors.

Too many negative happenings can make enemies of your fellow craftspeople, or even get you banned from a show. By getting along with others, you can sometimes make important contacts and better yet, friends for life!

So what do you do once you're at the craft show? Believe it or not, so much more than just sit there and wait for buyers!

YOU'VE ARRIVED

Getting to the show and setting up is only half the battle. There's so much more involved in making this show your best show.

We should first tell you that, unless absolutely unavoidable, you should never take on selling at a craft show by yourself. While shows can be exciting and profitable, they can also be physically and emotionally exhausting.

That's why it's important to bring along someone to help you work the booth and deal with customers. This will also give you a chance to get up and go to the bathroom and grab a hotdog or something to drink without losing sales.

Ask a friend or family member to go with you. Most will be willing – especially if they share the same love of handcrafted items that you do. Don't make them pay for anything – if at all possible. That's just one perk. Perhaps you can offer them a percentage of the profits for those who are reluctant to help you out.

If you decide to go it alone, realize that your booth will be unmanned for a certain amount of time. If you must walk away – even for a short time, try to get one of the neighboring booths to help you out. And, by all means, offer the same back to them.

Probably the first thing you should do upon arrival and completion of set-up is to walk the show. See what other vendors are offering and what they are charging. Ask them about their work, introduce yourself as a fellow craftsperson, and take an interest in their booth.

This is a perfect time to take note of how their booths are set up, note what they are doing to attract customers, and mimic their demeanor, if it seems like it would help you sell yourself. Consider what they've done and how they've done it – especially if they're selling something similar to what you have available yourself.

There are two things that vendors at craft shows do that could hinder sales. Because your booth space is your

showroom, you need to project a professional image. That includes curbing certain behaviors.

Many craft shows these days ban smoking while in attendance – both by vendors and attendees. Even if smoking isn't banned, it's a really bad idea to smoke while in your booth space, especially if you are selling clothing or items where smoke smell might linger.

Since it's not advisable to attend a craft show to sell your product alone, tell your partner you are taking a break, and walk away from your booth – far away. Smoking can run off potential buyers quicker than body odor!

Though much less likely to offend than smoking, eating while in your booth is also a chancy behavior. You really should avoid eating in front of customers. When you are engaging in behaviors like eating, it seems to customers that you are not really interested in selling your crafts and they will simply walk away.

Greet everyone who stops by to look, but don't be pushy. Be friendly, but don't feel you have to sell your crafts unless what you've made has a unique feature that isn't readily visible. Being pushy can drive away a potential customer quite quickly.

At the very least, make sure your display table is clean and attractive and that your products are well displayed with prices clearly marked. Some people string lights in their booths and display color photos of their work to spice things up a bit. Still others will play some type of music which can relax a customer and make them more apt to buy.

You're a crafter, so take this opportunity to build your inventory. There will possibly be a lot of downtime while you're at the show, so bring along your supplies and continue making your crafts while you're selling.

People like to see a craftsperson creating artwork in his booth, not just selling it. While this isn't always possible, it's a crowd-pleasing idea that works well for jewelry makers, woodworkers, quilters and other craftspeople. Show customers that you know what you are doing and that you love it enough to continue even when you could be relaxing.

Making crafts while in your booth serves a dual purpose: you show them you love your work, but you are also building your inventory. In fact, how much inventory to bring along to a show is probably the biggest question for new crafters.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

A question that is often asked by crafters who are just starting out on the craft show scene is "How much inventory should I bring to a show?". Since empty space in a booth will hinder your sales dramatically, the obvious answer is to bring more than you intend to sell.

But how do you calculate how much you will sell? Of course, it is impossible to answer this question with 100% accuracy, but there are a few guidelines to follow to ensure you have enough inventory for an event.

First, if the event you will be attending is not brand new, talk to other craftspeople who have attended the show in previous years. Try to get an idea of how many customers normally attend the show. The show promoters can also help you out with this question.

Also ask them some of the following questions:

- Were the customers a serious-buying crowd in the past?

- What types of products seem to sell the best at the show?
- How many people typically attend the event?
- What types of advertising do they use to promote the event?
- What is the average sale?
- How many crafters are repeat vendor?

If you expect a large number of buying customers at the show, then you should plan on creating more products for the event well in advance. This advice, though, depends on whether or not you've attended the event before along with your experience at craft fairs.

After taking into account the experiences of other craftspeople as well as yourself, assess the things you already know about your product line. What are your best sellers?

If this will be your first time selling crafts, ask yourself what the items are that your family and friends like best. Do you have any seasonal or holiday items that correspond to the season the show is held? You should always bring an excess of these items to a show.

While there are no easy answers to the question of inventory, a good rule-of-thumb is to bring as much as you can possibly carry to an event. However, if your crafts are small and lightweight, this is much easier to accomplish than if you carry large, harder to transport items.

So if your products are very large, concentrate on bringing as many of your most popular products as you can.

Twice the amount of inventory as you expect to sell is considered a safe number.

Remember, a booth which is scarce of products will also be scarce of customers! You can always bring home what you do not sell, but craft shows have a very impulse-buying atmosphere, so you should always be prepared to have enough inventory so that you do not sell out of anything.

Speaking of inventory, it's important to have an organizational system so you can easily tell what you have at any given time. This is especially true if you have themed merchandise. If you run out of nursing plaques and you only have 2 left, you want to know this right away when you have an RN and her friend waiting for theirs.

The best way to organize your merchandise and all the other things you need to bring is to sort them into similarly sized, easily carried, bins. You can get some great bins with lids at discount stores and hardware stores.

Organize your inventory into bins by section or type, so that you can easily put up a section, and then take it down and store it.

Have separate bins for administrative materials (sales forms, staplers, tape, handouts) and for utility items (extension cords, table risers, table covers, display pieces).

Label these bins with peel off mailing labels. Make those labels very specific so there's no doubt what's inside.

Another huge issue with new crafters is how to price their product. If you price it too low, you lose profit. If you price it too high, it won't sell. How do you figure out that happy medium?

IS THE PRICE RIGHT?

Deciding how much to charge for your crafts is an important decision. While ultimately you must decide what your products are worth, there are a few things you can consider that will help.

First, determine how much you or your employee will be paid per hour to produce products. Multiply this hourly rate by the number of hours a week that will be spent producing crafts. Write down this figure. This is your weekly cost of labor. For example, if you need to make \$10 per hour, working 40 hours per week the weekly cost of labor would be \$400.

Then, determine how many products one person can produce in one week. Calculate the total cost-of-supplies needed to make one finished product.

Multiply the cost of supplies-per-piece by the number of products produced in a week. If your cost of materials per piece is \$1 and you can produce 100 products a week, the figure would be \$100. Add this figure to your weekly labor costs. (In our example here that would be $\$400 + \$100 = \$500$)

Divide this figure by the number of products produced in a week. So \$500 labor/materials divided by 100 finished products a week would be \$5.00 per piece. If you will be wholesaling your products, multiply this number by two which would give you a retail price of \$10 per product.

Compare this cost to similar products on the market. If your price is more than similar products, you may need to reduce it by cutting hourly price, finding less expensive supplies or by increasing your production time. If your price is significantly less than similar products, you may want to consider raising your price.

Now, this might sound awfully complicated to the novice crafter, but it is a great way to figure out what price

range your product will sell in so that you will be able to make a profit. Of course, supply and demand will also come into play, but it's a good place to start!

This equation does not take into account any expenses other than labor and materials. You can figure in weekly costs of any other business expenses that you may have and then add it to the weekly labor and material costs.

When considering supply costs, remember that one piece will not use an entire supply unit. For instance, an 8 ounce bottle of glue might make a hundred pieces of inventory. In this case, calculate how many pieces can be produced from a supply and divide by the cost of the supply.

We can't stress enough the fact that you should do your homework before mass-producing any items at all. That means attending craft fairs and seeing what similar products are selling for from different vendors.

Don't be afraid to ask questions, but expect to be met with a less than enthusiastic answer. After all, crafters are in the business of making money and might not want to share their secrets. If they do, however, soak in every word and use it to your advantage.

When you're selling your crafts, check with the promoter to see if you're allowed to offer discounts. Some fairs prohibit the allowance for clearance sales or percentage-off sales. If they let you do these types of promotions, by all means, give it a shot!

This is a great way to get rid of unwanted or unsold inventory from past shows. Plus, people love a bargain. It's a proven marketing ploy – even from the big stores. Advertise an item as marked down or on sale, and people will buy it.

However, remember that you are selling your handmade items. It's one thing for a big department store to mark down a name brand item. It's an entirely different thing for you to say something along the lines of "It cost me \$.50 to make this item, it was priced at \$5.00, but YOU can have it for just \$3.00".

There will be some people who will buy into this philosophy. It's simple psychology. But don't expect it every single time.

There are some things you shouldn't be caught without when selling at a craft fair.

THE ACCESSORIES MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

So many variables exist when you are exhibiting at a craft show. Bad weather can come, you can find yourself lost in unfamiliar country, car troubles, cash shortages, problems with your displays – all are pitfalls that can happen – and all are what you should be prepared for.

If you plan on traveling to many craft shows, problems are inevitable. We have come up with a list of things that can help you be prepared for many of the woes that may come your way in your crafting adventures.

Always carry a roll of duct tape with you. There's a reason why NASCAR calls it 200 mile an hour tape. Duct tape is great for so many purposes. It can help hold up displays, signage and even repair a damaged canopy. It's inexpensive and small enough to bring without a hassle. Keep a few rolls on hand for all those little repair needs that may arise.

Always have a cell phone on you. In this day and age, a cell phone seems to be normality, but when you are a crafter at a remote site where a telephone is not readily available, you'll be glad you have a cell phone on you.

It's no fun having mechanical problems in the middle of the night in an unfamiliar town. A cell phone can help you find assistance if you need it. Not to mention other things like when you are running late, being able to notify show officials and your hotel as to when you will be arriving.

We are of the opinion that cell phones were invented for emergencies initially and then blew into a huge market. Now they are considered essential, but even if you don't feel the same way, a small investment into a pre-paid phone will pay off in the long run!

Don't leave behind the tools! Screwdrivers, a hammer, scissors, pliers and even a cordless drill can be very handy in unexpected situations. You never know when you'll need to tighten a leg on a table or drive a stake into the ground at an outdoor event. Keep all your tools in an easily accessible place for when you need them.

Cub Scouts believe in being prepared. So do we. You never know when something will happen. In these cases, it's good to have a well-stocked first-aid kit readily available.

This should include not only bandages and antiseptics, but things like aspirin and antacids. They might seem like little things until you need them. Believe me, it's no fun walking booth to booth at a crowded show asking other exhibitors if you can buy an aspirin from them when you have a splitting headache!

Even when you're not at a craft show, you should always have a list of important numbers on you at all times. This includes more than just phone numbers, too.

The important numbers include your vehicle license number, the phone number to the show officials, the number to the hotel where you will be staying and the number to your auto insurance carrier are all important numbers to keep in a handy spot.

You may be late to a show and need to let officials and your hotel know that you will be arriving late. You may have an accident and need to contact your insurance agent. It's very helpful to keep these numbers easy to reference ahead of time in the event of an emergency instead of having to find the information in a confused rush.

Also have on hand emergency contact numbers in the event that anything should happen to you. Write this information down too. Keep in close by with a note on it in bold writing that states "In The Event of an Emergency..."

Unfortunately, in this day and age, you need to address the issue of security while you're at the show. You don't want your hard work to go to waste because of a thief.

PLAYING IT SAFE

Although crime has been around since the dawn of man, there's no reason why you have to make yourself an easy target for the next criminal. Thieves WILL target craft fairs in anticipation of naïve people who are unusually trustworthy.

How can you protect yourself, your money, and your inventory? Consider these easy tips.

- Keep your money on your person. Don't have a money box, or bag you "hide" in your booth.

- Be especially alert at set-up and break-down when there is a lot of commotion.
- Jewelers with gold and precious stones: You should have at least one or more additional people with you at shows. If you feel you are being cased during a show, alert the staff.
- Trust your instincts.
- Consider using dummy bags to carry your merchandise or money in.
- Don't register in your hotel under your show name.
- Don't take a first floor hotel room, or a room near the elevator or stairs.
- Fill up with gas the last morning of the show so that when you leave, you will go far before having to stop.
- Keep a disposal camera in your booth, and take a picture of someone you think is casing your booth. Bad guys don't want to be seen and remembered.
- During daily set-up and take-down, always keep your merchandise on your person or securely locked to an immovable object.
- Don't give anyone an opportunity to take what is rightfully yours.
- Accept Credit Cards, thereby reducing carrying a lot of cash.
- Be careful about hiring non-show people who happen to be around at set-up and offer to help you for a

twenty.

- We always recommend removing your work from your booth at night even though most shows provide overnight security.
- Don't leave tempting items in your booth overnight: cameras, radios, briefcases, etc.
- Lock your vehicle! Remember to lock the back and side doors of your parked trucks and vans.

Once the craft fair ends, what do you do next?
Actually, the answer is – A LOT!

THE HONEYMOON IS OVER

The craft fair ends and you're ready to go home. What should you do first? It really doesn't matter at this point. Well, you should tear down your booth, pack up your inventory, and get "out of Dodge". But other than that, what should you do?

The first piece of advice we can offer is to reflect. Think about what happened during the show. Did you have a lot of lookers and not a lot of buyers? Maybe your item was priced too high. Perhaps it wasn't displayed in a tasteful way.

Did you run out of product too quickly? While it's a great feeling to sell out after the first day, it's also a sinking feeling to realize that if you would have had more inventory, you could have made that much more money. Think about how much you brought to the show and how you can change that for the next show.

Count your money! Before you move on to the next show, sit down and figure out how much you made on the last one. For example, if you spend \$1,000 on this show, did you make \$1,000 back? Remember, we're talking about profits, not sales!

Don't forget to include the cost of your materials, the booth space, travel, shipping and cleanup. This kind of breakeven analysis will help you figure out if you should exhibit at the same show next year. It can also help you gauge how well your item will sell someplace else.

You might want to consider putting out comment cards for your customers and lookers to offer advice about your booth and your product. We can't stress enough that any comments you get – bad or good – should be taken with a “grain of salt”.

What you're trying to do is get an idea of what people want. Once you can figure that out, modify your plans, booth space, etc. to meet those needs. You'll sell more in the long run. Plus, if you ask for something as simple as an e-mail address, you'll be amassing a database where you can showcase your product and perhaps get new and/or repeat customers!

Then start to replenish your inventory. There's no reason for you to sit back and relax. There's always another show right down the road. May as well get an early start!

There are literally hundreds of craft fairs out there for you to consider. While we can't give you a comprehensive list, we can provide you with some places to begin with. Location, of course, is important, but here are some of the top craft fairs for you to look at.

WHICH WAY DO I GO?

We'll begin this section with our personal favorites. There are literally hundreds of craft fairs out there. What we want to do is tell you about some amazing places we have been so you can see for yourself!

It's been called the craft fair capital of the world, and after attending year after year, we have to agree. Although we haven't attended any craft fairs outside of the United States, we're pretty sure that if you're looking for some great handmade crafts, you can't get any better than Bentonville, Arkansas.

In general, during the third week of October, Bentonville becomes one huge craft fair. The traffic is horrible, the people are packed shoulder to shoulder, but nowhere else will you find any better place to get your crafting fix!

Here are some of the main shows you can find during "Big Craft Weekend":

- 'Ole Applegate Festival
Highway 72 West
Bentonville AR, 72712
888-404-7478

The Autumn Fair is the Ozarks largest gathering of artists and craftsmen, for five full days with live entertainment and great food.

The Autumn Fair is at two locations; The Farm - 1 mile west of Bentonville on Hwy. 72 and at the Clarion Hotel & Convention Center - 211 Southeast Walton Blvd. This provides true Ozark Country Atmosphere. Tour buses welcome.

- Bella Vista Arts and Crafts Festival
P.O. Box 5009

Bella Vista AR, 72714
479-855-2064

This is a juried arts & crafts fair with upwards of 300 exhibitors, abundant food, entertainment by musicians, singers, dancers, kids' activities, art, craft and music demonstrations. This fair is sponsored by the Village Art Club. It is located off US Highway. 71 at Highway 279 and 340 in Northwest Arkansas

- Frisco Station mall Arts and Crafts Festival
100 N Dixieland Road, Dixieland Mall
Rogers AR, 72756
479-872-9917

This is the largest inside mall arts & crafts festival in Northwest Arkansas. It is located at Walnut and Dixieland Blvd. in Rogers. Exhibitors should contact Mike Kinne at (479)750-9823 or email mkinne@cox-internet.com.

- Jones Center Arts and Crafts Festival
922 East Emma
Jones Center for Families
Springdale AR, 72765
479-751-9313

Located inside the Jones Center, this show is sponsored by Northwest Medical Center Auxiliary – It is a juried show with live music, free admission, and free parking. Only the most unique crafts are accepted to this show! Contact Carolyn McCoy at the above number for more information.

- Ozark Regional Arts and Crafts Fest
Embassy Suites
3303 Pinnacle Hills Parkway (I540 - Exit 83)
Rogers, Arkansas
479-756-6954

This show is completely indoors. The hotel has restaurants, is handicap accessible and offers free parking and admission. Contact Bill or Karen Lloyd at 5557 Walden St. - Lowell, Arkansas 72745

- Ozark Regional Arts and Crafts Festival (not to be confused with the "Fest" listed above!); Holiday Inn Convention Center and Northwest Arkansas Convention Center
HWY 412/I-540 - Exit 72
Springdale, Arkansas
479-756-6954

Located in the Holiday Inn NW Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale, this show has free parking and admission plus handicap access. Contact: Karen & Bill Lloyd, 5557 Walden, Lowell, AR 72745

- War Eagle
11036 High Sky Rd.
Off Highway 303
Hindsville AR, 72738
479-789-5398

Back-in-the-Hills of NW Arkansas, 300 of the finest artists and craftsmen display handmade products in a beautiful country setting. This show boasts many years of tradition - 52 years for the fall fair and 44 for the Spring Fair. Also, visit The Mill at War Eagle which is open year round! Contact Shirley Sutton of War Eagle for more information.

Now, we'll tell you a little bit about Cedarhurst Arts and Crafts Festival. Mount Vernon, Illinois, is the city who hosts one of Southern Illinois' best craft show.

This show is a wonderful mix of handmade crafts and fine arts, with the emphasis on fine arts. You'll find some

beautiful pieces perfect for decorating your home or giving as gifts, but be sure to bring your checkbook and credit cards.

This fair is always held the first weekend after Labor Day on the grounds of Cedarhurst Center for the Arts in Mount Vernon, Illinois. This juried craft fair showcases the work of quality craftsmen from throughout the country.

Approximately 15,000 individuals annually attend the festival, which features more than 100 artisans, entertainment, craft activities in the children's area, and plenty of food. It's a great family outing!

Only artists or craftspeople selling their own works will be eligible to participate. No dealers, agents or representatives will be permitted. All work must be original and creative. Not acceptable are kits, commercial molds, or commercially fabricated forms.

To participate in this show, you will need to submit slides of your work. A jury will view the slides and make its selection based on originality, artistic conception, and the quality of workmanship.

Only media accepted by the jurors will be permitted in booths. The committee reserves the right to view each booth after set up and requests that any work not up to our standards be removed. The artists must come with their craft and have enough merchandise for all days. The committee urges exhibitors to demonstrate as much as possible.

The Internet is a great place to search for craft shows, fairs, and festivals. Try Googling those words and we're sure you'll find many results! However, once you find the perfect show, be sure to do your research to make sure it's the right show for you!

Not all craft shows are done in specific locations. Does that sound strange? It shouldn't! In this day and age, the Internet is commonplace. Even when it comes to crafting!

ONLINE CRAFT SHOWS

Just as many aspects of our life are affected by the Internet, many aspects of business can be affected by the Internet as well. What this forum can do for you and your craft business is open you up to a whole new customer base.

There are hundreds of online craft shows that you can display your product at. Be aware that a lot of people think that this type of venue is a waste of money, but there are many others who have seen great success selling crafts online.

Two huge parts of successful online selling is cross-promoting as well as linking to your blog or website. Getting the word out about your site is the key to high sales!

E-bay isn't just a place to sell stuff you found in Grandma's attic. You'd be surprised to see how many crafters are successfully selling their product on e-bay – and amassing a customer base at the same time.

If you make unique children's clothing, check out boutique wear for kids on e-bay. Often, hand-crafted articles of clothing can sell for upwards of \$100 for a pair of appliquéd overalls. Most of this clothing is directed towards little girls, but you can sell boy's clothing as well.

Anything that is hand-painted (HP) will sell well – especially if it's personalized. Thousands of people throughout the world love to have items that are "their own" and made just for them. Personalized gifts are huge sellers as well!

But there are a lot of other places online where you can showcase your craft. Consider some of the following websites:

www.artsefest.com

www.craftsfaironline.com

www.craftshowconnection.com

www.northcrafts.com

www.ezcraftshow.com

www.craftlister.com

www.countrycraftshowonline.com

www.getcreativeshow.com

So we've covered a lot about selling your stuff at craft shows. What about when you shop at the fairs? Are there actually tips out there on how to shop? You bet!

ON THE OTHER SIDE

Craft fairs are fun places to while away a Saturday afternoon. Not only do you have beautiful handcrafted items to look at and buy, but you have amazing food, and some very uplifting people to help you enjoy your experience.

While most people think that shopping is easy, shopping at a craft fair actually takes some planning in order to maximize your experience. Artists who make crafts also love shopping for crafts. At the very least, they love browsing for ideas. Consider some of the following tips the next time you go to a craft show.

First, have a plan. If you have access to a show map, study it before you go and figure out the best route to take when viewing the products for sale. If there is no map, take a few minutes when you first get to the show to notice the layout and pick a path.

Believe it or not, this can make a world of difference – especially at the bigger craft fairs. You want to see everything when you're there, so making an action plan can help assure that you will.

Just like you have your path planned, you should also have some idea of things you are looking for. Many people shop craft shows for Christmas presents. Make a list, if you must, of people you are shopping for. When you see that perfect gift, you'll be able to cross that one off your list.

If you're like me, you know whether or not you're interested in what a crafter has to offer. If it doesn't spark your interest right away, you tend to walk away. I can't tell you how many times I've passed up a booth only to be called back by my shopping partner and finding something I just can't live without!

Remember that point as a craft seller, too. If your booth and products look boring, customers could just pass you by thinking there's nothing special about what you have to offer. Make your booth interesting and the people will come to you. But I digress.

It's no fun shopping alone – especially at a craft show. Take along someone close to you to maximize your experience. I usually have my mother along. What I can't see as interesting or a good buy, she can show me in ways the crafter can't. She's also great to suggest a certain product for a gift when it would never occur to me.

If you have someone with you, have a way to contact them. That means either a cell phone or inexpensive walkie

talkie. I can't tell you how many craft fairs I've been to where I see women "paging" each other like kids playing cops and robbers. In reality, if you should get separated from the person you came with, these tools are lifesavers when it comes to reconnecting.

Don't bring along a huge, bulky purse. Fanny packs or small purses are best to have because all you really need at a craft show is money, credit cards, identification card, your cell phone or walkie-talkie and maybe a tube of lipstick! You'll regret having to lug around a huge bag – especially when it's loaded down with things that really aren't essential for your crafting adventure.

All crafters need to keep up their energy – whether buying or selling. Take full advantage of the amazing food that is available. We liken the menu to what you might find at a county fair, but with so much more.

Particularly good fare includes apples with caramel dipping sauce, huge gyros with all the fixings, Frito pie, nachos, and bar-b-q shrimp skewers. Browse the vendors and pick what you like. Try as many as your stomach can possibly hold. You may find yourself craving fair food long after you've left!

When you purchase a large item, ask the vendor to hold it for you until you're finished browsing the show. Nearly all sellers will do this happily (they've made a sale, after all!) and you won't be stuck lugging around that 6 foot reindeer you got at an incredible price!

Don't be afraid to haggle on prices. We love the old adage – you never know unless you ask. Many vendors will be happy to consider an offer rather than have an item go unsold. Just be careful that you don't put a price out there that is so ridiculously low that it might insult their work. If

you've done your homework, you know what an item sells for and what to offer for it.

Haggling is part of the business. Vendors often expect it. Just ask them if they can do better on the price or ask "Will you take \$_____ for this. The worst they can do is tell you no. Nothing ventured, nothing gained!

Beware of mass produced products that are being sold as homemade. Believe me, they are out there en masse and it's sometimes difficult to tell the difference. However, if a vendor has 15 hand painted cookie jars with the same design, take a good look at that design.

Compare two jars together and look closely at the designs. Crafts that are truly hand painted will have subtle, small differences in the painting. Perhaps one has a spot where the other has a stripe. If that's the case, it's probably hand painted. If the design is exactly the same right down to the speckle marks, it was purchased wholesale for probably $\frac{1}{4}$ of the price the vendor is asking.

You can buy product like this if you want to, but keep in mind that what you will have is a cheaply made mass produced item instead of a lovingly hand crafted gem. Check out the LTD Commodities website or catalog and see what they have in stock that looks hand made. You'll see what we're talking about!

As a buyer, you should not get roped into the whole "I can make that" way of thinking. We're sure you could. The real question is will you? There have been so many crafts I've seen that I vowed I would create myself. I have yet to make one of them.

If you see something that looks easily crafted and is priced reasonably, buy it if you want it. Then you'll have something you want plus you'll have a model to work from if you really do decide to make them yourself.

Candles are big sellers at craft shows. Many of them look very pretty but have no smell. Look for candles that are hand poured and have a strong smell when you open the lid. The one with strong smell probably retain their smell when being burned. Those who have a faint smell probably won't.

There will always be one item that is a hot seller. The lines at the booth where these things are will be long and you'll see many, many people carrying around the same item. Most times, these items are personalized. If you like it, buy it. If you're just going along with the crowd, though, think twice. You may be paying for a fad that won't be as great next year as it seems this year.

Keep track of what you spend and what you're willing to spend. Don't go over your budget. You'll regret it in the long run.

Craft fairs are often wonderful places to be. Guys, remember that a majority of the people there will be women. Our local craft fair recently set up a beer tent for the guys who are attending with their wives and significant others. While that's not for everyone, unless you're a guy who enjoys crafts, these shows are probably going to be a huge bore for you!

Crafting is a great way to connect with people you don't know, spend time with those you do, and find some great gifts and accessories you just can't live without!

CONCLUSION

Most of this book has focused on crafting as a business. It can be a great way to do what you love and make money while doing it. But be realistic when you start to venture

into this type of business. You won't make a million dollars, and you'll spend a lot of time in pursuit of your dream.

But don't be afraid to take the chance and make your hobby into a career. Sure, it's not an easy living, but it certainly is a satisfying one! Be prepared to be up early and stay up late. Be prepared to wait for your profits to show. You probably won't see much of a profit your first time out.

Many people who have decided to get into crafting as a business can't see themselves doing anything else. One crafter says, "Sometimes I get frustrated making the same item over and over again. It can be boring. But then I remember my clerical job doing the same job over and over again – and being bored too. At least this way, I set my own hours and make my own success. Having a steady paycheck was nice, but knowing you are doing something for yourself is so much more valuable."

For home based artists and craftspeople, selling at fairs and shows provide an opportunity to ring up sales and find new customers at little cost and overhead. But making money at fairs and shows isn't as easy as it seems. It requires research, planning and the ability to keep a smile on your face while standing on your feet for long hours. And that's not for everyone.

To be successful at shows, you should have some sort of a retail personality, but you don't have to be a natural salesperson. All you need to have is a passion for your product and yourself. Then you talk about it to your customers and let the rest take care of itself.

Crafting is more than job a hobby for millions of people. It's scary to take the leap into business for yourself. But once you do, you'll find reward by the mile. Those rewards can't be found behind a computer at an office job or out in the field selling something you don't really believe in.

Do your research, learn from those who know, and be relentless in your goal to become a successful crafting business. Reading this book is a great start! Now get to work. There's a show right around the corner, and you need to be at it!

Happy Crafting!

The following websites were referenced in researching this book:

www.about.com

www.wikipedia.com

www.getcreativeshow.com