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Article: Taking Your Craft To The Next Level

Taking Your Craft To The Next Level

Do people tell you all the time that you should sell your crafts? Do others encourage you to show more people your work and insist that you could probably make a lot of money if you sold more of your crafts? Perhaps you have given it some thought but nixed the idea because you have heard that once you start producing more than *one* of anything, you will be labeled an “assembly line producer.” The good news is crafters who have determination, perseverance, creativity, a passion for their craft and a desire to make money *can* go somewherethe next level in crafting, called “vending!”

What is a craft vendor? A craft vendor is someone who is willing to take their craft making skills to the next level by marketing and selling their craft/s to the public at a public event, such as a festival, craft fair, community arts events etc.

How-to Vend at a Craft Fair

There are many different kinds of festivals and fairs and getting a sense of these different kinds of craft fairs is a good way to figure out if you fit into a particular niche where selling your crafts will prove profitable. Once you are ready to take your business to the next level and participate in a craft show, there are a few tips and things to consider when contemplating becoming a craft vendor.

Here are some tips and things to consider while doing so:

Size of Show: You may want to start with a smaller event to acclimate you to the craft show environment. Try a local craft show that is a one day event where you can get an idea of what to expect. Things to Consider:

- How far away (travel distance) is the craft show?
- What will it cost to get you to your location to sell your crafts? Is this amount out of pocket worth it?
- How long is it going to take to set up and prepare for the craft show? Allow enough time to set up completely before the start of the show.
- Will people help you set up?
- What do you need to bring to the show?
- Should you bring your own food to snack on throughout the day or is there food and water provided?

Application:

- Make sure to read the entire application and all the rules.
- Take your time answering the questions and start on a separate sheet, this is your one shot to wow the judges of the applications with what you have to offer, make it count.

- Take pictures of your work for others to see. It is the only thing the judges have to get an accurate picture of what you are selling.
- Find out if the space you are renting at the show has tables and or canopies included or whether you need to bring your own or rent from them. Do you need electricity? Find out if you can get access or if you need to rent electricity.
- Be sure you fill in all the information and include any extra info you think they might need with the application.
- Mail it out before the deadline or postmark deadline.
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What to Bring To The Craft Show

- Crafts you have made plus enough to replenish your area when things are sold
- Lots of water
- Snacks
- A stool or fold up chair
- A book or magazine
- A table cloth to drape over your table
- A banner or large sign that portrays who you are and what your business is
- Decorative displays for your crafts
- A cash box
- Enough cash in small bills to give customers exact change (don't lose it!!)
- BUSINESS CARDS!! Any other handouts or promotional items you might like to hand out such as postcards or fliers
- Sunglasses (if it's an outside event) and sunscreen
- Tarps, umbrellas, plastic sheet covers (if it's an outside event)
- A helper in case you need a break to use the restroom or walk around. Find out if the craft show sponsors will provide you with a break.
- Display Items for your table/space:
 - Trays or decorative plates or bowls for smaller items
 - Garment rack for clothes
 - A coat or hat rack for scarves or other hanging items
 - Vintage suitcases for displaying larger items
 - Get creative!

While You Are There:

- Make sure your space is set up in a way that is easy for the customer to understand
- Store anything not in your display under your table out of view of the customer
- Try to be at your table the entire time to answer questions and gives suggestions to customers
- Be attentive and smile, a friendly demeanor is inviting for customers
- Model what you are selling or tell stories about your products and your business, get the customer involved.
- Keep track of what sells and how many items of each to better assess what did well for you at the show
- Keep a log of what people seemed interested in and any feedback they may have given you, this can help out in future shows

- Try to meet the other vendors around you and get their business cards, these people are good contacts to have as they are other people doing the same thing as you and can help you find other shows and offer feedback about your experience. Find out about their experiences and try to learn through their mistakes!

Money:

Determine what profit you are making by subtracting all of your costs before the show from the money you made while at the show.

- Add up all of your costs before the show
- Cost to make the goods you are selling including time
- Cost of application fee
- Cost of booth fee
- Cost of display items
- Cost of travel to the event
- Cost of the hours you spent working at the event

Cost of miscellaneous fees having to do with the show

Remember, you might want to start out small and then venture to larger craft shows as you gain experience. Craft show vending can give the beginner or even experienced crafter another way to make money and it is also a great tool for establishing and acquiring a customer base for future sales. So, keep it simple to start, be organized, never stop marketing and before you know it, you will be maximizing your profits, increasing sales of your products and acquiring a better understanding of what it takes to becoming a successful craft vendor!