

GARAGE SALE PROMOTING: FOR QUICK, EASY MONEY!

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Pick almost any city or town in the country, drive through any middle class neighborhood or residential area on the weekend, and you're sure to spot at least a half dozen garage sales.

What's being sold at these garage sales? The accumulated "junk" people no longer use or want taking up space in or around their homes. Are they making any money with these garage sales? You'd better believe they're making money! It's not at all uncommon to make \$600 with a weekend garage sale. Is it hard to put on a profitable garage sale? Well, yes and no. It really does take some of your time, and also requires an awareness of a few merchandising tactics. But the problems in running a successful garage sale are small in comparison to the profits.

Who are the buyers, and how do you get them to come to your garage sale? Your customers are going to be "everybody," and you get them over to your garage sale with a little bit of advertising and promotion.

Let's look at the background: Everybody accumulates the kind of garage sale items that other people are searching for, and are willing to buy. These items range from no longer wanted or outgrown items of clothing, to furniture, tools, knick-knacks, books, pictures and toys. Many garage sale items are objects of merchandise purchased on impulse, and later found to be not what the buyer wanted. He discovered too late that he really didn't have a use for it, or he no longer has a need for it. Many items found at garage sales are gifts that have been given to the seller, but are the wrong size or incorrect choice for the recipient.

The problem with most people is that they haven't the time to gather up all the items "just taking up space" in and around their homes and staging a garage sale to get rid of them. Many people don't know how to stage a garage sale, and many other people feel that putting on a garage sale is just too much bother and work.

This is where you enter the picture. Your enterprise will be an ongoing garage sale of items donated and collected from these people who lack the inclination to put on garage sales of their own.

Step one is education: Spend a few weeks visiting all the garage sales, swap meets and flea markets in your area. Find out what's being offered for sale, what people are buying, and how the merchandise is being sold. Generally an item is tagged with a price, but the seller is open to almost any reasonable offer from the customer. Another thing you want to make mental note of is the way the merchandise is displayed, and how the customers are allowed to browse.

You start your own garage sale by cleaning out your own basement, attic, closets and garage. Talk to your relatives and friends; tell them what you're going to do and ask them for donations of no-longer used or unwanted items. It's here that you'll get your first experience in negotiating, and finally, an agreement for you to display and sell other people's merchandise for a percentage of the sales price. You'll find people explaining that they really don't have a use for a specific item or they really don't want to keep storing it, but because of sentimental reasons, "just hate to give it away."

Once you've had a little experience with this type of seller, you will be able to advertise in

the newspaper that you buy garage sale items, or take them on consignment for a percentage of the final sales price.

It's best that your wife handle the garage sale itself - greets the potential customers, "shows them around," and generally engages them in conversation. If it's a woman staging the garage sale, then arrangements should be made to have an other woman "mind the store" while she's out digging up more items for sale.

The advertising angle is really quite simple, and shouldn't cost very much either. You should run an ad in your area shopper's newspaper for about three days in advance of, and up through the day of your sale. Once you're operating on a full time, every-day-of-the-week schedule, you'll want to change your ad schedule and the style of your advertising. But in getting started, go with small classified ads simply announcing your garage sale, emphasizing that you've got something of interest to everyone - everything from A to Z. To get ideas on how to write your ad, check your newspaper for a week or so; cut out all the garage sale ads you can find; paste them up on a piece of paper. Then, with a bit of critical analysis, you'll be able to determine how to write a good ad of your own by determining the good and the bad in the ads you've collected. Something to remember: The bigger and better your sale, the bigger and better your "getting started" ads should be. And the secret to outstanding garage sale profits is in having the widest or largest selection of merchandise.

You should have made an old-fashioned "sandwich board" sign to display in front of your house when your garage sale is open for business. This will pull in your neighbors, if you haven't already informed them, and attract the people driving by. Sandwich boards are sometimes set out at key traffic intersections not far from the site of the garage sale, to attract attention and point the way. (Check local ordinances to see if this is permitted in your area.)

Another "sign idea" practiced by a few really sharp operators is the old "Burma Shave" roadside pointers. Here, you simply take a few cute sayings in verse (or one-liners), write on pieces of cardboard and tack onto the power poles at about 200 yard intervals on a thoroughfare leading to your garage sale. You'll create a lot of traffic for yourself! Simply visit the public library and check out a book on limericks, adapt the ones you find humorous, and start making signs. One word here though: Be sure to check your local ordinances before you start nailing signs to power poles.

By all means, search out and use all the free bulletin boards in your area. It's better, and usually much more profitable, to take the time to make up an attention grabbing circular you can post on these bulletin boards than just using a written 3 by 5 card announcement.

To do this, pick up some "transfer lettering," go through your newspapers and old magazines for interesting illustrations, graphics and pictures, then with a little bit of imagination, make up an 8 1/2 by 11 poster-type announcement of your sale. When you've got it pasted up, take it to any quick print shop and have them print up 50 to 100 copies for you. The cost should not come to more than six or seven dollars.

If you make this "circular/poster" up with versatility and long-time usage in mind, you can use it over and over again, simply by pasting on a new date. In case you were puzzled when we talk about "pasting," this is simply pasting another piece of paper onto the overall page. Say you have a

circular with a date of Wednesday, March 1st, and want to change it to read Thursday, July 16th. Rather than do the whole thing over, simply write out the new date with your transfer letters on a separate sheet of paper, cut out to fit in the space occupied by the old date, and paste the new date over the old date. A good paste to use for this purpose is rubber cement. That's all there is to it; the printer does the rest.

Now let's talk about the "inside secrets" of drawing people into your sale, and the merchandising "gimmicks" that will result in the maximum sales and profits for you. First, call attention to your sale. Don't be shy, bashful or self-conscious about letting everybody for miles about know that you're having a garage sale. Some sharp operators do the next best thing to having the Goodyear blimp overhead: They rent miniature blimps, send them up above the housetops, and tether them there on their sale days. Of course this giant balloon or miniature blimp has some sort of sign on the side of it, inviting people to your garage sale! This is one of the strongest available advertising ideas for pulling "traffic" to a sale of any kind. For more details, write to Pie-In-The-Sky Company, PO Box 5267, San Mateo, CA 94402.

You have to give your sale some flair. Put some posts up across the front of your property and run some twisted crepe paper between them. Even better than crepe paper, run brightly colored ribbons. Invest in some colorful pennants and fly them from temporary flag poles. And don't forget the balloons!

Make your garage sale a fun kind of event with clusters of balloons anchored to your display tables and racks. Be sure to "float" them well above the heads of your customers as they are browsing through your merchandise displays.

Cover your display tables with colorful cloths. Don't hesitate to use bright colors with busy patterns. Regardless of what you sell, effective display is still predominantly essential!

You cannot "dump" items haphazardly on a table, sit down, and expect to realize great profits. The people doing the most business - making the most sales - are the ones with interesting displays, action and color.

Try to have as wide a selection of colors as possible in your clothing racks, and mix them for a rainbow effect. Make sure that your jewelry items shine and sparkle. Arrange them in and with jewelry boxes, jewelry ladders and other items sold for the purpose of showing off jewelry while keeping it neatly organized. We know of one lady who regularly arranges jewelry items in a battery operated lazy susan. Seeing this jewelry slowly turning on the lazy susan never fails to draw attention.

Think about it, and then study the methods of display used by "rack jobbers" in the stores in your area. These are the wire racks that usually hold card packaged items. This kind of display rack would lend itself beautifully for anchoring a cluster of balloons. Keep these things in mind, and build your individual displays as part of the whole; make it pleasing to the eye as well as convenient for your customers to browse through and select the items that appeal to them.

Look for some kind of interesting and unusual item to call attention to your sale - something you can set up or park in front of your home during your sale. Some of the displays we've seen along these lines include a horse-drawn surrey, a restored Model T, an old farm plow. But anything of an unusual and interesting nature will do the trick for you. One couple we know put up a display

using a manikin dressed in an old-time farm bonnet, long dress and apron. The display depicted a farm woman of old, washing clothes with a scrub board and two steel wash tubs. You have to believe this drew crowds and made people talk!

Wherever your imagination takes you, you have to be different and distinctive, or you'll get lost in the hundreds of garage sales going on all around you. If you'll take the time to employ a bit of imagination and set your sales up with the kind of flair we've been talking about, you'll not just draw the crowds, you'll end up being the one holding the most profits.

It's almost a compulsion of many women to go shopping, to search for interesting and sometimes rare and valuable items. This fact alone will keep you as busy as you'll ever want to be - staging and holding garage sales. The market is so vast, and the appetite so varied, that anything from a brass bedstead to a used diary of somebody's long-for-gotten grandmother will sell, and sell fast at garage sales. Put it all together, use a little imagination, and you'll easily make all the money you want!