

Setting Up Your Own Craft Consignment Shop

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Setting Up Your Own Craft Consignment Shop

Sell arts and craft items to the public on a commission basis from your converted garage workshop or basement showroom. If you have access to a public location, a garage or small building (even a portable building) on your lot, along the highway or well-traveled street frontage or can rent space in a marketable area, the consignment business is worthy of consideration.

Note that some small towns these days have stores with very reasonable rent.

Many people who enjoy (and are good at) making craft or art items do not like (or don't have the means) to sell them. Some simply can't (or won't) and others are actually too embarrassed (self-conscious) to market their own creations.

Most crafts people do not even recover the cost of their materials! These crafters will welcome a service to market their creations. They won't have to worry about that part of it, and will probably realize more for their efforts even after your commission.

They would undoubtedly realize even LESS than if they sold their own products at wholesale prices. With you taking care of the selling, they can devote their time and talents to creating more products.

Of course you can also make and sell your own craft products in your spare time, or offer instructions to others. This type of business is not limited to any certain type of crafts. In fact, it is quite flexible and can easily be adapted to whatever products are available and in demand in your area.

You should have a written agreement with each consigner. The easiest way is to have your terms printed on receipts you give them for their crafts. If there is any possibility of a misunderstanding, make sure they understand the agreement.

The printed terms should have a place for a minimum price desired by the owner and cover a specific period of time so you don't become overloaded with things that won't sell at the prices you must ask. Something like thirty days would be fine for most articles. If it hasn't sold by then you can either re-negotiate with the owner or give it back.

Retain a copy of each receipt in your permanent files. You also have the option of buying items outright -- the craft person might be willing (even anxious) to sell at a good price for cash. In a very short time, you will be able to judge what will sell

and how much it will bring. You can also stock craft supplies -- some of which you can sell to your crafters for even more profit and service to your clientele (both customers and clients).

You will be responsible for reasonable care and safeguarding of merchandise consigned to you (insurance for that should not be terribly expensive) as well as collecting for sales, withholding any tax, computing and paying the consignors their share. With this in mind, be extra careful about giving credit, because it will be YOUR funds that are lent, NOT the consignor's!

For consignment sales, it is a good idea to consider renting a store unless you already have a suitable area where prospective customers will come to your display. Build or buy adequate shelves and display areas so you will have plenty of room to "showcase" the craft items tastefully and attractively.

The display area should be well-lighted, neat and offer sufficient protection to goods consigned to your care. There should be enough room for customers to view the items that you have strategically arranged to make them look their best. If the place looks cluttered and unkempt, you will have to lower your prices to match your sales environment (presentation).

The bottom line is that you are in the business of selling craft items. In order to do this effectively, you must present those items to the public in "style", so they will not only sell, but bring the best possible prices. If your place looks junky, people will want to pay junk prices.

Other possibilities include specialty foods such as home grown strawberries, chocolate pies, homemade pickles, etc.. this category, however, requires care not to violate pure food laws or possible liability. If you consider any type of foods, find about any needed permits or even get legal advice before going ahead.

Still other alternatives are antiques, selected household items, holiday decorations and potted plants.

The above alternative suggestions can be test-marketed easily. In the case of potted plants, for example, simply place a few in your display area and see how they do. If they don't sell, try something else; if they do, expand this feature and make more profit.

Use all the free advertising you can get. A way to get it is to write little articles about your consignors and feed them to your local paper --human interest stories: what they make, how they make it, and of course, where you can find their fine products.

It would be even better if you could provide pictures. If you do,, use a good quality BLACK AND WHITE film (it is easier to

process for printing in the paper).

The editor probably won't take more than one article about your shop,, but he may welcome items about different people in the community (even if your shop does get a lug here and there).

Think of the free advertising you might get by writing little items about art exhibits in your studio.

With a good sign and a little publicity, a small (2 or 3 inch) contract ad in the local paper may be all the commercial advertising you need. This type of ad allows you to change all or part of your copy each week or month, so you can feature different items every week.

People (especially in small towns) get to where they look for your ad to see what is on special each week.

Finally,make sure you take in all craft related activities in your area. Attend craft shows, work with stores that craft supplies (they will welcome the opportunity to tell their customers where they can sell their completed projects), and talk "crafts" whenever you can.

To help create more interest in crafts, consider conducting classes at your place -- if necessary hire a teacher and charge tuition to cover that expense.

BUSINESS SOURCES

HOBBY INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, 319 E 54th St.,Elmwood Park, NJ 07407. Assn of hobby crafters and businessmen.

GLASS STUDIO, Box 23383, Portland, OR 97223. Trade magazine for arts and crafts dealers.

MIESEL HARDWARE SPECIALTIES, Box 257, Mound, MI 55364, 800/441-9870. Hardware for hobbyists (hinges, to eyes, clock parts, wooden wheels); catalog \$1.

TOYS, HOBBIES & CRAFTS, 454 5th Ave.,New York, NY 10017. Trade magazine for hobby and craft dealers.

LHL ENTERPRISES, Box 241, Solebury, PA 18963. Hobby and craft supplies.

AMERICAN CRAFT COUNCIL, 44 W. 53rd St.,New York, NY 10019. Publishes CRAFTS HORIZONS, POPULAR MAGAZINE (good place to advertise crafts); prints information on craft shows.

CRAFTS REPORT, 1529 E. 19th St.,Brooklyn, NY 11230. Specialty magazine for crafters (good place to advertise).

TOLE & DECORATIVE PAINTERS, National Association of, Box 808, Newton, KS 67114. Association of people interested in painting scenes on wooden objects, etc.

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, 1441 L St.,NW., Washington, DC 20416. Offers free pamphlet on making and selling of craft items.

QUILL CORPORATION, 100 Schelter Rd.,Lincolnshire, IL 60917-4700, 312/634-4800. Office and computer supplies.

IVEY PRINTING, Box 761. Meridan, TX 76665. Letterhead: 400 sheets plus 200 matching envelopes - \$18.

SWEDCO, Box 29, Mooresville, NC 28115. Three line rubber stamps - \$3; business cards - \$13 per thousand.

ZPS, Box 581, Libertyville, IL 60048-2556.. Business cards (raised print - \$11.50 per K) and letterhead stationery. Will print your copy ready logo or design, even whole card.

WALTER DRAKE, 4119 Drake Bldg.,Colorado Springs, CO 80940. Short run business cards (250 - \$3) and stationery. Good quality raised print, but no choice of style or color ink.