

Use Your Talent In Your Own Calligraphy Business

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Use Your Talent In Your Own Calligraphy Business

Calligraphy is a business where you use your skill and artistic talents to apply beautifully styled hand lettering to the customer's paperwork.

While calligraphy is considered an art, unlike sculpting and oil painting it is also considered an acquirable one for most people with basic ability and a desire to learn.

A person with basic artistic ability can easily learn this specialty which is in demand for a number of situations.

Every stationery store gets orders for specialized, hand-letter printing that only a calligrapher can do: wedding announcements (sometimes even addressing the cards), menus, certificates, invitations, place mats, personalized greeting cards, etc.

Orders of less than 100 or so are very expensive to have printed commercially with calligraphy type, (that look machine printed): so there is almost no competition for short-run (less than 500) orders.

Even though a printer can make a thousand copies of a hand-lettered menu in a photo-process, someone (a calligrapher) must do the original!

Few printers or stationery stores have their own in-house calligrapher; they routinely send this type of work out - often to another city or state.

Stores in your area would undoubtedly be happy to have the same quality done faster and probably cheaper (counting postage) nearby!

Learning the art of calligraphy is not difficult for one with a little talent. There are countless books, and kits available at almost any book store; many under \$10.00.

Basically, the fancy effect is attained with broad tipped pens that make wide vertical strokes and narrow ones horizontally.

Drawing a circle while holding the pen in the same position will yield an "O" with fat sides and skinny top and bottom. Turning the pen results in various other effects, and even more are achieved with different pen point shapes, (wider, more rounded, etc.).

The calligrapher normally learns one alphabet at a time, and adds to his or her repertoire as each new one is mastered. Some

of the more ornate alphabets (fonts) understandably require more practice, but most of them are variations or additions to previously learned techniques.

To get into the calligraphy business, buy a kit, learn a few alphabets, practice until you feel confident, then put out the word that you are available.

Design and letter your own business cards (or have them printed - see next paragraph). Personally call on shops that sell products that lend themselves to your talents.

Give them your card, leave samples and an idea of your prices, so they know how to quote your service retail. If you both retail and wholesale jobs, be sure to charge full retail to retail customers or risk alienating your wholesale accounts.

This is usually handled best by giving your wholesale customers "suggested" retailed prices - and informing them (if they ask) and if you do retail, it is at these prices only (and do it!).

Here is a hint to have some fabulous looking calligrapher business cards. First, lay out your "master" 4 or more times the size it will end up.

The normal business cards is 2" x 3 1/2", so four times that size would be 8 by 14. Or, you could make it 3 times as big 6 by 10 1/2.

Print your design and copy (include logo if desired - even if you cut out and glue it onto your "master." When satisfied, take it to the local stationery store and have it reduced to the proper-size on their copier (you may have to white-out shadows or lines from a glued-on logo).

When you get to business card size (2 by 3 1/2 inches) you will be amazed at how much sharper it looks! Then, take your copy ready master to a printer have him run off your business cards.

The printer will photograph your card and use his photo offset process - which is easier and cheaper than having to set type and lay out the copy.

If there is not a good printer locally, check Sources, below. While you are at it, have him "emboss" your cards. This used to be an expensive process (and still looks expensive), but now it is simply a special ink that expands (bubbles) when heated (the printer uses a roaster). The resulting raised print effect is beautiful!

Make up sets of samples for your wholesale customers (one set can be copied for customers and you keep the originals to avoid

any appearance of favoritism).

Include samples that represent the range of your capabilities and also give potential customers an idea of how to use your services.

For example, a sheet of nice, quality paper with the same message in several different styles, examples of greeting cards, decorated menus, company name logos, a fancy certificate, desk sign, etc.

Samples are suggestive - they can lead to impulse purchases. Fees for calligraphy are usually by the piece (with a letter limit), by the letter (with adjustments for size) or a combination of both, plus any additional decorations or illustrations.

The price also is affected by the amount and detail required. The calligrapher can often expand an order by suggesting the envelopes be addressed in matching script!

The easiest way to price your work for wholesale, retail, or combination of both is to quote everything retail and give your wholesale accounts a 35-40% discount from listed "suggested retail" prices.

This way, your retail prices are "up front," and you can use the same samples and price lists for both retail and wholesale customers.

It also saves your wholesale accounts the trouble of figuring out or making up their own retail price lists - it makes it EASY for them to sell your products.

A potential problem area in this business is getting the instructions and/or copy wrong. One misspelled name or price can ruin the whole job!

To be safe, keep clear copies of all orders, and have any doubtful job orders initialed. While doing the job you have ANY doubts, don't guess: call the customer for clarification!

You may also have to experiment with different types of erasing systems and products. Always do this on test scraps first for different combinations of paper and ink, to avoid ruining something in which you have invested several hours of work!

BUSINESS SOURCES

DICK BLICK CO., Box 1267, Galesburg, IL 61407-1267, 800/477-8192. Wholesale art (including calligraphy) and sign supplies. Old, well-respected company; good prices.

THE KELSEY CO., Box 941, Meriden, CT 06450, 203/235-1695.
Wholesale printing and related (including calligraphy) supplies.
Old, reliable company; excellent prices.

JERRY'S ARTARAMA, INC., 1105 Hyde Park, New York, NY 10040-8182,
718/343-4545. Wholesale art supplies. Large company.

DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC., 31 E. 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11015,
516/294-7000. Good source for discount reference books; many on
calligraphy related subjects, plus clip-art and stencils.

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

PUBLISHERS CENTRAL BUREAU, Box 1187, Newark, NJ 07102-1187.
Discount reference (etc.) books,

QUILL CORPORATION, 100 Schelter Rd., Lincolnshire, IL
60907-4700, 312/634-4800. 312/634-4800. Office supplies.

NEBS, 500 Main St., Groton, MA 04171, 800/225-6380. Office
supplies.

WALTER DRAKE, 4119 Drake Bldg., Colorado Springs, CO 80940.
Short run business cards and stationery with no choice of colors
or style, but good quality for the price.