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Affordable PR for WAHM Businesses

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Sell your cards and crafts

A PR mini guide

Do you enjoy card making or crafts, and want to make a profit from your hobby? This mini-guide will give you ideas for starting a business and promoting your cards and crafts.

Getting Started

Before you do anything else, think about what sort of business you want. Do you simply want to fund your hobby, and sell to friends and family? Have you got the time to make up enough products to take to craft fairs and shows? Or are you more ambitious and would like to see your crafts and cards in local gift shops? Develop your ideas, and write them down. If you have aims for your business, you can check back as you progress, and make sure you are on track.

Now it's time to plan your range of designs. Think about events throughout the year for which you can make cards. When are people likely to purchase your crafts; would they be ideal Christmas gifts, or perfect for Valentine's Day? Ask other people to look at items you have made and listen to their comments. Check out what looks good in card shops – and think about designs that will make your cards unique. Look at crafts that are on sale, and see what stands out.

Think of a name for your business, and a strap line that sums up the unique or special points about it. Use this on promotional materials and when telling people about your new venture. Remember, you have three months to register as self employed after you start your business.

Start Selling

It's important to get your pricing right before you start selling large volumes of products. Selling to friends is a great way to test your prices. Check how much time it takes you to make each item – or see how many cards you can make in 3 hours, for example. Note down the cost of materials, and keep all your receipts. You can deduct the cost of materials from the profit you make. Talk to the Inland Revenue about other expenses you can claim. Starting your accounts at the beginning is much easier than trying to work out what you have spent a few months in.

If you haven't sold any of your cards or crafts already, try them out on friends and family. If you sell cards, have a smart folder with your designs in clear plastic pouches that you can show to people. Similarly, think of a way to carry and display your crafts while keeping them clean and protected. You may feel nervous about showing off your wares, but no one will object to looking and you can practice your sales pitch!

Selling at Shows

Once you've made a few sales, why not think bigger? Find out if your local playgroup would let you have a stall one morning. Alternatively, look out for fetes, school events or craft fairs. You'll need lots more stock, so allow plenty of time for making up designs.

Find out the table size, and practice laying out your products attractively. To create a good display, increase the number of items you have on display. Use props to make your display more interesting and avoid simply putting things flat on the table. Choose a tablecloth of a colour that will contrast with your cards: black, for example, if your designs are on white card. Use boxes to raise part of the display and pins to attach the cards or crafts. There are also stands available and, if you do a lot of shows you can provide your own lighting to ensure your stock really stands out. Think about a prize draw or special offer to attract people to your stand.

If you like showing people how to make cards or to do a craft, why not look for groups where you could do a demo. Women's or retirement groups might be interested. Call and offer your services, and take along items for sale too.

Take a folder of samples or photographs to shows and demos if you are prepared to make custom orders. Take payment, name and address on the day, and simply pop the item in the post when you have made it.

Selling More

If you want to further increase your customers, you will need promotional materials. Think about what will be most useful – business cards, leaflets or posters. Some things you can produce yourself on your home computer – or check out local print shops or websites for offers on printing. Use your strap line and photos of your products so people can see what you offer.

You may want to generate some free publicity through the local paper. Have a think about what might make a good news story about your business. Buy a copy of the local paper and see what stories they cover. Let them know if you are selling crafts at an event or giving a demonstration.

Start a database listing contact details for everyone who has bought from you. Note down how they found your business. Think of ways of contacting them again to encourage them to buy more. You could send out leaflets telling them about special offers or advertising if you are going to be at a craft fair. You could also offer them a discount for repeat purchases or vouchers if they introduce new customers.

Selling Online

A website is a good way to showcase your work. There are various packages that help you to set up your own site, or you can pay a small monthly fee for an online store. Having a website won't increase sales on its own – you'll need to

promote it and attract customers. Find out about 'Search Engine Optimisation' – having good key words describing your site to ensure that search engines can find you easily and link potential customers to you. Make a list of other websites that complement yours to swap links with. Do you have a 'banner' you can send to them? Put a link to your website in your email signature too.

Plan regular updates to your site to keep people coming back, and have a contact form for people to sign up for updates about new card designs. Submit your website to online shopping sites, business directories and local websites. You may also want to look into online adverts, such as Google adwords, Espotting, Overture and Mirago. Plan a newsletter to send out regularly to keep old customers and potential new ones interested.

Selling to Shops

If you want to sell your crafts to local gift shops, pop in and ask about how they buy. They may like to see you by appointment, with a folder of your best designs. Make sure you have thought about pricing, so both you and the shop are making a profit. Will you offer 'sale or return', or do they buy your work outright? Will you require them to order a minimum number of cards for wholesale terms? This is a more complex area, so you may want legal advice about a contract too.

Follow this tips, and you will soon be on your way to having a good business doing something you love.

If you want to learn more about promoting your products, check out our PR fact sheets. Each fact sheet covers a topic in more depth. So, if you want to learn about **Writing a press release, Promoting your business locally, Promoting your website** or many more topics, log onto

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