

HOW TO WEAVE CHARITY WORK INTO YOUR HANDMADE BUSINESS

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**HANDMADE
ENTREPRENEUR
OF THE YEAR**

Heather Gray

BUSINESS PLAN

101



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Diane Sulg is Executive Director of CRAFT and founder & co-chair of American Craft Week (ACW). She is a handmade advocate that provides valuable information in her one-day seminars titled "All About Wholesale" at wholesale shows throughout the United States. Diane is the former owner of Maddi's Gallery in Charlotte and Huntersville, NC. She can be reached at dianesulg@gmail.com

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On the Cover: Mermaid crown made by HEY winner Heather Gray. *Photo by Heather Gray*



The mission of *HANDMADE BUSINESS* is to inform, instruct, and inspire both the beginning and the established professional craftsperson and crafts retailer by providing them with: ■ how-to articles on all facets of handmade business management and related topics ■ relevant industry news, as well as information on current issues and trends ■ a forum for exchanging ideas and concerns ■ encouragement and recognition.



*“The greatest lesson you might learn in this life is this:
It is not about you”*

— Shannon L. Alder, *inspirational author*

Charity is something that I value. I grew up with a bleeding heart for a mother. From a very young age I donated my time to various clubs and organizations, everything from church organizations to community projects. The one organization that I stuck with the longest was the local VFW. My father was in the Navy while I was growing up, so we would help out at the food pavilion, for the VFW, at the Iola Old Car Show every year. My father and I would work 12-hour days for three days every year.

Little did I know that, after seven years of volunteering, I would receive a \$500 scholarship upon high-school graduation. Donating your time or craft to a good cause can reap all sorts of unknown benefits. Not only does it feel good to help others, the world has a way of rewarding you for it.

The article “Philanthropy and You” on page 30 shows how you can donate your time or craft to a cause and still win. Though charity is selfless, there are still ways that donating can help you and your business. Getting involved with a charity or organization that is meaningful to you can help inspire your art as well as spread your brand. There are also ways of donating pieces, while still making some money from them. You may not make as much as you would if you sold it yourself, but you are making money for a meaningful cause.

Another great example of charity is helping others in your craft. No one does this better than the Handmade Entrepreneur of the Year for 2019, Heather Gray. She helped the handmade business world with her creation of Gypsy Spoonful, an online market that provides a platform for handmade artisans to sell their craft. Congrats Heather on clinching the honor of being named the 2019 HEY and bettering the handmade world.

Charitable donations and philanthropy can be written into your business plan. The article “Starting a Business Based on Facts, not Fantasy,” (page 16) explains the importance of a business plan and how to create one. Writing philanthropy into your business plan helps you prepare for the dip in income that comes along with it. I was taught the five P’s when I was growing up: Proper planning prevents poor performance. So put the five P’s to good use in creating or updating your business plan.

Since you put your heart into your craft, you should at some point in time put your craft into philanthropy.

Have courage, create and learn!

Melissa Jones
Editor

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2019 Handmade Entrepreneur of the Year

By Stephanie Finnegan

Heather Gray GoosieGirl.com
GypsySpoonful.com



Above: Heather Gray

Right: Gray's fall-themed crown. *Photos by Heather Gray*



HEY Criteria

1. Must be a handmade artist-founded business entrepreneur with three or more years of operation
2. Must have an online presence, such as a standalone website and/or active social media pages
3. Must produce high-quality, unique, original works of art or fine crafts
4. Should be actively engaged in local, regional, or national community events or organizations, charities, professional guilds, schools, art colonies, or clubs, etc.

Background basics

It's fitting that Heather Gray should have received the top honor of Handmade Entrepreneur of the Year. Having toiled in the handmade arena for 15 years, Gray acknowledges that red-carpet swag and celebrity gift bags helped to give her a higher profile and a visible online presence.

Under the GoosieGirl moniker, Gray creates fabulous fascinators, flower crowns, bows, hats, clips, and over-the-top, photogenic accessories. Her creations are worn as attention-grabbing headwear and used as photo-shoot props or as ways for any customer to stand out from a crowd. Several years ago, Gray encountered Lisa Gal Bianchi, the entrepreneur behind Hollywood Gift Baskets. This crossing of paths opened up a star-filled doorway for Gray, who was tapped to contribute items for entertainment gift bags, baskets,

A mermaid crown created by Gray.



and gifting suites. If an artist was nominated for an Emmy or a Grammy, one of Gray's creations would be included in their congratulations swag. If a celebrity gave birth, Gray was called upon to help feather the star's gift basket.

"I love networking and meeting new people that have a passion and hustle for creating handmade products. Through this Beverly Hills gift basket company, I got connected to the celebs, and it took off from there," Gray explained. "I also took a course by Sarah Shaw of *Entrepreneur*, who has a CD (Audible Book) course called 'How to Get Your Products into Celebrity Hands.' I highly recommend it to anyone wishing to break through on the A-list celebrity scene."

Growing up as an only child, Gray acknowledges that she was fated to be a maverick and a self-starter. From an early age, she was left on her own to entertain herself and to fill the hours of her day: "I learned at a very young age to depend on myself, and if I needed something done, I'd need to make it happen myself. That's not to say I didn't have encouragement from my mom. She raised me to believe that I was special and could do anything that I put my mind to."

Additionally, Gray had a day-to-day role model in her grandfather. "He was an entrepreneur and owned his own printing shop. His determination, stick-to-itiveness, and dedication was a great inspiration to me."

Handmade insights

Beyond that essential, self-guiding gene in her DNA, Gray also has a personal connection to her customers and her clientele. Whether it's a world-famous pop singer or a pre-K little ballerina, Gray enjoys the give-and-take between herself and her clientele. She adores the heads-up when one of her halos or mermaid crowns or top hats has been photographed and shared on Instagram or Snapchat. Her custom-boutique photo props are a hit for old and young alike, Tinsel Town legends and aspiring wannabes.

"I knew I had 'arrived' when I was designing a fascinator headband for Taylor Swift! I knew it when I had tons of customer appreciation photos coming in every day of their little ones in their costumes or hats that I had designed. Customer satisfaction and



Above: Gray's frame creation.

Left: Gray's circus-themed hat.

their happiness is paramount to me. I am also so pleased to see that my Facebook page has more than 33,000 followers!"

Talkative and talented, Gray attributes her business's allure to her visible authenticity. She puts her true face and feet forward when she promotes her wares: "Trust is a necessary factor in making sales and being successful in business. I use social media as a way to communicate my true authentic self – the good and bad, the success and failures. When people feel you are a 'real person,' they will trust you and buy from you. I have a passion for what I do. I live to create! When someone buys one of my pieces, it's a vote of confidence in what I am doing."

Regarding the connection she has with her handiwork, Gray is not shy. "My pieces have love, sweat, and even tears put into them."

Climbing over challenges

While Gray's success story does smack of a Hollywood happy ending, there were moments of despair and despondency. In fact, there was one harrowing moment when it seemed that she might have to hang up her tools and follow a different dream. "In the beginning of my 'crafty' handmade life, I had a different business name. I honored my grandma Daisy by calling it Daisy Head Maisy. Well, apparently this is too close to a character from Dr. Seuss. They sent me a cease-and-desist order. I consulted with an attorney and was told that I could fight it, but it would be a lot of hassle and would cost a lot of money. So, I conformed. I had to change my business name. I chose GoosieGirl, which is my nickname," Gray revealed.

"It was so hard to have to start over after having worked so hard to establish myself. I had to re-brand and then go from there," she

shared. "My advice to any newbie starting out is to research your potential business name. You have to do this thoroughly so that this same thing doesn't happen to you."

Another challenge that Gray has tackled head-on is the presence of Chinese piracy. "As a small handmade shop, I've had to deal with China knockoffs in the marketplace. They steal designs from us makers and then mass-produce them in factories. They then sell them back to U.S. consumers for less than we can even buy supplies for. A big hurdle for me was when Etsy began allowing these types of 'makers' and 'production partners,' a.k.a. factories, onto their site. This is NOT handmade. This is mass-produced goods masquerading as handmade, and it is undercutting the whole entire handmade market," Gray stated.

Making a difference

Relying upon her sincere indignation, her single-minded focus, and her gritty determination, Gray decided that she wouldn't just sit back and watch her handmade creations vie for sales against Chinese manufacturers. She started her own online sales community.

"I also own a site similar to Etsy, but much smaller. Gypsy Spoonful features 100 percent handmade, only-by-U.S.-makers creations. It is truly the one site that places people before profits, and community before competition. It requires at least nine hours a day of my time, and I do everything with the help of a volunteer admin team," Gray advised.

"The very most satisfying part of starting Gypsy Spoonful is seeing handmade succeed. I am so passionate about educating and empowering my small shop owners. I come alongside them and walk the walk with them," Gray recounted.

Drawing upon her 15 years in the handmade field, Gray has pledged her heart and soul to the Gypsy Spoonful site, which kicked off in 2017. "Now that I create and promote handmade through Gypsy Spoonful, I don't think I could ever go back to a regular 9-to-5 job in a cubicle. Today, I love what I am doing, and I feel so proud every time I see one of my small shop owners grow or make a sale. I actually feel like I am their mama goose and they are my goslings."

Background basics

When Alexis Moyer is asked to think of an adjective to describe herself, she gladly proffers the word “determined.” The owner of The Pot Shop, based in Philo, California, Moyer grew up in a retail world. She understood from an early age the sacrifice and self-direction that is needed to make a go of it in an entrepreneurial situation.

“I think all successful artists are determined because the motivation to do the work comes from inside ourselves. I read a book recently called ‘Creative Confidence,’ and it was a really interesting premise. I came away with the conclusion that I had no shortage of that!” Moyer admitted.

Looking back on her early years, Moyer admits that her parents served as inspirational role models. “Since I was raised in a retail business, I was already familiar with wholesaling, gift shows, staffing the shop, and doing all of the bookkeeping and chores that go with running a business,” Moyer remarked. “I have always been much more comfortable being my own boss than working for someone else. I like making the decisions and being able to set the course for the future of the business. The risks are all mine, but so are the rewards!”

Moyer finished art school in 1984, and the combination of her in-school curriculum and her personal exploring dictated her life’s journey: “After I finished art school, I went to Greece for a summer program

and then traveled on my own afterward. I came across several pottery shops where the work was made in the back and then sold in the front. I got the idea for my own studio/gallery arrangement. I came home knowing what I wanted to do and have created a business pretty close to what I imagined for myself all those years ago.”

Handmade insights

For 30 years, Moyer has lived out her long-ago vision in her repurposed gas station. She has converted this space into her studio/gallery, where she creates both functional pottery and hand-built animals and totem poles. “I offer my work for sale to tourists who pass through our valley,” she noted. “Having this outlet for my work has allowed me to grow and create pretty freely as an artist.”

A natural-born optimist, Moyer is also energized by the customers who enter her studio space and joyfully interact with her. “Many people seem fascinated to see how things are made and the process of the work. They like to see the work in progress and the work at different stages, so they can get a picture of how my pieces are created. Coming into my studio makes their visit into more than just a shopping experience,” Moyer observed. “Seeing someone, in person, fall in love with a piece of my work – whether it’s a mug or a totem pole – brings me so much satisfaction.”

In addition to making sales and making conversation, Moyer is also impressed by the honest back-and-forth between herself and customers. “I meet so many people who are looking forward to a time in their lives when they can have the time to do something creative or personally satisfying. I feel so lucky that I made up a job for myself where I’ve gotten to do exactly what I dreamed of every day,” Moyer stressed. “I don’t look forward to retirement. I look forward to going to work, and that feels like a great way to live.”

Left: Alexis Moyer. *Photo by Susan Spencer*

Right: “Top Dog” totem created by Moyer. *Photo by Alexis Moyer*



Climbing over challenges

Like many entrepreneurs and self-employed artisans, Moyer has faced down the anxieties and worries that a health crisis can create. Three years ago, she became a kidney donor so that her daughter could receive a life-saving transplant. This is an emotionally draining scenario under any circumstance, but for a handmade entrepreneur it can become even more nerve-wracking and risky. A gallery proprietor and artist has to plan for the future – involving downturns in health and finances – and Moyer has always risen to those demands.

Below: “When Mom’s Away” totem created by Moyer.



“My challenges have been on a personal level. Balancing motherhood with running my business has always felt like I was trying to keep a lot of plates spinning to keep everyone happy and give all parts of my life the attention they need,” Moyer said. “I finally learned to STOP apologizing for everything I wasn’t doing and, instead, be grateful that I was my own boss and could close when I needed to.”

Leaning on her positive mind-set, Moyer viewed her self-employment as a godsend in a trying time. “I could close when my children needed me; and to me, that freedom is the gift that entrepreneurship gives to those brave enough to take the risk of being responsible for their own livelihood.”

Besides the expense of health insurance, Moyer points to “growth” as her biggest challenge: “Each of my pieces has to be handcrafted. There are no prints or reproductions that go with pottery. Since the creative part comes from me, it’s not something I can train others to do or delegate out. I can get help with some of the simpler production parts, but the creative work all originates with me. That is the biggest challenge in growing my business. I’ve finally come to understand that my business will grow through my prices going up and not through me creating work in ever-greater volume.”

Making a difference

Grateful for her good fortune, and wanting to show gratitude in her life, Moyer began a line of wall hearts that make a charitable donation to kidney research. She began this mission as she prepped for her kidney donation, and she continues to do this as a fund-raiser: “I call these my Hearts Full of Love. It is amazing to hear the stories from people who connect with them on a personal level, as well as spreading awareness around the importance of organ donation with everyone who purchases them.”

An active member of the national American Craft Week event for the past 7 out of 10 years, Moyer has organized Mendocino County Celebrates American Craft Week, which became the model for similar celebrations throughout the United States.



Above: “Lulu” – a commissioned dog portrait created by Moyer. *Photos by Alexis Moyer*

Until its recent closing, Moyer taught for 11 years at a group home for boys: “This gave me a chance to help high-school-aged boys in the juvenile justice system have the experience of creating projects from raw clay and seeing them turn it into useful items and sculptures. It was a way for these boys to experience ‘success’ when most of their lives have had mostly struggles.”

Finally, Moyer and a friend/collaborator are putting the finishing touches on a team-building activity that is ideal for businesses and other organizations. They are in the process of launching its website, and the venture will be called My Art Muse — Create!

“I think it’s important to make sure that creativity and thoughtful, generous communication are part of the workplace culture,” Moyer mused. “It is easy to lose those things when we get too much artificial intelligence and not enough humanity.”



HEY Of Note

Linda Billet lindabillet.com

Background basics

More than a decade ago, Linda Billet bid farewell to her job at the post office. She walked away and has never regretted that fateful decision. An artist who specializes in glass mosaics, Billet listens to her heart and then creates her pieces. She never has to fret about what came first: The chicken or the egg? The business plan or the inspiration? The pricing or the vision? For Billet, it's always what bubbles in her mind, and then the rest falls into place.

"I am not trying to make work that I'm sure will sell. I am trying to make good work that is saying what I want it to say. After the work is finished, then I go about selling it," Billet stated. "A lot of this philosophy comes with my age. A really great mosaic may take me a month or two to complete. That doesn't give me enough time to fabricate all the ideas I have in my head, and I get more ideas every day. There's no time to make work that is not important to me."

Handmade insight

Because Billet did not begin her art career right out of school – her time at the rural post office was a creative detour – Billet is cognizant of how fortunate she is to now be following her dreams and ambitions.

"I feel it is important to do what you love because one spends such a huge portion of their life working ... if you can call what I do work! I've met many successful people, in many different professions, who say that they feel they play all day and get paid. That is the ticket," Billet underscored. "When one loves what they do, they are willing to devote the huge amount of time and energy that it takes to become proficient at what they do."



Top: "Be the Change" mosaic created by Billet. *Photo by Linda Billet*

Above: Linda Billet. *Photo by Jessika Decembrino*



Above: “Imagine” mosaic created in collaboration with a local school.

Billet knows what she is talking about, because she utilized her saved vacation days as a mail carrier to provide her with enough Fridays off that she could enroll in a glass-blowing class at her local community college. She made her time and her schedule work in her favor. “I used to dream about a job that would allow me to bring my dog to work, where I could go barefoot, and come and go as I please. I live that dream now. In my view, that’s successful. It wasn’t easy getting here, but it was worth it.”

Climbing over challenges

After Billet exited the post office, she had to adjust her worldview and her expectations. “I could not have foreseen all the stymies that made success take longer than I had anticipated. It took so long for me to make money, I was forced to re-evaluate and up my game,” Billet recalled. “I am grateful for the way things have worked out.”

Observant and empathetic, Billet recognizes that overcoming obstacles is part of every entrepreneur’s life story. “No matter how bad or good something is, it is only temporary. When things are going well, I ride that wave and enjoy it while it lasts. When the inevitable stumbling blocks show up, I do my best to stay calm and figure out how I can make these problems work in my favor,” Billet emphasized.

In fact, Billet chronicled her own peaks and valleys in a book entitled “My Meteoric Rise (To Here).” The tome offered personal anecdotes and revelations. Billet wrote it in order to “encourage anyone who was struggling to realize their dreams.” Today, when she ruffles through it, she is pleased with her insights: “Now I can see that the result of that particular struggle is that I am now stronger, smarter, or in a better position because of it.”

Making a difference

Being a champion for herself and an advocate for others ranks high among Billet’s goals. She works with school children in group projects that involve creating and finishing a large mosaic together. “Because school projects are worked on by rotating groups of kids, each time a kid enters a room, there is a massive amount of progression that happened while they were gone. It is so cool to hear their praise for their own and each other’s work,” Billet revealed.

“I try to get done with projects a day early so I can talk to them about making a living in a non-traditional field. For years, I have kept letters from teachers with notes from kids. I try to give these kids faith in themselves and optimism about their future,” Billet stated. “This is not altruistic. This is my way of making the changes I wish to see in the world. I want to give these people self-confidence because they are the ones that will be piloting planes we are on, taking care of us in nursing homes, tending the world for you, me, and my grandchildren. It only makes sense to empower these people. I am doing what I can the way I am able, and that feels good.”



Above: An example of DeSchepper’s signature woven metal under glass technique. Photo by Ingrid Urena

Background basics

Tahmi DeSchepper is the very essence of a Renaissance woman. Able to see a need, and then envision a way to solve it, the jewelry designer is “crafty” in every sense of the word. She is enterprising, resilient, curious, talented, clever, and driven.

“Because I’m self-taught in so many different areas, I was never exposed to the ‘this can’t/shouldn’t be done’ limitations that are the unintentional byproduct of the educational process. For example, I can’t tell you how many times well-meaning glass workers have come over to explain to me why my signature ‘woven metal under glass’ technique is wrong/shouldn’t work/won’t work. Even as I have the sparkly proof that it does work in my booth! And because I go down the path rarely traveled, my work has a distinctive look all its own,” DeSchepper described.

Handmade insights

While attending shows, a practice that she has worked hard to wean herself away from, she would hear peers grouse that there were “too many jewelers here.” DeSchepper never heeded that warning. Instead, she knew that if a customer gravitated to her creations, then she really didn’t have any competition at the fair.

“I think that as well as having a unique aesthetic, my customers also responded to my practicality. For example, I created two different clasping systems that made my work easy to put on all by yourself, first thing in the morning, before glasses and coffee. I created work that would look awesome with a black dress but would garner just as many compliments when paired with blue jeans.”

DeSchepper viewed the daily rituals and lifestyles of her customers and the people she strove to attain as clients: “I tried to look at how much customers lived their lives and tried to create artistic jewelry that would fit into those lives.”

Climbing over challenges

After graduating college, like many other fresh-faced students, DeSchepper found it hard to find a full-time job. In 1991, she took matters into her own hands when she was turned down for a position at a sandwich shop due to not having any food-related experience.

Rather than retreating or surrendering, she figured out what she did have experience in and launched her own business. In her college work-study, she had been taught how to do book repairs, so that’s what she proceeded to do. Denying that this was potential “library lunacy,” she founded the Scriptorium, an archival-book repair service. “I provided services to libraries and individuals all over Iowa. It just seemed obvious to me that if no one would give me a job, then I’d just make one for myself!”

This same moxie popped up again when she created Zephyr Consulting, a business that assisted telecommunications companies with problems in their billing and provisioning systems. Zephyr flourished until 2002, when the tech crash upended everything. DeSchepper knew that it was time to formulate a new game plan.

“While on the road doing consulting work, I had also been working various textile techniques in metal, just to see what the possibilities might be, and to keep myself entertained in the hotel room at night,” she reminisced. “I had created a line where I wove



Above: DeSchepper hard at work. *Photo by Jason Flora*

a traditional rope weave around a mandrel, then filled the hollow space with pearls, thus creating a ‘rope of pearls.’ I took these up to the Arts Center in Des Moines, and the gift store manager said that he’d never seen anything like it. He immediately put them in his store, and I knew I’d found the next direction for my entrepreneurial passion.”

One of the reasons why DeSchepper has landed on her feet so frequently is her adaptable perspective: “I think that because of my past experiences, I thought of myself as a business owner first, and an artist second. I was able to avoid that mental block thinking of myself as an artist trying to make a living from their work.”

Making a difference

Among all the hours that DeSchepper spends inventing and innovating, she has also managed to carve out time for online communities, like Flourish at Artisan Indie. She gravitates to the groups that offer the tools for creative types to build online stores and businesses. “I have benefited greatly from people generously sharing knowledge with me over the years, and I love to give back by sharing my knowledge when I can. But I do have my toes in many different online communities and am always happy to share resources and knowledge with those who are ready to get off the road and take their creative business in a new direction,” DeSchepper offered.

Additionally, DeSchepper is enthused about the work she is doing with Amazon. She was selected by Handmade at Amazon to meet with policymakers regarding what this service has done for her handcrafted business and others that she is aware of. Amazon also handpicked her to be filmed to raise the profile of her business and of handmade entrepreneurs. “I am excited about this opportunity and the additional opportunities for advocacy this might create.”

Background basics

Kristi Lyn Glass does not cower from a dilemma. While some people tremble with worry or fret about where to turn, Glass has confidence that she is trekking in the right direction. She doesn't scramble her mind with anxiety about her orienteering or her creative decisions. The old expression "God is my copilot" definitely applies to Glass and her daily decisions, large and small. "I now sincerely believe He wants me to be a path finder, to create beautiful and useful things, and to offer them to others for their enjoyment and benefit. I realized my hard work and efforts were 'paying off' when people began to resonate with this vision and started appreciating and buying my creations," Glass said.

Handmade insights

Currently, Glass's inventory includes a buffet of different devices and household goods: "My artwork brings beauty and positive emotion into the home. My decorative pill organizers keep pills handy, while enhancing one's décor; they also make pill-taking a more pleasurable experience. My UnderCover secret storage cubes disguise clutter or unmentionables yet make them easy to access. My SteedBeads rhythm beads (jingling necklaces for horses) have many purposeful uses while adding bling and a pleasant jingle to one's ride. My Protestant prayer beads organize and incentivize one's prayer time, while providing beauty and comfort in hand. This brings one closer to God on a regular basis."

When Glass surveys her output, she is happy to see that it connects with customers and reflects her devotion to a non-materialistic purpose. "To me, the allure of my business is to be able to use my God-given talents to create and market artwork and beautiful products that are useful and have positive effects on others' lives," Glass revealed. "I love the creation process, and I am driven by God to explore new creative opportunities and media. I am gratified to have fulfilled God's directives when my efforts strike a chord with others and my creations find welcome homes in their hands and homes."

Climbing over challenges

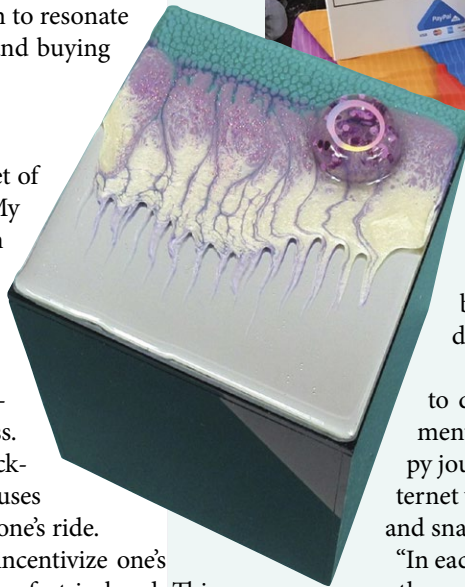
Glass has always been an entrepreneur and a self-identified "path finder." She founded and managed Metro-Net, a "precursor to the Internet in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area." On that same platform, she devised Mainframe Games: "It was so people could play mainframe-based computer games by the hour, using telephone modems and dumb terminals."

Beyond computer technology, she was also the conduit for readers, writers, and publishers of gothic and romantic-suspense novels to connect with one another. She put out the bi-monthly news and review magazine Gothic Journal. "This effort led me to learn how to create pen-and-ink drawings of 'great gothic romance-novel settings,' like castles and mansions, usual-



Above: Glass at her booth.

Left: Glass' UnderCover design.



ly on sea cliffs," Glass observed. "Once I had thus dabbled in the world of art, that interest blossomed, leading me to explore other media, including beading and jewelry making."

It was perhaps Providence that allowed Glass to discover and coax out this artistic temperament. Her computer businesses and her hard-copy journal were about to become obsolete. The Internet would replace the need for mainframe games and snail-mail-delivered newsletters.

"In each of these situations, the writing was literally on the computer screen, so it was obviously time to turn my energies elsewhere," Glass recollected. "Actually, it was somewhat of a relief to quit trying to push those ropes uphill. But when each thread was cut, another intriguing one invariably appeared."

Making a difference

After relocating from Minnesota to Nevada, Glass has labored tirelessly on behalf of her fellow Elko residents. She has served as President of the Elko Country Art Club, is a 22-year member of the Northeastern Nevada Museum, belongs to the Elko Area Chamber of Commerce, and has donated her creations to charitable groups for silent auctions and fund-raisers.

One of Glass's most gratifying avocations is the work she has done with women in need: "I saw an abundance of unchecked codependency and alcoholism in the small Nevada town where I now live. I therefore wrote and conducted for many years (for a local nonprofit) a 12-session workshop for women titled 'Keys to Happiness and Healthy Relationships.' That workshop stressed the importance of a connection with a Higher Power. That concept led me to use my bead inventory and skills to create and market Protestant prayer beads to encourage others to embrace and regularize that connection."

Utilizing her goods in order to do good for others has always held a special significance in her heart, and this was the perfect forum for creativity and honoring the Creator.

Background basics

If it's true that behind every great man, there is a great woman. Then it stands to reason that behind every great clay, there might be an equally great woman, too. Carrie Story is the developer and manufacturer of a line of metal clays. Occasionally, she will teach students how to work with the metal clays – leading them through the clay's unique properties and abilities. "My art is the hobby behind the clay. I love clay. It is my passion. I love creating with it. However, I am more successful making the clay than creating art to sell. So, to pay my bills, I must focus more effort on

technical properties than creative," she assessed.

While working in this still-new field, Story has relied upon the moral support and understanding of her husband. "He gave me the confidence to jump in headfirst and continues to stand by my decisions while offering clear advice when I need it," she shared. "I would say I manage to move forward in my business because I have a very positive attitude about things in general. If something doesn't work, just try something else. There is never a wrong answer or move. It just might not have been the best one. Everyone has constant opportunities for improvement. Don't be afraid to make a move because it might not be the right one. Just make the move and work through the challenges as they come."

Handmade insights

One of Story's major decisions has been to remain a small business. This is a conscious and well-thought-out business model. "This means I am always looking for ways to be competitive as a small business, not trying to compete with the large players. I spend vast amounts of time trying to determine what the large players are missing and fill those customer needs. There is a reason the customers come to me. They want something that is different. They want the things that no one else has."

As a small-business owner, Story has the ability to establish one-on-one connections and to use that individual knowledge to her company's advantage. "When presented with a problem, I will normally try to step back and say to myself, 'If I were the customer, what would I want?'" That little question has gotten me through some very difficult decisions."

Climbing over challenges

Like all of the HEY honorees, Story has had her fill of setbacks and snafus. Her optimism, determination, and indomitable spirit combine to see her through. "I have faced many roadblocks. The challenges themselves are what motivate me. I think a competitive nature can be very helpful in many busi-



Above from left: One of Story's pieces being worn. *Photo by Carrie Story*
• Story working hard. *Photo by Ashley Lozano*

Left: An example of Story's metal clay necklaces. *Photo by Linda Purcell*

ness dealings. The desire to win in every business move can be instinctual. I don't always achieve the goal, but that is a good thing as well, for it teaches me another valuable lesson."

There are specific challenges that Story has encountered, and these have also worked as life primers: "It is important to maintain a positive attitude and a little competitive nature to overcome obstacles like existing contracts that could hamper new business development. With a positive attitude, I can generally find a way through the issue and continue moving forward with the idea."

The metal clay field is relatively new, and its adherents are in an artistic revolution of sorts. Story's company's name, Clay Revolution, addresses that "upstart/new kid in town" identity. Without a long-storied past to draw upon, she finds it difficult at times to see into the next few decades. "Predicting the future is by far the hardest challenge. Adjusting to changes and developing new plans is a daily routine. I have become accustomed to dealing with things as they come. However, when planning for future investments and new concepts, I find myself questioning which is the right move," Story stated.

Making a difference

When Story leads a teaching session or a hands-on workshop, she bonds with her class. In fact, this is one of her most treasured experiences. "There is nothing more satisfying than seeing my students achieve their goals. The joy they feel when they reach a goal or learn a difficult lesson is overwhelming. Nothing can make you feel prouder than knowing you helped to get them to that goal. I watch them grow, support their needs, and help motivate them to continue every day," Story remarked.

Another moment that Story will cherish is her invitation to develop and manage the Camp PMC Certification Program. "The endeavor is a huge undertaking. However, the honor of working on this project will stick with me for years to come. It will help perpetuate my small business and increase customer awareness for the Clay Revolution brand. I am looking forward to more exciting years to come!" ^{HB}

STARTING A BUSINESS BASED

Why a business plan is necessary

By Patrice Lewis

What is the difference between a successful artisan business and an unsuccessful one? Often it comes down to whether or not the artist created a business plan. For an artist to run a financially successful business, that business must be based on facts, not fantasy.

Many artisan businesses were created informally, with the crafter diving in and figuring things out as he went. While a business plan might seem like a cold and pointless exercise, in fact such a plan will quickly point out whether an incipient business can become fiscally sound, or whether it should stay as a hobby. Starting a business on paper is often the best way to learn if the business can get off the ground in real life.

Why a business plan

If you're an artistic type, then creating something as numbers-focused and boringly professional as a business plan might seem anathema to your creative endeavors. How dare the reality of facts, figures, and finances encroach on your fantasy?



ON FACTS, NOT FANTASY

Be as outraged as you wish; but the unyielding fact of the matter is a business plan can help you determine whether or not your art can provide you with a viable living. A business plan asks the tough questions before the harsh realities of the marketplace ask them for you.

What is a business plan? Think of it as a roadmap that guides the creator through each stage of starting and managing a business. It gives structure to what might otherwise be a nebulous dream based on unrealistic hopes (“Gee, honey, I think I can make a fortune selling frammerjammets! Let’s sink our retirement into this idea!”).

The most critical thing about a business plan is it allows you to identify weaknesses. Sometimes these weaknesses are just areas you hadn’t considered before and need to be thought through and shored up. And sometimes these weaknesses are crippling indicators your product or service does not have a large enough customer base to become a full-fledged business. Believe me, the time to figure this out is before you sink your life savings into manufacturing frammerjammets, only to lose everything.

Before you begin

We all like to think our art or craft is so special and unique that of course it will sell. But the cold reality is businesses are market driven. If you don’t have customers, you don’t have a business. Your job is not just to find the customers, but to create a product or service those customers want.

A starting point should be what’s formally called a UVP (Unique Value Proposition), which simply means how your product or service will solve a problem in a better way than your competition. Think of it as your slogan: “You’ve tried the rest, now try the best” or some such reason a customer should lay down money for your product.

If you can answer this question – why your product or service is unique and valuable – then you’re well on your way to creating a business plan.

Types of business plans

There are nearly as many types of business plans as there are small businesses. A business plan for a startup bakery differs from a business plan for a construction company, which differs from a business plan for a daycare, etc. But no matter the business, a plan contains several common elements.

The two basic categories of business plans are the “Traditional” plan and the “Lean” startup plan. Which type you use depends on several factors, including whether or not you’ve run a business before, and whether or not you’re seeking funding.

In a nutshell, the Traditional plan is long, detailed, and takes a lot of time to write. The Lean startup plan is more like a short summary, takes very little time, and is often confined to one page. While it may be tempting to take the shortcut and use a Lean startup plan, don’t do so if it means you just want to cheat and/or ignore fiscal reality.

That said, sometimes Lean plans are more useful for the beginning business because you may not know all the answers yet. If you're still perfecting your product, figuring out your customer base, trying new marketing strategies, or adjusting your manufacturing, then your learning curve is steep and you're not in a position to fill in the details necessary for a Traditional plan.

Think of a Lean plan like an "elevator pitch" in which you can explain the essence of your business in the length of time it would take to ride an elevator (about 60 seconds). During that time, you should be able to describe your product, your market demographic, your sales strategy, and other critical components to a stranger. If your mythical elevator companion asks a question you can't answer – such as "What's the market like for your product?" or "How much competition do you face?" – then it's back to the drawing board. Those are important questions and you need to be able to answer them.

The exception in focusing on a Lean plan is whether you're seeking funding. Most banks or investors will want a lot more detail than the Lean plan offers.

Parts of a business plan

While the following elements are listed in the order they should appear in the finished document, please note they are not necessarily listed in the order they should be written.

- **Executive summary.** What do you expect your business to accomplish? What goods and services will it sell? What is your mission statement? Why are you starting this business, and what is your experience that will make it work? Since the Executive Summary is meant to highlight what you intend to discuss in the rest of the plan, the Small Business Administration suggests this be written last.
- **Company Description.** What are your goals? What customer demographic do you plan to serve, and how will your goods or services be helpful to your target audience? How will your business stand out from the competition?
- **Market Analysis.** This portion of a business plan illustrates how well you know the industry. Use data and statistics to discuss past trends in the market, where it's expected to go, and how/where your business will fit in. This is also where you specify details of the customer demographic to which you'll be marketing (such as their income level, interests, etc.).
- **Competitive Analysis.** What's your competition in the marketplace? What are your competitors' strengths and weaknesses? How will your business compare? What issues (such as startup cash, etc.) might prevent you from jumping into the market?

- **Management/Organization.** How will your business be set up? How many employees will you have, and what are their responsibilities? Is there a chain of command? A board of directors? Obviously, this usually doesn't apply to small artisan businesses, so if you're a mom-and-pop operation, say so. However, be sure to detail what each person's job description is and what they'll be doing.
- **Products/Services.** This is where you provide greater details about what you're selling. What do you make/serve/create? How long are the products supposed to last? How do these products or services meet an existing need? Who are your suppliers? How much does it cost (and how much time does it take) to make your products? How much will you sell them for? Are there any patent or copyright concerns?
- **Marketing Plan.** This is where the financial rubber meets the road. How will you get your products and services in front of potential customers? Don't be vague; this is where you need solid, concrete steps to promote your business. This portion of the business plan should also include a budget to implement your marketing efforts.
- **Sales Strategy.** How will you sell your products? Again, be concrete, clear, and specific. If you plan to hire a sales rep, say so. What are your sales targets?
- **Request for Funding.** This portion may or may not apply to you as the artisan. However if you believe you'll need startup cash – and especially in the subjective and fickle arts and crafts market – you will need to be absolutely crystal-clear and solid in the rest of the proposal so investors or banks will see you as a professional, not an amateur.
- **Financial Projections.** Let's face it, you're in business to make money, not lose it. This is where you outline your financial goals and expectations based on the market research you did earlier. List the anticipated revenue for the first year, and projected earnings through the second, third, fourth, and fifth year in business. Don't be modest; but don't be unrealistically optimistic either.

Predicting the future

Many entrepreneurs gnash their teeth at business plans because they legitimately point out they can't predict the future. How can they forecast their income if the business is a startup?

Don't worry; no one expects you to peer into a crystal ball. Instead, concentrate on realistically assessing your potential sales. It can be very informal: "Let's see – if I attend four craft shows this summer and sell 40 items per



Where Do I Find a Business Plan?

- www.sba.gov The Small Business Administration is an excellent starting point.
- www.bplans.com or https://www.bplans.com/sample_business_plans.php is a great source for sample business plans tailored to a wide variety of businesses.

show at \$10 per item, then I project sales of \$1,600 for those shows. Subtract travel costs and booth fees, as well as the cost of materials, and my profits will be \$1,000.” Adjust this scenario for your particular product or service, and your particular marketing plans, and you have the general idea for how to forecast your income.

Morphing your business plan

In the face of changing circumstances, some artisans are at a place where they aren't sure if they should alter their business plan or scrap it and start over.

To an extent, business plans are fluid and changeable. You don't want something so rigid and unchangeable that you can't roll with the punches or adapt to changing circumstances. But nor do you want to ignore the fiscal realities of what it takes to make your business a success.

Sometimes a business morphs into something unexpected. Perhaps one type of product line took off and left others in the dust. Perhaps you changed from retail to wholesale or vice versa. Perhaps you partnered up with another artist producing a different but compatible item. This is where you start wondering whether you should alter your existing business plan or scrap it and start again.

Marketing tactics can (and often must) change frequently until you figure out what works and what doesn't. If you find yourself compulsively following your business

plan even though it's imposing unnecessary restrictions – if it's replacing creativity and experimentation with rigidity – then it's probably time to scrap it and start again, creating a new plan based on what's worked for you.

“Creating a business plan implies that the entrepreneur can adequately prepare for the major components of their business,” notes Brian Hamilton, founder of the Brian Hamilton Foundation. “This is simply not the case for startups. ... The financial aspect of business planning is almost always a fool's errand in the beginning.”

But if your business is merely adjusting as it expands, then a business plan can be adjusted as well. This is where you can put your plan to work! Track your actual results against your financial forecast on a regular basis. This will tell you whether you need to adjust your budget, tweak your sales forecast, or alter your marketing strategies. That plan is a tool. Use it.

An analogy: Can you build a house?

A business plan has been described as a blueprint for your business. Just as you wouldn't walk over to an empty lot and start nailing boards together if you wanted to build a house, neither should you build a business without a blueprint.

Yet for millennia, people have built houses without blueprints, drawing upon their personal experience as



well as the knowledge of more experienced builders. Sometime these “seat of the pants” houses fell apart, and sometimes they lasted for centuries.

If a builder is a novice at his craft – or if he needs funding for the house – then a blueprint is necessary. But blueprints must sometimes change or alter depending on the reality of building the house. Requirements can change (“We’re having another baby! Let’s add another bedroom to the house!”) or circumstances can alter (“Let’s build on a different piece of property with a slope”). If the blueprint no longer fits the house, time to create another blueprint. But if the house can continue to be built with just a few minor alterations, then the blueprint can be modified to reflect that. Same with a business.

Do I even need a business plan?

Endless successful small businesses have been created without the formality of a business plan. Whether or not you actually need one depends on several factors.

One, how good is your business sense? Have you created a business before? Do you have a head for numbers? Do you have a realistic grasp of your market, how to sell, and what you’re competing against? Many people have an instinctive understanding of (or real-world experiences with) these matters and can create a successful small business by the seat of their pants.

Two, are you seeking venture capital or other funding for your business? If so, then a business plan is not just necessary, but expected. It not only demonstrates your professionalism, but it puts on paper what an investor needs to see.

“Writing a business plan is the best way to test whether or not an idea for starting a business is feasible, other than going out and doing it,” observes Susan Ward in *The Balance Small Business*. “In this sense, the business plan is your safety net; writing a business plan can save you a great deal of time and money if working through the business plan reveals that your business idea is untenable.”

Bottom lines are important

Many artistic types like to claim they don’t have a math brain. They prefer to focus on the creative output for which they’re so talented. Yet they believe their art or craft has enough fiscal merit to turn it into a successful business.

If this is you, then enlist the aid of someone more focused on numbers and get crackin’ on turning your art into a financial success. There’s no finer feeling than knowing your talent can be translated into the dollars needed to support you and your family through your creative genius. ^{HB}



Patrice Lewis is a wife, mother, homesteader, homeschooler, author, blogger, columnist, and speaker. An advocate of simple living and self-sufficiency, she has practiced and written about self-reliance and preparedness for almost 30 years. She is experienced in homestead animal husbandry and small-scale dairy production, food preservation and canning, country relocation, home-based businesses, homeschooling, personal money management, and food self-sufficiency. She and her husband have been married since 1990 and have two daughters.

WHAT READERS HAD TO SAY

Mark Bair
M D Bair Studio LLC

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

Always. Never think you have a perfect plan. As soon as you do your done! I look at my plan as an outline to work within. I'm not afraid to make sensible changes. I review my plan monthly to keep me on track and see what isn't working.

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

In my old life I was a sales rep. We had to manage our time and schedule on our own. The better you plan the more successful you were. I have carried that with me to my full-time art business.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

It's a matter of adjusting to your market or reinventing yourself to find new markets. If you have collectors, they want fresh new work. The biggest problem now is the old collectors are aging out and downsizing. The 30 something crowd are minimalists, so the work needs to appeal to their interest and passion.

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I am always thinking about my plan and adjusting as needed. With that said, no sudden moves. A couple bad shows does not mean you need to make major changes. Be aware of the market and what successful artists are doing. Don't get caught up in negativity. It's an easy road to go down and that doesn't serve you.

What advice do you have?

Plan your work and work your plan. Keep a daily, monthly, and yearly schedule and review every day. Don't be afraid to adjust as needed. Plan time, your time, wisely. Show up in your studio every day even when you don't feel creative. Plan time in the week for the "nasty chores," bookkeeping, show scheduling, paying taxes, and keeping a P/L. If you can do this successfully you will reap the rewards!

Chuck Flagg
Flagg Pottery

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

As things have changed, as I age, I need to make some changes, but I'm not sure which way to move.

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

I learned as a student of the College of Hard Knocks. Mostly watching and asking other artists what worked and didn't for them. Reading up on as many sources that I could.

Explain any hardships you had while developing your business plan.

When I first did some wholesaling, I undercut myself on prices. I improved with a long-term order for speech tournament trophy's for Bradley University for 40 years. Earning an average of \$3,500-\$4,000 each year at the end of the calendar year. It paid all the cost of my studio and clay supply through the lean sales months of January-April. I also added small batch mugs with custom logos for coffee shops and B & B's.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

With an extended stay in the hospital twice last year I lost some small orders and had to retire from my bigger money trophy order. (I turned the order over to a younger potter friend).

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I am trying to figure that out right now.

What advice do you have?

Don't put all your eggs in one basket even though it helped me for years. Like an investment plan I have to diversify my pottery business. For 44 years I did 70% art fairs, 20% wholesale, and 10% internet and custom orders. I am still figuring which way is best for me at 72.

Marge Wisniewski Lovecakes Jewelry

Do you have a business plan?

No.

Why don't you have a business plan?

I need to make one. I've been working on it, but I could use some help.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

Just the fact that I need to make one and I want to do it correctly.

Sharon Griffin The Sassy Crafter

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Explain any hardships you had while developing your business plan?

When first coming up with a plan, I had a hard time figuring out why I would need one. When my business began to evolve, I had a hard time scrapping my original plan, and reworking it so that it would work with my new business model.

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

I used various books and magazines related to business, and online searches for creating/purpose of business plans.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

I changed it because business has changed from strictly selling in person at craft shows to selling both online and in person.

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I rewrote it from the beginning.

What advice do you have?

Take your time. Don't be afraid to scrap your first plan and start over. Your plan does not have to be written in stone, it should evolve over time as your business evolves.

Sandra Morris Tower House Dolls

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

In the hurly burly of doing business, it's easy to lose sight of the big picture!

Explain any hardships you had while developing your business plan.

It's difficult to forecast stuff.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

Revisit it often, it's tempting to do it once then file and forget.

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I wrote a new plan.

What advice do you have?

It's ok to tear the old one up and start again. A business plan should be organic, not fixed in stone.

Anonymous

Do you have a business plan?

No.

Why don't you have a business plan?

I don't have one because when I started glass with a different business my partner wanted to do this "for fun" not for "making money" so we never made one. I never got around to making a plan of my own for this business. Though I am now working backwards through "Business Accounting for the Numerophobe" it doesn't seem to be a very profitable endeavor. After five years, I realized I should have done one first because I've since discovered what I make is not very profitable, takes too much time, and not enough money coming in. Wasted effort.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

How to write one!

Dee Durkee

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

Best to prepare backup plans. Things are always changing, and we cannot depend on consistent sales or acceptance at shows and exhibits.

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

I looked at other artists traditional plans from business and pulled out the parts which fit me. For example, I included continuing education, research, and time off for exploring.

Explain any hardships you had while developing your business plan.

Sticking to what I thought I could accomplish. I was not good at estimating time.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

As I said, things change. I try to adjust my work on what I see folks want or like. Also, I made my first art business plan while I lived in the Midwest and found that I had a whole new set of criteria and buyer interest when I moved to the Southwest.

What advice do you have?

Keep looking at your plan, perhaps posting it somewhere you can see it. Be ready to adjust it after shows, exhibitions, and monthly payments from galleries.

Cara Codd

Do you have a business plan?

No.

Why don't you have a business plan?

I'm just starting out and haven't created one yet.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

Yes! I don't have a clue where to start.

Kim Joy Art Happens on Tarboro

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

I have no idea if I am writing one correctly.

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

I borrowed books from the public library.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

I changed it because my business is ever growing and changing slightly.

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I altered my existing plan.

What advice do you have?

Seek professional help instead of trying to wing it on your own with a book! I am going to the local SBC to get help.

A Wright Prancing Pony Pottery

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

As an experienced business manager, I had helped many other businesses develop plans, it was a no-brainer when it came time to do my own.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

Etsy figured into my original business plan and once they started changing their rules and artist-only format, I abandoned the idea of business with them.

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I altered my existing plan.

What advice do you have?

Create a business plan even if you think you don't need one.

Anonymous

Do you have a business plan?

Yes.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

I wrote it many years ago when I first started, but I have not updated it. My business model has changed so much

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

I used books and attended a free one-night class at a community college.

Explain any hardships you had while developing your business plan.

I had a difficult time trying to predict the future.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

The internet came into being.

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I altered my existing business plan.

What advice do you have?

A business plan is like a road map, if you don't have a destination or planned route you don't know where you are going or where you will end up. How will you know when you get there? It is okay to take side trips, but you have to get back to the main route sometime.

Annette Crawford AJ's Craft Cottage

Do you have a business plan?

No

Why don't you have a business plan?

I'm very small and just starting out. I would put one together if I had intentions of getting a loan or opening a physical store.

Do you have any concerns regarding business plans?

It's not a concern, but I do try to keep accurate records, so I know the status of my business from a profit/loss standpoint. I have goals for specific activities (social media, new product launches, classes, etc.) but nothing formal.

Celia Ridge Blue Heron Silks

Do you have a business plan?

Yes

Did you use any sources to help develop your business plan? If so, what sources did you use?

My dad helped me create one.

Have you changed your business plan?

Yes.

Why did you change it?

Business plans are a guideline. They are meant to be changed as you go through the process

Did you write a new plan or alter your existing one?

I altered an existing one.



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Successful Summer Market

Sizzling weather, sizzling sales (but the “hot” market had nothing to do with ambient temperature). Gift buyer attendance continued strong, more than doubling in just the past 7 years. The new 315,000 square feet “Expo at World Market Center Las Vegas” building, replacing the Pavilions, remains on schedule and will be ready to open at next year’s summer market. The “Meet the Makers Tour” on Monday went exceptionally well, showcasing the work of handmade artisans. Finally, there was increased interest by many buyers looking into handmade in North America products as a potential hedge against the impact of increased tariffs on made in China products as part of the current administration’s on-going trade war with China.

Elizabeth Moss a 17-year industry veteran joined the Las Vegas Market tradeshow leasing team. Two existing members of the team –Priscila Gilburg and Michelle Karol –will take on additional category responsibilities.



Nashville Wraps Welcomes New Staff

Nashville Wraps welcomes Cathy Brown as Custom Print Manager. Brown has over 25 years of marketing, sales, customer service and vendor relations experience in the retail and gift industries. Just in time for the release of the Fall/Holiday 2019 catalog.



Find with Ferret

Ferret (www.findwithferret.com) is an exciting, new, internet-based, innovative discovery app allowing wholesale buyers of goods to connect with wholesale sellers. Its initial focus is on “handcrafted in America products.” It is the creation of Martha Bennington (The 3 Sisters Design Co., The Wild Rumpus Room collectives in Atlanta and Las Vegas, and the “Artisans Who Wholesale” closed Facebook group) and Kathleen Plate (Smart Glass Art). The system allows buyers to search listing artisans’ work by product category and trade show presence, enabling them to directly contact sellers and/or facilitate an order. Buyers can utilize the system at no cost while listing sellers are charged a nominal \$9.99/month, or \$99.00/year.



Emerald Expositions Additions



New senior management team and reorganization at Emerald Expositions (“EEX” – NY Now, American Handmade Philadelphia & IGES/SSS). In addition to Ms. Sally Shankland, President and CEO, and Brian Field, COO, three additional, new Executive Vice Presidents, formerly with UBM Americas, have joined the EEX Senior Management team: Lori Silva, EVP of retail; Jessica Blue, EVP of Emerald Connect; and Amy Sklar, EVP of customer solutions. The new, on-going reorganization groups all retail shows together, as well as all design shows together.

“Retail Renaissance” Revives Show Experience

Summer, 2019 show had excellent attendance (estimated at 25,000+ buyers) throughout all five days defined the “Retail Renaissance” at NY NOW over a beautiful, extended summer weekend in NYC. Co-location of the National Stationery Show (NSS) and JA New York added to the overall draw of the revitalized show. Thirty new features and events highlighted the show, including: Daily Fashion Runway shows in the Crystal Palace, a memory wall in the Accent on Design section commemorating 35 years of passion and design excellence, an Epicurean Kitchen featuring live demonstrations by expert chefs, CBDNOW, chicNOW, First Taste and expanded Transcend spaces throughout the show creating new experiences by notable interior designers. Most important, however, the Handmade Designer Maker section was busy throughout its four days and an overwhelming majority of exhibitors reported excellent orders/sales, from both new and returning retailers.

Abound for Artisans

Abound (www.abound.com, formerly “Replagic”) has launched an internet-based site for connecting artisan sellers with manufacturers’ representatives. Their system includes over 2,500 “vetted” manufacturers’ “reps” across over 100 industry categories, as well as 13,000+ entrepreneurial “brands”/makers. In recognition of the on-going explosion of craft/micro/early-stage “brands”, the system facilitates connecting, and encouraging, conversations between “reps” and “brands”/independent artisans. The system has significant potential to expand and grow.

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By Donald Clark
justask@handmade-business.com

Guiding Tools for Your Business

How business plans and charity donations can help you

Q *I've been told I should have a business plan. I'm not sure what a business plan is and why I need one.*

A **(Donald Clark):** Think of a business plan as a tool to guide you as you develop and grow your business. This certainly applies to a maker beginning a production business as well as a retailer planning to open a shop. Existing businesses can also benefit from a business plan. It is typically written to contain the goals for your business, how and when you intend to reach those goals. Let's look out how a business plan can help you.

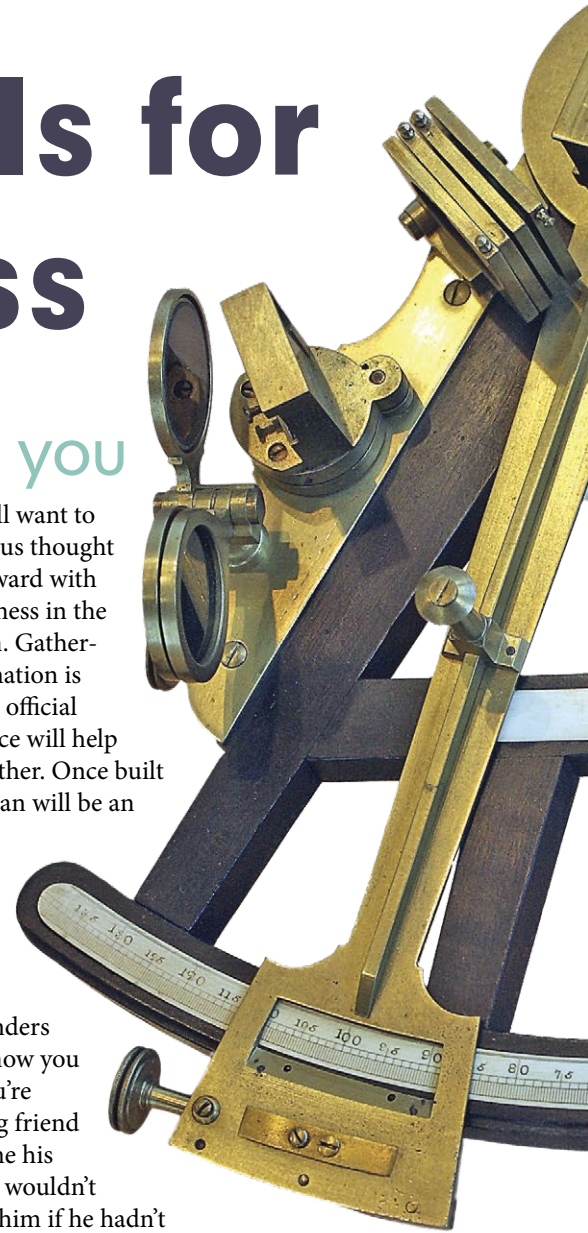
A business plan is an essential tool to guide you when planning a new business. There are numerous boiler plate forms available online. Search around to find one that will best serve the nature of your proposed business. Then it's really a matter of filling in the blanks, so to speak.

In addition to the online sources for business plans you would be wise to consider a visit to your local U.S. Small Business Administration Office (SBA). Typically, you'll find assistance with your business plan development, market analysis, cash flow analysis, personnel and organizational issues, guidance to conventional and non-conventional financing, and marketing. Often these offices operate in conjunction with and support from the state. I'm sure you'll find an SBA office in your area with an online search.

In my mind the most important benefit of creating a business plan is the process will force you to focus. First, you'll have to think through the rationale for opening said business, you'll want to do some demographic research, is there data supporting a need in your area? Then, you'll want to create a budget to cover the start-up costs and operating expenses for the first year of the business. You'll also have to project income for that year and the sources of that income. If income doesn't cover the

expenses, you'll want to put some serious thought into going forward with your new business in the proposed form. Gathering this information is your work, the official in the SBA office will help you put it together. Once built the business plan will be an aid for procuring funding; whether from a bank, family member or friend all prospective lenders will want to know you know what you're doing. A young friend recently told me his banker said he wouldn't have talked to him if he hadn't been guided by the SBA. Best news, the assistance the SBA provides is free. Once you start the business the work you did planning it will be a guide for your business and aid in its growth.

What about an existing business, what would that owner want with a business plan? Typically, an informed business owner is always operating with a plan in their minds. I'd suggest creating an actual written long- and short-term plan for the business. This would require the same collection of data as above. The difference here is that it would be factual based on the past performance of the business. It would be a time to analyze the progress the business has made based on the original plan. Unknown factors seem to always





come up changing the directions we have chosen in business as in life. Why not take time to sit back and take stock of where your business is now and where you want it to be in a year, five years, and write a new plan to help you guide your business there.

Now what about a one-off maker, artist? A business plan of a different nature may be helpful for you also. This would best be thought of as a career guide. Think about the work you've completed. What bodies of work are planned, what would be the time frame for completing each? Once completed how will you market them? If you have a relationship with a gallery, you're halfway there. If not, you'll want to have a plan for approaching galleries and shops with your work. You may wish to have a web site where you can refer prospective galleries.

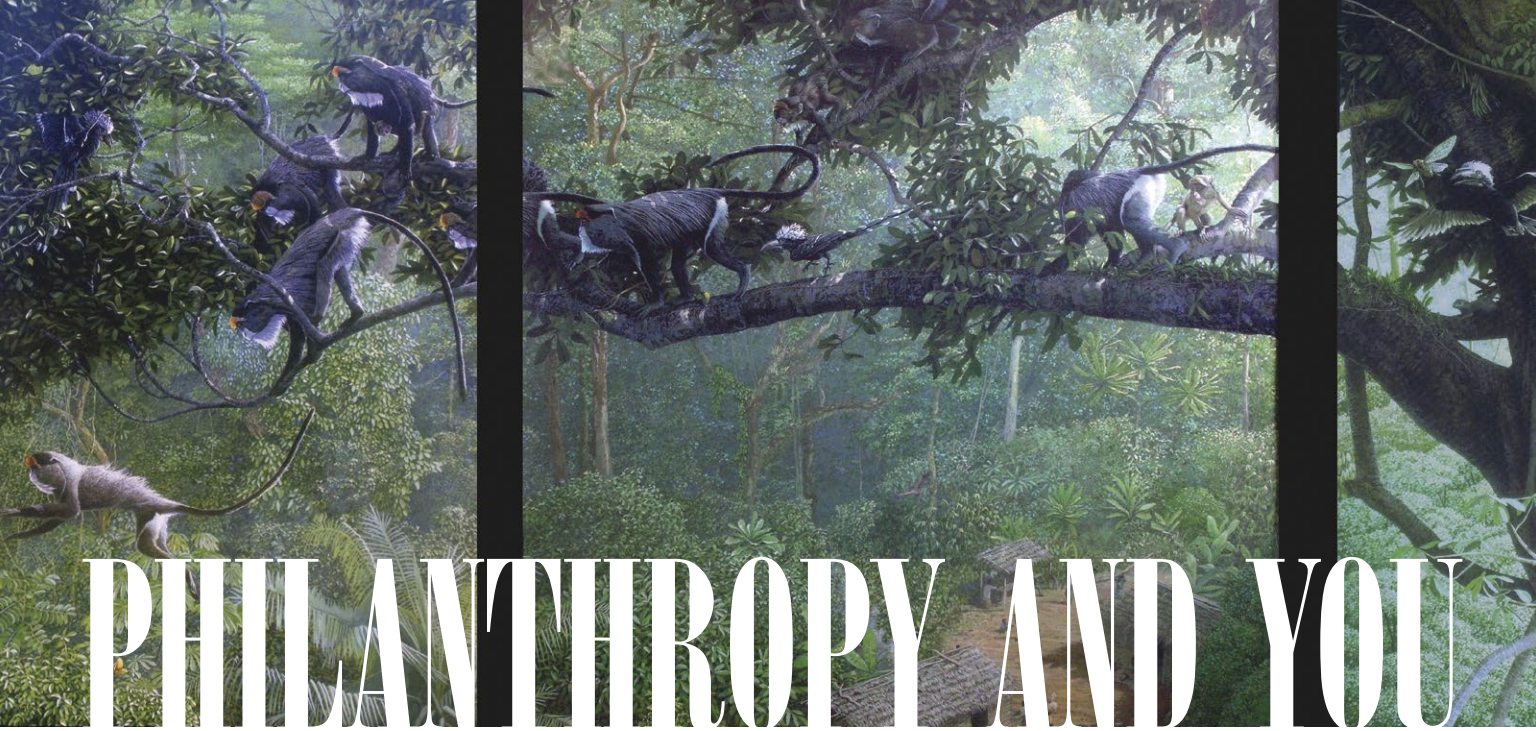
Q Nonprofit charities in my area often ask for a donation for their fundraisers. Although this occurs throughout the year it is more frequent during the holiday season. Is it wise for me to always say yes?

A DC: This can be a tough call. On the one hand we all want to be good citizens and support local events. On the other hand, we want to stay in business, and we may not be able to say yes to all requests. Here are some thoughts.

1. Create a giving plan, choose charities doing work that resonates with you and your family. Then you can explain to the others your giving plan.
2. Sometimes you'll have to deviate from your plan it's hard to say no when approached by a good customer.
3. Typically, your work is going to end up in an auction, either silent or called. I think it's perfectly appropriate and perhaps necessary to negotiate a plan that will return to you the wholesale cost of your gift or a percentage of the final sale price. I'm aware these arrangements are increasingly common. Remember, the tax deduction on your gift is only the cost of materials, hardly an incentive so, get some cash back.
4. Make a stipulation that your gift be displayed with appropriate identifying material. I'd suggest you not leave this to the committee, provide them with what you want to be shown with you work. This "advertisement" must be part of the plan. Perhaps an attendee will like your work and want to contact you. Be sure they'll know how.
5. Here's an interesting approach to giving. Offer a tour of your studio and a demonstration of how you do your work. People are always curious about how things are made and to see where and how artists live. This costs only time and gets them into the studio where you will of course have a display of work that's available for purchase. A win for the charity and for you too. ^{HB}



Donald Clark is the author of Making a Living in Crafts and was a partner in Ferrin Gallery for 25 years. In addition to writing, he is currently a consultant to artists, a personal property appraiser, and a collection manager. He also continues to create constructions that have been shown extensively and collected internationally.



PHILANTHROPY AND YOU

How to make giving work for your handmade business

By Joyce Marder

“I get asked all the time to donate,” says oil painter Lucia Heffernan, whose career is in its zenith. Carel Brest van Kempen, another internationally renowned painter, says, “I get dozens of requests each year, few of which I care about.” Often artists are offered “exposure” in exchange for their work. “We don’t need exposure,” says Heffernan. “We need the money. It costs us to frame.” Oil painter Katrina Berg says organizations that ask for 100 percent are adding to the starving artist problem. “I think we need to help educate people (who) don’t know how long it takes. It costs \$4 per inch for my time.” That all too common request for donations leaves one to wonder under what circumstances any artist should agree to be charitable. Community Nursing Services and Art Access host profit-sharing, art show, fundraisers that have earned the support of these artists. .

Profitable charities

Community Nursing Service’s (CNS) provides in-home health, hospice and immunization services. “Art & Soup” is CNS’ major fundraising event. Fifty artists are invited to display and sell their work in-person during lunch and dinner sessions on a Wednesday and Thursday in early spring. CNS provides grid-booths and publicity at no costs to the artist. Artists agree to donate thirty-five percent of their proceeds to CNS. Attendees pay a nominal \$25 per ticket. As they browse, guests sample soup, pasta, and bakery items donated and served by the two dozen restaurants, bakeries, and caterers also on site. According to Kimberly Dansie, Vice President of Business Development, the event attracts some 20,000 people annually and raises about \$200-\$250,000 for the non-profit organization. All proceeds from “Art & Soup” support CNS’ Charitable Care Fund.

Heffernan is an advocate for this model of charitable event. Her humorous, anthropomorphized animal portraits can be found in art galleries and museums. Heffernan’s images have been licensed for reproduction on calendars, greeting cards, posters and

puzzles. She paints at least 10 originals and sells some 10,000 prints per month. Heffernan says “Art & Soup” motivates her to paint new work, rather than donate leftovers that have not sold, as some charities seem to think artists want to do. “We want to show our best work,” she says. Heffernan’s booth is always crowded. She donated approximately \$10,000 to CNS in 2019.

On one occasion, Heffernan donated 100 calendars to the local Humane Society to be sold for \$20 each. An animal advocate, whose work is in high demand, she typically donates a poster by referring animal organizations to her licensing agency. She says she would never get any work done if she had to handle this herself. She also puts a limit on the monetary value of her donations.

Education as currency

Acclaimed wildlife artist Brest van Kempen uses acrylics to portray the daily drama of lesser known lizards, snakes, birds and mammals in their natural habitats, often juxtaposing predator and prey. His work can be found in private and museum collections around the world. Brest van Kempen supports a select number of international organizations that have facilitated the survival of endangered species. He contributed illustrations to Hawk Watch International. He volunteered in Cameroon and donated supplies to Struggle to Economize our Future Environment (SEFE) which promotes sustainable farming practices in Africa. Brest van Kempen also donated paintings for auction to the Turtle Survivor Alliance which he credits for preventing the extinction of the Burmese Star Tortoise and to the Peregrine Fund which he says saved the Peregrine Falcon and California Condor.

Brest van Kempen says he prefers to give his time and effort, benefiting in turn by gaining the opportunity to observe and learn about the flora and fauna he portrays. “Conservation of nature is the most important thing to me and the biggest problem for humans,” he says. He is an advocate of promoting conversation and taking direct action, preferring to donate anonymously since he is not in need of publicity.



Choosing who to support

Berg's stylized flowers and landscapes in pastel oils have also attracted collectors around the world. A mid-career artist, Berg includes CNS' "Art & Soup" among her selective group of charitable organizations to support with her artwork. She says her own need for specialized medical care and a friend who works as a hospice nurse have endeared her to this cause.

Berg also contributes two original works of art to Art Access' "300 Plates Fundraiser and Exhibition." Art Access provides educational opportunities and gallery representation for people with disabilities, veterans, and other under-represented populations. Some 160 artists are asked to create an original 10 x 11-inch work of art and agree to reverse the usual commission split by donating 70% to the organization. Originally 300 pieces created on metal printing plates, now 400 panel or plexiglass plates are displayed together and priced sequentially with a select few set aside for a silent auction. Ticket holders have the opportunity to vie for ownership over the course of an evening in May as they also enjoy a small buffet.

Berg says while there are endless opportunities to donate the full value of her artwork, she limits her donations to four or five each year so that it does not take away from her time to do commissions. She also hosts a podcast and blog and offers a wholesale line of notecards and fashion accessories. Berg donates a few original oil paintings for auction to causes that support women, particularly young mothers like herself, who are pursuing art careers and working in the home. Vision for the Arts is one such organization, providing scholarships to young mothers to buy art supplies or pay for childcare. Berg also donated her time to be a juror for a high school show at Springville Museum of Art, which required an hour commute from home each way in addition to the day spent viewing submissions.

Facing page: Carel Brest van Kempen's "Convoy Through the Canopy" with deBrazza's Monkeys. Acrylic triptych on illustration board, 30 x 72-inches. *Photo Credit: C. P. Brest van Kempen*

Left from top: Fifty artists are invited to "Art & Soup" each year. They display their art on grid booths that are provided for them. *Photo Credit: Melina Moore* • Many artists offer prints of their works. *Photo Credit: Melina Moore*

Below: Hogle Zoo's annual "World of the Wild" art show. *Photo credit: Jameson Weston*

Hogle Zoo held its first “World of the Wild Art Show” 25 years ago, according to Jameson Weston, Hogle Zoo Art Director. Artists paid a small entry fee and kept 100 percent of sales. Jameson said while the “World of the Wild Art Show” was not a successful fundraiser, it became a successful event that supports wildlife artists and gives the public an opportunity to view animals in a different light.

Jan Henderson has participated in “World of the Wild Art Show” off and on over the years. She says her motivation is to bring awareness to animals and to art. Her work has been featured in major wildlife art expositions and has been licensed for reproduction. When asked for a donation, she says she may offer a print or a gift certificate. Semi-retired now, Henderson is more interested in promoting the careers of her students, many of whom also enter “World of the Wild.”

Like Henderson, Whitney Brown uses her skills to bring attention to and awareness of wild animals. Originally, she worked in Hogle Zoo’s art department as a graphic designer and photographer. Currently, Brown works in the zoo’s education department traveling around the state visiting second graders. She contributes illustration and photography to several zoo partners, such as the Niassa (National Reserve) Carnivore Project in Mozambique and the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, to increase awareness of animals in the wild. She, too, says her repayment is good karma. “I feel good about what I do for what I care about.”



Above: Heffernan’s adorable “Ball Hog.” *Photo Credit: Lucia Heffernan*

Below: “Fox Tale” an original by Lucia Heffernan
Photo Credit: Lucia Heffernan

they are upfront, I have no problem. If it is a group you want to help, it’s all right.” He contributes original artwork to the “300 Plates” silent auction because he knows this local event is a good art show in support of a worthy cause.

Heffernan shared how she created a charitable partnership that proved mutually beneficial, considering the fact that current tax law precludes artists from deducting the full value of their work. She made arrangement with an appropriate corporation to purchase an original painting at a reduced price, thereby receiving her usual commission. In turn, that corporation obtained both publicity and a tax write off by donating the piece to Huntsman Cancer Hospital (its intended recipient) for the hospital’s fundraising auction. “Do something that matters to you. Look for causes that help you, too,” says Heffernan, “Getting your work in front of any organization’s donors only matters if those donors are also interested in your style of artwork.” ^{HB}

Karmic creations

Oil painter Tyler Swain has been a full-time professional artist since finishing school five years ago. His work can also be found in several fine art galleries. Swain became familiar with CNS as a result of receiving an invitation to participate in “Art & Soup.” He notes his spouse Heather Swain, who is a certified CNA, provided live-in and later hospice care for an elderly couple whose home they shared while he was still in school. Swain also donated artwork to the Malouf Foundation for an art auction because Sam Malouf was a neighbor and good friend whose foundation works to fight child trafficking and exploitation.

Swain says artists who are just starting out should do what they can to support good causes which will create good karma – bring benefits in return. He says his work has always sold at “300 Plates.” “Be available for good opportunities,” he says. “Say yes. Meet new people. Get yourself out there.”

Berg says she sold a lot of work her first year at “Art & Soup” because her prices were low. In subsequent years she sold fewer pieces at higher prices and earned more, as did the charity. As a result of her participation in that first “Art & Soup,” Berg was invited to do a solo show at the Jewish Community Center. “You need to feel passionate about the organization.” Berg also advises artists not to give up. She was not accepted the first time she applied to “300 Plates.” “Rejection helps you reevaluate why you want to be a part of this event. Keep applying. People need to see your style. It takes a while.”

Brest van Kempen acknowledges that publicity is of value to an emerging artist. “It depends on where the artist is in their career,” he says. He also advises artists to be selective. Brest van Kempen says too many organizations’ real purpose is to raise money. “As long as





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HOW PLATO CAN IMPROVE

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PHOTOS

The philosophy
of composition

The orange purse is on the lower third line and between the two vertical third lines making the photo more interesting.

Writing about photographing two-dimensional art last month I suggested using the grid display screen on your phone (or camera) to help you square up artwork. Besides squaring up picture frames the grid screen display is also a valuable tool that can help you compose your images. Light and composition are the keys to successful photographic images, and I've written a lot about light so now let me turn my attention to composition.

Composition is defined as the way elements are organized. For example, in music it is the way the notes are arranged that is the musical composition itself. In writing composition William Shakespeare and I use most of the same words, but he did a far better job of organizing them than I ever will.

The idea that there are formal compositional structures in art goes back at least 2,400 years ago to Plato's Theory of Ideal Forms. Plato thought that these ideal forms were abstract, unchanging and pleasing to the eye. Over the centuries the masters of classic art – painters, sculptures and architects – refined and redefined these “rules” to create what we have today as “rules” of composition. Now of course we know that these ideal forms have their origins in human psychology and the way our brain brings order and sense to a very chaotic world.

Photographic composition is about the organization of the elements – like the subject, its shape and color, the lighting, the dark areas and the light ones in the picture frame. The goal is to create a structure that will catch the viewer's eye, lead it through the image and keep it there as long as possible for maximum impact.

Unlike painters, photographers have limitations on their ability to compose images because we have to use what is in front of the lens and not simply pull things out of our imaginations. With all this in mind here are a few basic rules or guidelines for composition that will improve your crafts photos.

To start with let me point out that in Western cultures we read from left to right and so our eyes are trained to enter a page or a photo from the left side. With that in mind the compositional tools I'm describing all assume this left to right habit and build on it.

Below: Notice the turquoise purse appears flat because it is in the dead center of the frame.



Above: Using a combination of thirds and diagonal lines the viewer can see the inside of the band.

The center is dead

Let me begin with the notion that the most static part of a photograph is its center; the dead center. Putting subjects in the center of the frame is the antithesis of a well composed image. However, online I see too many photos where the crafts are right there in the dead, energy-less middle. People probably don't know any better and often think that the markings in the center of the LCD screen are telling you that this is where to put your stuff. This is simply wrong, and it ruins a lot of otherwise decent photos. The center markings usually refer to the areas that the camera or phone is measuring for exposure and has nothing to do with composition. The first rule of composition is a do not do rule to remind you never put anything in the dead center of the frame. Avoid it like the plague. To help you visualize how these compositional forms work I have added yellow lines and arrows to the photos.

The power of thirds

The “rule of thirds” is one of the most basic of all compositional forms and the easiest to use. The rule of thirds is made up of four imaginary lines that roughly divide the frame vertically and horizontally by thirds. The camera or phone's LCD “grid” display shows these lines so you can use them as a guide when you shoot. As a reminder you get the thirds gridlines by going into the phone or camera menu (or Setting pages, click on Display, and then on Grid or Gridlines). While these lines appear on your LCD screen they do not appear in the pictures.

There are two important rules that make up the rule of thirds. The first is that objects placed on or along these lines will be seen as visually stronger in the frame. Secondly the



Above: An example of a diagonal line through the frame creating an active and strong compositional form.

strongest visual point in a frame is at the intersection of two grid lines. In the photo on page 35, the turquoise purse is in the dead center of the frame and the photo is flat. In contrast to that is the other image I shot of the orange purse. Here the purse, on page 34, is situated on the lower third line and between the two vertical third lines. This is a strong placement that makes the photo more interesting. It shows the purse and tells us something about the long chain and how the purse is meant to be carried slung low.

Dissecting with diagonal lines

A diagonal line through a frame is another very active and strong compositional form. Placing objects along the diagonal gives the image a lot of energy and movement. Look at the photo above of the red and black wrist band. Do you see how the diagonal placement of the arm strongly leads the eye up from the bottom left of the frame and straight up to the right-hand top corner? I imagine that if the hand was lying flat in the frame the photo would have had no energy flatter too.

Using triangles to tame the eye

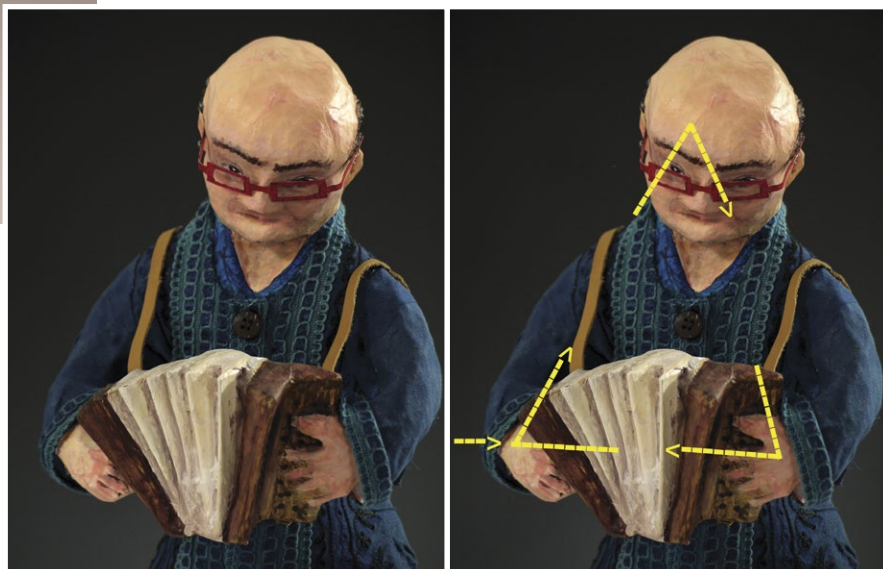
Another compositional form that comes in particularly handy, when shooting things like necklaces, is the triangle. Aligning the elements of the image around the three points of a triangle the eye is led around the subject. For an illustration instead of a necklace I've used a photograph of a papier-mâché sculpture by my friend the artist Sylstone. Following the yellow arrows, you can see the path the eye takes going around the image. Entering the frame from the left it goes to the hand on the left side of the

accordion then up to the face and then down to the other hand. Then the eye goes back to the first hand and around and around. Keeping the eye within the frame makes a very strong image and gives it a sense of wholeness.

Turning the triangle upside down – that is standing on a point you have the basic composition for necklaces with a pendant at its lower tip and the neck chain spread open and following the sides of the triangle.

Combining forms

The photo of the silver ring, on page 35, illustrates another rule of composition; combining forms. In the small insert photo, I added yellow arrows to the image to show how I composed this shot. You can see the ring is sitting on the lower third line and the upper third line goes right through the center of the stone. To show the viewer some of the inside of the band I had to turn the ring to an angle which aligned it along the diagonal.



Above: Follow the yellow arrows, you can see the path the eye takes going around the image.

There are more compositional forms that will have to wait until next month. And remember that when you are shooting with any of these compositional forms if you aren't precisely on these lines it is OK, and you can always crop and fine-tune the photograph later in a photo editor. For now, take some time to practice using these ideal forms and next month there will be more to try. ^{HB}



Steve Meltzer is a writer and photographer currently roughing it in the south of France. His photographic journey began 35 years ago when he had the good fortune to attend workshops with photographers such as Cornell Capa, Duane Michals, and Oliver Gagliani. Meltzer has written for publications as diverse as The Seattle Times, Popular Photography, New Awakenings of Lagos, Nigeria.

Business clients have included Helly Hansen sportswear, Starbucks, and Boeing. He can be reached at stevefotos@cs.com.

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By Diane Sulg



SELLING SMILES AND FUN



Above: Mavis Stevens.

Top: Miss Mavis arty kitchen towels.

Mavis Stevens was just fifteen years old when she entered her first craft show. Not old enough for a driver's license, her Daddy drove her to the outdoor show in Robins Warner, Georgia. She had made a hooked rug from a kit, but rather than buy more kits, she figured out how to draw simple designs on the rug backing, cut her own yarn, and hook away until she had finished rugs. At the close of the show, she had profited \$80, a handsome sum for a teenager in those days. Moreover, Stevens had reached a very important decision she shared with her father, "this is going to be my life," she told him. Today she adds, "Selling my own arty creations is an obsession that has never waned!"

Fast forward 10 years after that first fair, and Stevens is in a mill-end carpet store in Centerville, Georgia. Ads for the store promised they would be demonstrating a one-of-a-kind sewing machine that could make faux hooked rugs. Stevens watched with intrigue and amazement, and dancing through her head were visions, not only of rugs, but all sorts of other textiles like pillows, aprons, or even towels. When she left the store, Stevens was the proud new owner of the unique sewing machine.

For just a minute, let me depart to tell you a bit about Stevens as a person. Simply put, she is one of the kindest and happiest people you will ever meet. While you might guess not everything has always been easy for her, somewhere along the way Stevens made a decision that happiness was a lot more fun than complaining, and fun was better than drudgery. She named her business Miss Mavis Fun House and her company reflects both her attitude and her unique products.

Stevens used her design skill to create simple, folksy, and fun images on textiles, all made with the big loopy stitches of her unique sewing machine. She debuted her towels and

aprons at the Atlanta Folk Fest and while selling individual pieces was wonderful, she yearned to take her business to a larger level. In 2012 she exhibited at her first wholesale show in the Handmade section of the Atlanta Gift Show. She was blown away by the number of orders, particularly for her unabashedly funky towels.


Today, Stevens makes her wholesale home in the Wild Rumpus Room, a collection of American handmade artists with showrooms at both the Atlanta and Las Vegas Markets. She calls her fellow exhibitors "a herd of unicorns" for their fun and funky attitude as well as their capable and serious business minds. With four wholesale shows a year she has attracted shops and galleries across the country, including some of her dream accounts. After her latest show in Las Vegas, Stevens exclaimed, "the best feeling is a big ol' pile of orders."

For individuals who may not live near a place stocking her towels, Stevens maintains an Etsy store, www.etsy.com/shop/MissMavisFunHouse. She is keenly aware of lifestyle trends, and if she thinks they fit her style, she is quick to adopt them. For instance, her donut towels are a big, big, deal! She also is fastidious about her production standards and keeping her products affordable. While only a rare few can afford a Picasso, nearly everyone can have a handmade, unique set of Miss Mavis arty kitchen towels. They are a joy to own and to give as gifts because Miss Mavis herself specializes in selling both smiles and fun! ^{HB}



Diane Sulg is Executive Director of CRAFT and founder & co-chair of American Craft Week (ACW). She is a handmade advocate that provides valuable information in her one-day seminars titled "All About Wholesale" at wholesale shows throughout the United States. Diane is the former owner of Maddi's Gallery in Charlotte and Huntersville, NC. She can be reached at dianesulg@gmail.com

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