“Business Ideas From Home”

Hello and welcome to “Business Ideas From Home.”

Business Ideas From Home, is the result of intensive research in the field of unique home-based businesses. In my research I have discovered many fascinating businesses that can earn you a good full or part time income. Best of all, most of these businesses can be started in your spare time so you don't risk your present income.

This publication is divided into several sections or categories. You can navigate to each individual section by selecting the “Bookmark” tab from the left side of the PDF reader.

Good luck with your new business ventures.

Ben Bassey

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Category: Auto Related Businesses

How's My Teen's Driving?

Here's a neat adaptation of an existing business that could make someone a fortune.

I'm sure you've seen bumper stickers on commercial trucks and vans that say,

"How's My Driving -- Call 800-555-5555 truck # AES-0513."

Did you know that 2 or 3 services handle all the calls that are generated from those bumper stickers?

It's like a specialized answering service. When you call the 800 numbers you are asked for the number of the truck you are reporting. The service cross references the truck number with the companies listed in its database and reports the complaint back to the company.

The companies pay a set fee per truck for this service.

Well, how about a service that does the same thing for teenaged drivers?

You could charge parents a fee of $20 or $30 dollars a year for the service. Contract with a telephone answering service to take the calls and report back to you the complaints and the vehicle number. You would then contact the parent with a written report of the incident.

An inexpensive way to market this service would be through press releases to newspapers and parent oriented magazines.

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Used Car Flea Market

Many people with used cars for sell would rather sell directly to a buyer without going through a middleman.

Likewise, many buyers would rather deal with the seller and save the middleman's fee. The problem is getting the two sides together.

The solution?

A used car flea market.

Rent an empty parking lot or drive in theater for weekend use and rent space to car owners to display their used cars.

Advertise in the local paper and by placing ads on light poles near busy intersections.

One man in San Jose, CA makes $2000.00 each weekend by renting a closed drive-in movie lot for the weekend.

He charges $25.00 for owners to display their car. There is no fee to the buyer and all transactions are between the buyer and the seller.

The young entrepreneur makes extra money by running a concession stand (which was left over from the drive in movie days) and by running an independent inspection station.

Auto Service Notification

Are your brakes ok?

Is your alternator going to give out in bumper-to-bumper traffic? At 11:00 at night? In a bad neighborhood?

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Better to be safe than sorry.

Your car is overdue for a service. Call now to schedule an appointment and get 10% off any work performed.

Wouldn't a post card like that get you to call your dealer to schedule an appointment? Maybe, maybe not.

But a good percentage of people need to be reminded when their car is due for service. You could offer such a service by contacting auto dealers and offer to take over this tedious work.

One man, John Wolf of Oklahoma City, started this business with just $500.00 and 1 dealer. Today he mails reminders for 1500 dealerships.

Polish Up For Profits

"I have a 31-step process. I shampoo seats, do the dashboard with Q-tips, clean the trunk, dress the engine, etc. It takes 3 hours for what I do, and I charge $120."

This would be a typical response of someone who does Auto Detailing when asked what they can do for your car and how much they would charge you for it.

The age of the upscale carwash is here. As we keep our cars longer (average length is 7.5 years) we take better care of them. This is why the carwash business is booming with $8 billion in revenue, and so is auto detailing.

Executive Parking

Many auto detail services nest their business in executive parking lots. They get a permit from the city and from the business whose lot they use. This is convenient for employees who otherwise may not

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have time to bring their cars to a shop that would take 3 hours to get detailing done.

In a mobile operation such as this, you will need a van or pickup truck and access to running water and preferably AC power. In some cities, there are companies that convert and customize pickup trucks into mobile detail shops with its own reservoir and portable power generator.

140 Million Cars

Although many auto detailers will swear that a bulk of their business comes from car dealers, in reality the car dealer market is small and extremely competitive. Most car dealers need cars detailed before a used car is offered in an auction or is displayed in the lot.

However, the biggest market of all is still on the road, individual car owners, representing all of 140 million passenger cars plus another 30 million pickup trucks on the road.

This market, with an average age of 7.5 years, is ripe for a detail job at least twice a year.

Budget Detail

The best way to build up a base in this business is to introduce a mid-priced service that offers extras that carwashes do not offer.

Detail jobs in the range of $30 to $49 will open up a new market that can provide a stream of customers. You can provide a written list of what you do and how you build up your rates from the basic price of $30 to the premium rate $49.

With 5 customers a day, at 1 hour each, you can average $200 a day.

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Mobile Headlight Installation

There is never enough time in the day. Something always goes wrong at the most inopportune time, especially when it comes to cars. And that something that goes wrong doesn't always have to be anything major—it can be as simple as an overdue oil change or a burned out headlight. It becomes major when there is work to go to, kids to pick up, a house to clean and dinner to make.

Not everyone has time and not everyone is adept at changing headlights or taillights. That's where a mobile headlight installation business comes into play.

You can offer to purchase the required headlight, or taillight, for customers, and install them at the customer's home or place of work.

Why should people pay you to install their headlights or taillights instead of doing it themselves? Make a list of the benefits to the customer, which will help you in the marketing process.

First, really focus on the time issue. People are busy, and it really is a hassle to take time out of a busy day to go to the local auto part store to pick up the proper lights. Inevitably, mistakes happen which mean a repeat visit to the store, costing even more valuable time.

This is something customers won't have to worry about when they use your service.

Obviously, you go to the customer. They can simply pick up the phone, call you and tell you what type of headlight, or taillight as the case may be, their car uses. You would then purchase the headlight and go to the customer, whether they are at work, at home or even at a neighbor's home. You offer them personalized convenience for a reasonable fee.

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Having a headlight, or taillight, that works properly is not only safer but it's required by law that your headlights and taillights work.

In most states, a person can get a ticket if they have a burned out light.

Marketing your service is relatively simple because it's a service everyone needs at one time or another. You can print fliers, detailing the benefits of your service in a quick yet effective manner, then hang them in grocery stores, auto supply shops, anywhere and everywhere you can think of.

Make sure your phone number is displayed prominently, and you might also want to put tear strips at the bottom of each flyer with the phone number and your business name. This way, people can tear your number off and put it in their pockets.

You might also place classified ads in your local Penny Saver or newspaper.

Mobile Oil Change

Let's face it. Getting to the garage or local auto servicing company to get the car's oil changed every 3,000 miles or three months is just a big hassle, especially for people who work strict nine-to-five jobs. No matter what time you choose to go, you inevitably run into long lines, losing hours you could have used to do other things.

One enterprising company in Baltimore, Lube-on-the-Move, became a hit with local office employees by offering to change their cars' oil, in the office parking lot, during the workday. An oil change cost only $19.95, the same price most other companies charge, and customers are being saved the hassle and wasted time of long lines.

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If the popularity of Lube-on-the-Move is any indication, starting such a business will likely prove to be a great success. If you're good with cars, and know how to change the oil, then this is a business you might want to consider. All you need is solid knowledge about cars, oil, enthusiasm and you're ready to go.

You need to decide how you will offer your service. Will you have a number customers can call to schedule an appointment? If so, estimate how long each oil change will take, allowing for anything unexpected like a traffic jam. That way, you'll know how many oil changes you can schedule in a day.

Decide what area you will cover. Will you work alone, with partners or hire independent contractors in order to take in more business?

Marketing your mobile oil change business should be a cinch. Good news spreads quickly in the office environment, and you're likely to get a lot of interest from people who are too busy to worry about their cars.

Put fliers under the windshields of cars in office complexes, and approach the Human Resource Departments of different companies.

Explain to the Human Resources Manager that you are offering a valuable service that will save employees work time. Many businesses have company newsletters; ask that a blurb about your service be added to the next installment.

You can also place classified ads in local publications, and place flyers on bulletin boards in prominent locations.

Almost everyone in America has a car, so your market is everywhere around you; take advantage of it.

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Repair Shop Referrals

The car always seems to break down or start sputtering at the most inconvenient time—like when you've just moved into a new neighborhood and have no idea where you can find a reputable repair shop. Ask any car owner, and they're likely to tell you they've dealt with a shady repair shop at least once in their lives.

Finding a good auto repair shop, one you can rely on to perform an excellent job and for an affordable price, is like hitting pay dirt. It's priceless. Do you know a repair shop that you tell all of your friends about? Or is there a repair shop you've heard nothing but good things about? Find one then strike up a partnership to help bring them new business.

Go to the repair shop of your choice, and make them an offer: you'll bring in new business, and for every customer you refer you'll earn commission.

Since businesses are always looking for new customers, you'll likely have an easy time finding a repair shop with whom to partner. When you decide on the amount of commission you'll receive for each referral, make sure you have a document written that states the specifics.

Once you have a contract in place, then you'll want to start marketing the repair shop. To do this, you'll create fliers. Highlight the high quality work and affordable prices on the flier. After you've designed and printed the flyer, create a card with your name on it, and state "For a special discount, present this card to the shop manager."

Staple a card to each flier. Then, go to the mall or anywhere you'll find a lot of cars. Place a flier on the windshield of all of the cars that need bodywork.

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Car Buyer

Many people who want to buy a new car have no idea where to begin in order to get the best deal. That is were Al Jacobs comes in.

He finds cars for busy executives, single women and handicapped people with special needs.

Jacobs starts by interviewing his client to determine the particular need. He then looks in his database of over 400 different models and narrows the client's options down to just a few that match their needs. Depending on the dealer, he either delivers each car to the client for a test drive or takes the client to the dealership.

The real value for the client is that Jacobs handles all the negotiations with the dealership thus saving the client hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

Jacobs handles 40 deals a month at a fee of $200.00 each.

Mini Parking Lot

If you live near a busy downtown or university area and have a large driveway you can rent out the space for day parking to office workers or university students.

Advertise on bulletin boards or place flyers on the windshields of cars parked in more expensive lots.

Say you have enough room for 6 cars. At $100.00 per month each you would earn over $7,000.00 a year. Not bad for doing nothing.

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Category: Arts and Crafts

Cash In On The Crafts Boom

If you were in business selling a product then you would expect it to be useful to succeed. That's usually true - but there is one line where the most successful products are usually completely useless. And all the more successful for it!

The business is crafts - handicrafts or whatever. Everyone will have bought 'crafts' at some time. They are usually quality, hand made products - often based on the past in some way. Usually made from natural items - and intended for decoration, gifts, souvenirs etc.

However, although most crafts are made to look like individual, 'antique' like goods they are usually nothing of the sort. A considerable industry has grown up to produce crafts on a huge basis - such is the vast demand.

You too can exploit this business. Craft making usually doesn't need sophisticated equipment or skills - indeed, hand made things are an advantage. You can produce them individually as and when you need the money!

A further advantage is that no sophisticated sales network is needed to sell your products. They often sell on impulse, because of their sheer attractiveness!

Prices are not always high - but profits can be hundreds of percent. Everyone buys crafts!

If you don't feel offering a 'useful' product or service is interesting enough for you then try crafts. The successful products that have no good use whatsoever!

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Profit Potential

When entering the crafts business it is important to realize, and abide by, the unique profit potential built into crafts.

Quite simply, most crafts are made from ultra cheap parts. In some cases you can get these free! Many crafts are often made from rubbish. This makes your products very, very low in production cost - there are no expensive machines or overheads either.

But - do remember to temper this with the fact that most crafts are hand made in low volumes. This means increased labor costs. However, as many crafts can be made by home workers your costs are again reduced.

Couple low production cost with very high selling prices. Crafts are usually sold in an exclusive way - such as for holiday souvenirs etc. People are prepared to pay far inflated prices over what they would normally consider reasonable - and buy readily. A truly ideal combination! Research tells of one craft product (a decorated candle) being produced for 25 cents and selling for $10.00!

What Makes A Successful Craft?

The crafts business is not a chance to sell anything in the form of a craft! Successful items must have certain characteristics that make them attractive to customers, and hence benefit from the price advantages. When lining up crafts for manufacture/selling, try and incorporate these advantages:

- Attractiveness. Must look 'nice'!
- Curiosity. Ideal crafts are often a conversation piece.
- Hand made. No mass production techniques.
- Natural ingredients. Wherever possible, no plastics etc!
- Compact sized. Crafts are rarely large items as they must be suited to impulse sale.

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- Original. Should be unique for each customer, even if in a small way.
- Standard/Recognizable. Must be obviously a craft or curio, and obviously for display purposes.
- Price - Not high, not too low. Probably about $5 - $15 is optimum.

You may be able to think of many more points. Just remember that crafts are usually bought because they are 'interesting' or 'nice'. Let that be a guide to what customers want.

How To Make Crafts

If you are going to deal in crafts it is probably best to actually have them made especially for you. This way you can ensure they meet the necessary criteria, and benefit from the enormous mark ups! One viable alternative is to import them from low wage countries.

Most crafts don't need specialized skills or equipment. The production processes necessary can often be picked up from crafts books at the local library. Crafts don't have to be consistent in quality!

You may decide to produce them yourself - and most can be made safely at home in a garage or garden shed. Employ members of your family for a successful 'cottage industry'!

Do remember though that self production limits your output. So, a lucrative alternative is to use home workers to do all the work for you. They can work at home, thus cutting costs to the bone. You just deliver/collect crafts and tell them what to do. Pay could be by commission, and even as little as 10% might be adequate.

At all times produce crafts efficiently at absolute minimum cost. Prices may be high but efficient production makes your profits sky high!

How To Sell

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Selling is actually the easy part with crafts. Because, they literally sell themselves! Everyone likes to buy little 'odds and ends'! And, retailers know the inherent attraction and profitability of craft products. You only need to build a handful of sales contacts for a regular income.

Look mainly to sell crafts in country, coastal, resort and 'tourist' areas. Though, crafts sell well in all places nowadays.

One excellent way of selling is on your own stall – either at a crafts fair or perhaps a road or market pitch where allowed. You may sell only a few items, but margins are high.

One lucrative possibility is to sell direct to crafts and other shops - means a regular income. For big business you could sell to wholesalers who sell to such shops. Maybe even start your own craft shop!

If you want the ideal home business consider that some craft products are ideal for mail order selling - in appropriate newspapers and magazines. An interesting alternative is to export your products. Quality British crafts might sell well in some countries, especially the USA!

The potential for selling your crafts is truly enormous. But, part of the fun is seeking out your own lucrative demand. People want crafts - it's up to you to just find them!

Some Suggestions

Up until now the term 'crafts' has been used very generally. But, it can be used to cover thousands of attractive, interesting products. Anything with a certain novelty or curiosity value might bea 'craft'. Keep an open mind.

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Following, you will find a list of proven crafts. And, There's no reason why you can't copy the general ideas. Also - it is quite up to you whether you produce just one line, or many for much more money!

Candles. One of the all time successes! Scented and decorated candles sell fast at high prices. Candles can be produced at home with basic safety precautions - consult a specialist supplier.

Food. This can be a great craft line, though note food regulations. 'Old fashioned' sweets are one possibility!

Clothes. These are a larger, but high potential line. Cotton prints and 'hand knits' are the major areas to explore. Study designs very carefully - could lead to something big!

Shells & Rocks. Articles made with or decorated with sea shells are popular. Otherwise consider polished stones and semi-previous minerals. Some of these items can be carefully prepared and turned into quite valuable jewelry.

Junk. Many things you might term 'junk' can be turned into unique, interesting crafts. One possibility heard of concerned the sale of pieces of wood from an old church attractively polished and shaped into a crucifix.

Pottery. One of the most interesting craft lines, and could turn into a considerable business! Some investment would be needed in equipment though.

Wickerwork. Anything woven is attractive making a pleasant alternative to plastics. Possibilities range from baskets to place mats!

Scented items. Potpourri and lavender products have always been a big seller. There is also the chance to produce natural cosmetics (check for safety).

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Photographs/Prints. Original framed photos or sketches/watercolors, even oil paintings make good craft lines. If you are not talented it is amazing how many good amateurs there are.

Semi-Antiques/Reproductions. Anything that looks like an antique can sell fast. For example brass work, jewelry, small wooden items are good. Don't sell as genuine antiques though.

Really, this is just a selection of craft lines you could succeed with. There are so many, and you only need one to start.

A Final Note

You are sure to agree that most of the craft products considered are completely useless. And, it is that which makes them successful. People don't buy crafts for their functional use - they buy them to look nice - to enjoy. It's a basic human need and one reason why crafts can succeed.

Sheer proof that not all business successes have to be up to the minute!

Shadow Box Art

Just about everyone has a collection of keepsakes that they would like to have organized and attractively displayed. You can set up a business in which you take your client's memorabilia and organize it in a shadow box for display.

Making shadow box art is easy. You can buy the shadow boxes from any craft store. In addition, you will need fabric (for the background), scissors, glue gun, glue sticks and, of course, the items to be displayed.

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1. Remove the existing backboard and fabric from the shadow box and use as a guide for cutting the new background piece.

2. Place the cardboard insert in the center of the coordinating fabric. Cut around the edge, leaving the excess to be folded over each edge. Pull one long side of the fabric tight around the insert, and secure that side with the glue gun. Take an adjoining side, and bring it on top. Tuck the fabric at the corner like you are wrapping a package, and glue down. Take the other adjoining side and repeat the process. Before gluing the last side, check for wrinkles on the front and smooth before tucking the corner and securing with glue.

3. Position the items on the background. Before securing, put the frame over the fabric to see if you like the placement. Adjust as necessary.

4. Remove the frame, and attach the items to the fabric with a glue gun in the desired arrangement. Place the insert in the frame, secure the back, and hang.

Unique Marketing Idea

Make several sample shadow boxes using a variety of themes. Then, take your samples to a busy restaurant and offer to display them on the walls of the dining room. Put your business card on each shadow box and leave your brochure at the cash register. Give the restaurant a small commission for the sales generated.

Manufacturing Lap Desks

Have you ever heard of a lap desk? They are devices -- usually made of lightweight wood or foam board -- that fit over your lap and give

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you a hard surface to write correspondence on. They usually have a lid lift to hold pens, stamps, letters, envelopes, etc.

During the days prior to telephones, faxes, voice and e-mail, letter writing was a necessary art form. Lap Desks were popular because full size desks were expensive.

Now, lap desks are making a comeback. They are a great for setting in front of the TV or out on the patio and writing or addressing envelopes, paying bills, etc. They are sort of like a low tech lap top computer!

You can build lap desks in your home and sell them locally at craft shows or through consignment.

Here is a link to a website that sells antique lap desks so you can get an idea on the different varieties:

Antique Boxes

And here is a link to a website that sells plans that you can use to build your own lap desks:

Gold Country Woodworks

The Business Of Candle (And Soap) Making

Create and market your hand-made candles. This business, along with its closely related cousin's soap making and plaster craft does not automatically progress from the hobby to business stage without a good deal of planning and effort.

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The volume sellers must compete with cheaper, less stylish mass-produced and often imported products. But, with perseverance and ingenuity, it can be done!

Candle making is a highly versatile craft -- one that encompasses unlimited opportunities for creativity. Candles can be dipped, molded, rolled, fused, layered, sculptured or any combination of processes.

They may be colored (dyed, painted or tinted) within and without;; they can be scented or can have embedded materials such as beads or shells, coated or whipped (foamed).

An illustration of candle making ingenuity and versatility is hot yellow-orange wax poured over small ice cubes. When the ice melts and the wax sets, it leaves cavities that look like Swiss cheese!

Basic Requirements for Candle Making

- A place to work (it is too dangerous and messy for the kitchen),
- Adequate storage space for materials,
- A relatively cool place to put finished candles (they will sag in hot temperatures),
- Utensils to melt and blend the waxes, molds and wax additives.
- Startup supplies should include wax (sold in sheets or slabs), colors, stearic acid, temperature gauge, double broiler, a heating medium, molds and mold accessories (wick, lead, clay, etc.).

Equipment and supplies to get started at the crafts level should run in neighborhood of $200 from a professional supplier.

The candle making process is not complicated, but does require time and attention to detail for safety reasons as well as product quality.

Melting wax is highly volatile and can catch fire easily (this is why double broilers are used) if one isn't very careful. In the standard

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molding process, raw wax is melted and brought to about 180 degrees Fahrenheit.

During this time, certain additives such as stearic acid, colors and scents are added. Meanwhile, the mold is cleaned and sprayed with release (silicon). A wick inserted from the bottom and tied to a stick across the top and the hole in the bottom sealed with clay.

Note that the top of the mold equates to the bottom of the candle, and vice versa! Heavy lead wires (weights) are wrapped around the bottom of the mold.

The mold placed in a convenient position to receive the hot wax. When the wax is ready it is slowly and carefully poured down the side of the mold to prevent bubbles from forming. The mold is filled to the top.

The remaining wax is kept at ready temperature and used to refill the hollow that forms as the wax shrinks a natural result of the cooling process.

During this process the mold is frequently placed in cool water to speed the cooling process (the reason for the lead wire). If the candle is meant to be hollow (like hurricane candle) the still molten center is poured back as soon as the sides cool to the desired thickness (about 1/2 inch). When cool, the candle is removed from the mold, the wick trimmed and any final touches made.

Molds can be solid plaster of pairs, metal or metal shells, or flexible plastic. The flexible plastic and metal molds are the most popular. It is difficult to make your own molds for many projects. Most anything can be used for a mold -- from hollowed out wet sand to paper cones.

To make a flexible rubber mold, coat the subject with the commercial silicon formula and paint on successive coats (after each coat dries) of compound until the desired thickness is reached.

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Allow your mold to cure and then simply peel it off and start making casts. The procedure for using most molds is similar except that some need to be fastened together (2 or more parts and some need to be supported (in sand, plaster or even water).

There are unlimited variations that can result in strikingly different and very impressive candles.

One is dipping a partially formed candle into vats of different colored wax, and then peeling back layers with a knife to reveal the contrasting colors and textures.

Another is filling a cavity in damp sand with wax, which yields a candle with a sandy surface.

One "secret" technique was discovered by accident. A rubber mold was made of a wooden statue purchased in the Philippines. The statue had been made by aborigines who used shoe polish for a "stained" finish.

The heat from the mold curing process caused the shoe polish to break away from the wood and mar the smooth finish. The resulting mold imparted a pitted or frosted type surface to the molded candle -- not desired (and expected) smooth shiny surface.

The candle maker made several black candles and applied bronze. "rub and Buff" and the results were fantastic. The candles looked like they were made of solid bronze and sold like wildfire!

The way to get started is to order supplies and begin as a craft or hobby. Get your wax from as close to home as possible to save on freight (you will need about 50lbs. to start).When you feel confident of your ability and have a pretty good idea of the market, you are ready to consider becoming a business. Make up some samples, take some pictures and sell.

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The difficult part is marketing (due to competition from commercial, import and hobby candle makers). Some suggested techniques are:

- Concentrate initially on a few items that you can produce expertly on a fairly large scale for wholesaling to gift stores. Examples: Anniversary or hurricane candles.
- Develop an "original" candle or series and market them as exclusives, either wholesale or retail. Examples: Statue of local hero, school emblem.
- Visit local retailers and ask what they could use at what price; plan your production with their responses in mind.
- Set up a display (rent a window in a vacant store) to show candles you have to offer; include a sign with your number or address.
- Organize candle-making classes, charge a fee and sell not only the finished products but supplies as well.
- Rent a booth at a good flea market each holiday season and "test" the market and sell of any remaining stock.
- Have professional pictures taken of your best work, make up a catalog or send the pictures and descriptions (of candles you can mass produce) to catalog houses.

Anyone who works with candles just a few weeks will automatically come up with numerous original ideas and variations.

That is one of the beauties of this craft -- it almost forces you to be creative! Whether you produce a low volume of exquisite, high quality candles or a high volume of easier to produce candles, big ones or little ones is entirely up to you.

One candle may be highly profitable if it is a work of art. Note that candle making does not restrict you to wax only. You can sell other items that are decorated or complimented by candles, such as driftwood centerpieces with candles.

Soap making is very similar to candle making in that they are both molded, colored, and scented.

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In fact, many of the molds and ingredients are interchangeable. Plaster craft is also related (the same molds can be used, so long as they are thoroughly cleaned).

For ceramics you use totally different and much more expensive equipment, though many of the artistic skills are very similar.

The most glaring potential problem area in candle making is the danger of fire from the wax. Don't even THINK of melting wax without a good double broiler and fire extinguisher handy.

If the wax were to boil over, splash onto an open flame (or red heating element) a very serious fire could result. Anytime you are melting wax, make sure it is watched CONSTANTLY and that it is not allowed to get too hot.

How To Make Money In The Clock Mounting Business

Most successful clock making businesses started out as hobbies. This business involves buying (not manufacturing) clock works and mounting them in unique, attractive faces, holders and motifs that you create. Many different types and prices of clock works are available from various supply houses that you can fashion into works of art.

A clock can be mounted on any number of crafted or non-crafted items: burl wood, toys, funny faces, paintings, etched mirrors, souvenirs, marble slabs, sculptures, photographs, family keepsakes, or just about anything you can imagine.

In fact, you might well come up with a new idea. What about a large picture of your child, with a clock in one corner - or one on a picture of your mother-law (you're "on your own" on this one!).

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One enterprising couple made clocks from used circular saw blades: the wife painted scenes and numbers: the husband applied a protective covering and mounted clock works on them.

You do not have to know about clocks or watch repair, or have any special talents. The clock works, whether electric or wind-up come complete, ready to mount.

The main thing is to space the numerals evenly so they look as if they are a part of the object. One technique is to arrange the face numbers on a attractive slab of wood. They can be "spaced" with a paper pattern.

Draw a circle the right size and use a compass to divide the circle into 12 equal parts of 30 degrees each. Center the numbers on the 12 dividing lines, with the bottoms just touching the circle. When properly placed, glue them lightly in place to keep them from slipping and apply your finish (usually resin on wood.)

When the finish is thick enough and well cured, drill a hole at the center of the proposed dial circle and mount the clock from behind, letting the hands shaft project through the hole. Add the hands, and your clock is finished. Some handcrafted clocks are really works of art and bring over $100 apiece! Prices for quartz (battery operated) clocks start at about $3 each (even less in quantity), which means that your total materials cost to produce them is considerably lower than their potential value.. In most cases this business results in getting paid for both you time and a profit on the material.

Marketing handcrafted clocks is worth a little extra effort because the difference in price realized can be significant. Since one of the main selling points is beauty, take some good pictures of your best clocks and mount them in a photo album (a good quality album with nothing but clocks in it). Use a good camera and get shots that show only the clocks with contrasting background.

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For example, use a white sheet as a background for a dark clock; dark velvet or a plain, dark wall for a light colored one. Take pictures with negatives, which you can use to have a brochure printed. Another technique is to set up a display of your clocks -- at your place, a rented display window, or in a store (on consignment).

The display should show off your clocks to their best advantage - good lighting, contrasting plain background, with no other distractions in the immediate area. They can be displayed in a dedicated section of shelves or a display case, or even in a suggested decor.

The main idea is to treat them as valuable items, which is how you want potential customers to see them!

To get started in the clock making business, send off for as many price lists as you can for works and mounts. Clock suppliers will provide you with detailed mounting instructions for their products. In the meantime, experiment with finishing techniques - resin coating, painting, sand blasting or whatever your pleasure. When you have decided what kind of clocks you will start with, set up your working area and get the necessary tools and supplies.

For natural wood finishes, you will probably need things like stains, casting resin, cleaner, brushes, tin strips, wood finishing materials, clamps, saws, and glue.

To obtain an extra thick coat of resin, build a retaining wall (the tin strips) around the piece to form a reservoir. Pour in the resin and tap out any bubbles. When it has cured remove the walls, shape and apply resin to the edges. When satisfied with the thickness and uniformity polish and assemble your finished clock.

Your first few projects will probably NOT be perfect -- in fat, they will probably include several "features" that you will have to learn NOT to do -- or at least to do better.

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These efforts need not be losses, however. They can be sold for reduced prices at flea markets, given to relatives (presents?), or sold to retails stores (even second hand stores, if necessary).

Do not show these first efforts to any store or customer that may later be a prospect for your best efforts (and higher prices). If you try to sell imperfect models today, you risk damaging your reputation before it ever gets started!

People who build successful businesses withhold their products and services until they are GOOD. From that point, they NEVER offer anything of lesser quality. This is why Marshal Fields can get ten times as much as Kmart for an identical item!

Although you will probably buy your initial supply of materials from your local hardware or hobby store (Wal-Mart carries some good supplies), look for a good source to buy materials wholesale, or at a significant (20-40%) discount.

Experiment with the different materials and DO NOT overlook freebies, some of which might make fantastic clocks. Examples are: driftwood, used (weather beaten) lumber, slabs of native rock, magazine pictures (coated with resin), old shovels or radios.

Also, compare brands, prices and results of products to make sure you are using a $65 per gallon resin when a $15 would do just as well.

Other possibilities are custom clocks (made from a customer's materials, or idea), thematic (a pallet clock for an artist), nature (oak slab with acorns for numbers), and clocks for special uses (designed to fit on top of a computer, or on the dash of a motor home. When you stop and think about it, there must be millions of possibilities that have not yet been discovered -- is one of them yours?

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Once you have the materials and skill to produce clocks, you will automatically have attained both the skills and the means to make many other products that can be used to augment your business. For example, plastic [paperweights with imbedded acorns or pills or beautiful plastic coated and/or decorated jewelry and trinket boxes (some with music boxes) and whatnot shelves.

A word of caution about resins and finishes that are often used in clock making. Read the labels on the finishes, thinners, cleaning materials carefully. Most are highly flammable and many are toxic to breathe. Make sure your working area is adequately ventilated and have a fire extinguisher handy -- just in case!

Building Doll Houses And Doll Furniture

Well built and tastefully appointed hand made doll houses often sell for $400 or more, especially if they are to scale, realistic looking, well-decorated and nicely furnished.

Materials used to build and furnish high quality dollhouses are not necessarily expensive. The real expenses are in the apparent hours of labor and high degree expertise required for their construction.

However, many "expert" dollhouse craftsmen have no more training or background than a normal wood-workers or wood hobbyists. If you have ever built a model airplane or car, you can probably produce dollhouses that will command a good price. All it tales is a little attention to detail, practice and a few tricks of the trade.

Basically, building doll houses involves selecting and cutting out (according to plans 1/8" to 1/4" paneling for walls, a little stronger plywood for the bottom floor, and thin paneling with a simulated overlay for the roof.

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Cut out the required windows, doors and spaces for stairways. For efficiency, you will probably cut out several parts from the same basic plan at a time.

Check these parts often to make sure they fit properly. Most walls and floors should be decorated before they are permanently installed or you may not be able to get them to apply the desired coatings or linings.

Although you will develop your own procedures, it's wise to follow the plan instructions explicitly for the first few models. Remember that although you can substitute materials freely, some substitutions may require different applications from the plans so be careful!

If you want to try without a plan (a commercial plan is recommended, at least for the first effort), you'll need a sheet of plywood (or plain 3/8" paneling), some ice cream sticks or tongue depressors, glue, nails (brads), a few pins and screw eyes, a coping or jig saw, plus other normal shop tools. Get wallpaper and linoleum (or contact shelf paper) remnants from the hardware store and fabric scraps from an upholstery shop or yard goods store.

Much of the fun in building dollhouses is the ingenious and often, unique methods craftsmen come up with to create really amazing effects for door, windows, and roofs, outside and inside decor. Your total material cost could be as low as $200 including furniture. Of course, the cost can be much higher with veneer walks, silk rugs and fancy furnishing.

Doll house patterns are available from many sources--your public library probably has several books on the subject; discount book sellers offer a wide selection of books, plans and suggestions.

Decorations and furnishings can also be obtained from a variety of sources. Subscribe to one or more trade magazines to learn and stay abreast of additional sources for materials, building and marketing techniques.

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The first "trick" is to build your dollhouses to the scale of the furniture that you intend to use! This is much easier (and smarter) than building one haphazardly or to a standard which the furniture is hard to get or even unavailable.

This would mean trying to cut little pieces of furniture down or enlarge them to fit a non-standard scale dollhouse.

Unless you are equipped to build dollhouse furniture from scratch to the described scale, stay with the standard scales!

To find the scale of the furniture, measure the height of a table and compare that a similar table in your own home.

If the dollhouse table is 2 1/2" tall and it equates to yours that is 30 inches (2 feet), that's a one inch to one foot (or twelve to one) scale.

An inch or difference ON YOUR TABLE is not bad. The same procedure works on hour house scale. If your doorway opening is 32 by 80 inches (2 2/3 by 6 1/2 feet), then the same size opening in the doll house would be 2 2/3 by 6 1/2 inches. The one-foot equal one-inch is a widely accepted scale. You can use any scale you want, however, even metric.

A good tip for furniture is to buy imported dollhouse furniture cheap and refinish it even though it's new. Buy a $1.30 chair, and sand and give it a coat of good polyurethane to make it into a $6.95 (retail) chair instead of the suggested retail of $3.95.

Much imported dollhouse furniture is mass-produced by children or untrained workers. It is poorly sanded and lightly coated with varnish or other inexpensive finish (even shoe polish!). Their materials and tools are often poor quality and the finishes usually look and feel rough. Their wood, however, is usually excellent (good wood is cheap overseas.

With some fine sandpaper and sell wool, smooth the finish until looks and feels hand crafted. If the stain and finish is really bad, remove it with BIX (at your hardware store), re-stain and refinish it.

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This process needn't take long, especially if you do several at once. Give your wooden furniture one or more coats of quality vanish, polyurethane or liquid resin. Spray is fine a dust free area (some overseas furniture markers spray out in the open with cars going by).

Check the upholstery for fit and quality. Replace if it doesn't look nice or go with your "decor" or treat it. Trim loose threads and glue any loose corners. A few moments with piece of dollhouse furniture can triple its value. It can also make the difference between a $40 and a $400 dollhouse!

Market your dollhouses wholesale through craft shops (usually on consignment), toy or department stores, and/or do your own advertising and sell from your "factory."

If you retail, two things will help immensely: a catalog and a nice display. Take good (professional quality) color pictures of each of your creations from several angles. Use professional backgrounds and lighting to present them in their best possible light.

If you can't afford to have a catalog printed make up a scrapbook of your work to show both the quality and the variety that your produce. Add comments and prices to make it into your catalog. List various options and prices for each. For example, modifying the layout, adding a room or porch, changing the type of roof.

Next, make arrangements to display your dollhouses. This can be a corner of a room in your house or shop or rented display window (check with real estate agents for windows in unoccupied stores).

Pictures and advertisements are nice, but you just can't beat the real thing. The closer your dollhouse display is where little girls can see them, the better!

You can sometimes arrange with local businesses to feature a display (the bank, bowling alley) for a week at a time. As a local craftsman of note, these businesses will often cooperate especially if you're good. You get exposure; they have an added attraction for their customers at no cost.

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Unless you live in a big city it would probably not pay to advertise continually in newspaper except around Christmas. Of course, if you could get the names and addresses of parents with little girls in the 3 to 10 age brackets, you could mail out brochures with pictures to their parents.

One way to obtain such a list is to offer a dollhouse as a prize. Contestants fill out coupons with their name and address to enter (which becomes your mailing list). Take part in community affairs to meet potential buyers. Operate a booth at the county fair, give out free balloons at the parade and come up with dollhouse variations that the local paper will cover (perhaps a model of a prominent local house).

Be sure to have several completed models on hand or at least ready to finish in time for Christmas. This should be your best season. Don't over look the possibly of building (or finishing) custom dollhouses.

For example, a shape something like the family home, painted and decorated to match. With 4 or 5 different basic patterns, you could make minor adjustments to come up with quite a few totally different models.

One of your secrets that you keep all patterns, jigs, molds and simply change outer materials to get different effects.

For example, all of your roofs will be similar, but some can be finished in painted sandpaper or cut out thin panel wood "for asphalt shingles and tile. You can probably imprint some wood paneling with brick design, spray it a light color, and then roll it with reddish brown to look like brick. Similar designs inscribed on lightwood would look like patio and walkway tile.

There is simply no end to interesting effects that can be realized from your imagination and a little experimenting.

The best advice from this point is to remember that the more patience and care you take in building each doll house, the more enjoyment some little girl will receive.

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If this is your motivation, you will undoubtedly be a successful dollhouse and doll furniture builder. Even so,, keep accurate records and always try to work out procedures to enable you to produce sections of the doll houses assembly line fashion. This helps avoid mistakes, speeds construction and increase your profits.

Jewelry from "Ordinary" Treasures

Almost everyone has a box of sparkling old buttons from Grandma's sewing chest to marvel at, or set of dominoes, checkers or mah-jongg pieces rescued from a flea market. Maybe they have a partial Scrabble game and perhaps even a collection of colorful, fifty-one-to-a-deck playing cards purchased at an antique store tucked away in a drawer.

Gather your treasures together and start earning extra income now! Strap those buttons on a piece of elastic to create eye-catching bangle bracelets. Glue the dominoes, checkers, and Scrabble pieces onto earrings or pin backs for guys and gals. Whatever the material, mount your artwork on one-of-a-kind playing cards for good money in a rewarding home jewelry business.

In addition to having the satisfaction of creating fun gifts for family and friends out of "heirloom" materials, once the word is out, relatives will often send along their extra buttons and collectibles.

This helps build your inventory, resulting in a minimal investment for supplies. The season for successful jewelry selling is year-round, since the pieces make wonderful birthday and Christmas gifts, as well as fun wardrobe accessories anytime. Men, women, and children can wear these buttons, domino, and checker pins and earrings, so the sky is the limit for profits. And this business can be worked out of your home part or full-time.

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Bev Rice is one designer who not only models what she sells, but delights in the pleasure others have in purchasing her sporty art. She and her husband Jim started a home business called "Sport in Life" ten years ago with one imperfect mah-jongg set originally bought as a present for a friend. In the past five years "Sport in Life" has evolved from marketing craft-fair products to bona fide antique buttons sold at more expensive retail-quality level. With mostly word-of-mouth advertising, their jewelry has captured creative awards, been featured in the Image section of her local Sunday newspaper, displayed for sale in clothing and curio boutiques, and sold at jewelry parties.

How To Sell Pine Cones!

Ordinary pine cones, of any size, can be made to look almost exactly like tiny owls simply by adding "eyes" which can be purchased at any hobby or craft shop. The cute stylistic little creatures can then be mounted on stained or burned plywood plaques, a hanging device or hook added, and they sell like hotcakes.

Mount the little birds on a small limb or twig, glue the whole scene onto a plaque background of any kind, display them and people will want them.

Sell them singly or in groups. Start with one large "mama" owl, then add two or three "baby" owls for an attractive grouping. They are cute. Find an old limb with a knothole, or an old board. Mount a small bird just inside the hole, or on a twig just outside of the hole. You have a scene people will love.

The idea of using natural products to make nature scenes appeals to many people. One person sells more of these than he and all of his grand kids can turn out.

Combine cones, pods, twigs, old wood, boards, dried flowers and leaves. Be creative and use your imagination. You can make money

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from ordinary pine cones.

Setting Up Your Own Craft Consignment Shop

Sell arts and craft items to the public on a commission basis from your converted garage workshop or basement showroom.

If you have access to a public location, a garage or small building (even a portable building) on your lot, along the highway or well-traveled street frontage or can rent space in a marketable area, the consignment business is worthy of consideration.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Retain a copy of each receipt in your permanent files. You also have the option of buying items outright -- the craft person might be willing (even anxious) to sell at a good price for cash.

In a very short time, you will be able to judge what will sell and how much it will bring. You can also stock craft supplies -- some of which you can sell to your crafters for even more profit and service to your clientele (both customers and clients).

You will be responsible for reasonable care and safeguarding of merchandise consigned to you (insurance for that should not be terribly expensive) as well as collecting for sales, withholding any tax, computing and paying the consignors their share.

With this in mind, be extra careful about giving credit, because it will be YOUR funds that are lent, NOT the consignor's!

For consignment sales, it is a good idea to consider renting a store unless you already have a suitable area where prospective customers will come to your display. Build or buy adequate shelves and display

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areas so you will have plenty of room to "showcase" the craft items tastefully and attractively.

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

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

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

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

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

Use all the free advertising you can get. A way to get it is to write little articles about your consignors and feed them to your local paper --human interest stories: what they make, how they make it, and of course, where you can find their fine products. It would be even better if you could provide pictures. If you do, use a good quality BLACK AND WHITE film (it is easier to process for printing in the paper).

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The editor probably won't take more than one article about your shop, but he may welcome items about different people in the community (even if your shop does get a lug here and there). Think of the free advertising you might get by writing little items about art exhibits in your studio.

With a good sign and a little publicity, a small (2 or 3 inch) contract ad in the local paper may be all the commercial advertising you need.

This type of ad allows you to change all or part of your copy each week or month, so you can feature different items every week.

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

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

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

Rock Art

What do you buy the person who has everything? Holiday shopping can be a stressful hassle especially when you're on the hunt for a unique gift, something that makes the receiver turn his head and say, "you know, that's really different."

If you're an artist—or if you have a passion for creating art—you'll find this business idea both simple and fun: design and sell "Designer Rock Art." By adding a rubber base to the bottom of rocks, you can market them as paperweights. Similarly, by gluing rubber against the edge of the rock, you can create doorstops.

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The first thing you'll want to do is find suitable rocks. You can do this in a number of ways. Many gardening and home supply shops generally have a section where they sell a variety of rocks. In fact, any store that has a gardening section is a good prospect for finding rocks you can use for your designer rocks. Or, you might prefer to go scouring for unique rocks on your own. If you live near a beach, a forest or the woods, you'll likely find plenty of unique rocks, of all shapes and sizes, to suit your purposes.

Once you have a good amount of rocks, you'll want to visit your local art supply store. You'll need paint, brushes with all types of tips (depending on the type of artwork you design) and anything else you find that you might need or want to use.

Now you have free reign to go wherever your imagination takes you. You might create abstract patterns, traditional pictures like waves crashing against the sand or tourist scenery. Remember, you can be as creative or as traditional as you'd like. You might design rocks for Halloween, Christmas, Easter or birthdays. Let your creation dry then you might want to spray a coat of shellac over it to both protect it and make it shine.

You can market your "Designer Rocks" in a number of ways. For example, you can approach local shops, where tourists frequent, and ask them to stock your rocks, shelving them in a prominent location. Local churches, malls and schools often hold craft fairs, especially around the holidays, and you can rent a table to sell your "Designer Rocks."

Decorations for Wine Bottles

Wine is the perfect gift for the person who has everything. There are plenty of wine connoisseurs and novice wine collectors who are thrilled when they receive a bottle of fine wine, from an ideal year and with an ideal texture. And, when you go to a dinner party or a holiday party, what is the one thing most people bring? A fine wine

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will enhance the evening and show the host your appreciation for the invitation.

Nothing says class like a bottle of fine wine. However, aren't all bottles of wine pretty much the same? It's a spectacular gift, but it's not really very personal. By adding a simple decoration, one that slips over the neck of the bottle, your bottle of wine takes on a more personal touch. This is your opportunity to really let your imagination run free as you create and sell decorations for wine bottles.

You can create a variety of different bottle decorations among them: metal covers, wood carved covers or floral designs.

If you've ever taken metal shop, you know that you can create gorgeous pieces of art with a few simple tools. You can also hand carve designs—from the simple to the intricate—on wood. Visit any art supply shop, and they should be able to help you determine what tools you need to use to create unique covers for wine bottles. In fact, many shops hold one-day classes that will teach you exactly how to wood or metal carve.

You can also use floral arrangements for your bottle covers. The one thing you want to ensure is you choose flowers whose scent compliments the bouquet of the wine. You can find fresh flowers at your local florist, or you may want to use artificial flowers, which will not decay or die. The one big advantage of using artificial flowers rather than fresh flowers is the floral decoration can be used over and over again.

Once you've made a batch of decorations, you'll want to start marketing them. There are likely several liquor shops in your town. Try to get them to stock your wine covers. You might also have them stocked in gift, novelty and other shops where interesting gifts are sold.

You might also want to have a booth at a local craft fair or rent a kiosk at the mall at Christmas time.

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Time and Weather Station

What's one of the first things you want to know the minute you wake up in the morning, after you've hit the snooze button a few times? What time is it? Then, as the sleep clears from your head, you think, wait, what day is it? Friday or Saturday? As you throw off the covers, you shiver, wondering what the temperature is. Should you wear a coat to work or not?

Now you can bring all of that information in one convenient—and attractive—package to people looking for a unique gift. You can produce a "Time and Weather Station" which consists of: a barometer or a thermometer, a calendar and a digital clock all laid out in a single framed picture. For example, the picture may be of a cityscape, and set among the dials or skyscraper is the barometer, the clock and the calendar.

This craft business will allow you to really use your creativity skills and also market to a large number of people. The first thing you'll want to do is decide what type of picture you want to use. You don't have to limit yourself to one specific background, either, instead using a variety of photos.

Remember, your customers will be as diverse as the pictures themselves. Use photographs you've taken yourself or find copyright free photographs online. If you decide to search for copyright free photographs online, make sure you read any disclaimers closely, so you don't accidentally infringe upon anyone's rights.

How big will your photographs be? Five by seven, eight by ten or eleven by fourteen? Once you decide, you'll be able to purchase frames which can be wooden, metal or even plastic, as long as it has the desired effect for which you hope.

You can generally purchase digital clocks or thermometers at your local home improvement stores or at a variety of retail stores. For

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the calendar, you may want to create it on your computer. Visit your local home office or computer store for different types of printing paper.

Once you've produced the Time and Weather Stations, you'll want to get them in front of the public. Rent a kiosk at the mall, particularly during the holiday rush, or have local gift or novelty shops stock your product. You might also want to run classified ads, offering to create "personalized" Time and Weather Stations, made to the exact specifications of your client.

Category: Publishing & Writing

Local Advertising Cost Newsletter

Do you like to research and assimilate information? If so, a local advertising cost newsletter may be just the business for you.

Businesses need to advertise but choosing the best advertising medium is never easy. Business owners must examine their options and try to make an educated guess about which is the best strategy for their money.

The trouble is, information for the different media in an area is not available from any one particular source. And even if the business owner has the time and patience to request all the information from all the different sources, the information still must be compiled and compared.

That's where you come in.

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You will assemble all the information in one place and publish a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter listing the rates and audience size of radio and television stations, newspapers, weekly publications and other advertising media in your area.

What you will do is locate all the sources for advertising in your area. This would include newspapers, television and radio stations, weekly publications, local magazines, cable television, bus billboards, direct mail co-ops, etc. You can find these media listed in your yellow pages under the headings:

- Advertising
- Advertising -- Direct Mail
- Advertising -- Aerial
- Advertising -- Directories
- Advertising -- Newspaper
- Advertising -- Outdoor
- Advertising -- Periodical
- Advertising -- Radio
- Advertising -- Television

Next, you write or call each of the sources and ask them to mail you their advertising rate card.

After you have all the rate cards, group them by category and make a chart for each category that compares the rates for each source within the category. For example, one chart would be Radio Advertising. List all the radio stations along with their rates, number of listeners and cost per 1000 listeners. This chart should be subdivided by time of day because different times are more valuable than others.

Radio Station Advertising Rates

Station	**Time Slot**	**Rate per 30 Sec Spot**	**Listeners**	**Cost per 1000**
WFYE	Morning Drive	$15.00	120,000	.125

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WWVE	Morning Drive	$25.00	210,000	.119
WYHV	Morning Drive	$12.00	80,000	.150
WRTX	Morning Drive	$8.00	50,000	.160
WXIV	Morning Drive	$10.00	75,000	.133
WFYE	Mid Morning	$10.00	90,000	.111
WWVE	Mid Morning	$20.00	150,000	.133
WYHV	Mid Morning	$7.00	50,000	.140
WRTX	Mid Morning	$6.00	45,000	.133
WXIV	Mid Morning	$5.00	35,000	.142

Etc, etc, etc...

As you can see the best rate for morning drive time is WWVE at 11.9 cents per 1000 listeners. The best Mid Morning rate is WFYE at 11.1 cents per 1000 listeners.

You would also have different charts for spots of different length -- 15,30 and 60 seconds are pretty much the standard. A chart comparing the types of listener would also be helpful. Country music listeners have different interests than say, talk radio listeners.

Make similar charts for local and cable TV stations and for newspapers and weekly publications.

All other advertising media, such as bus advertising, billboards, skywriting, etc would be grouped together into similar charts.

You want to have several charts for each of the categories. By slicing and dicing the information in various ways you will increase the value of your information and help your customers make more informed decisions about their advertising purchases.

Take all your charts to a printer and have them compiled into a newsletter format.

Since this is very specialized information and not available elsewhere, a subscription to your newsletter could command a price of $100 or more per year.

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However, to increase your market, consider publishing several areas together on a less frequent basis. For example, you could very easily cover a 3 - 5 county area with a quarterly publication that sells for $40 or $50 per issue.

To market your newsletter, use a direct mail letter followed by a telephone call to the owner of the business a few days later.

Letter Writing for Profit

An Ohio woman earns a part-time income writing long personal letters to prisoners, shut-ins and service people. Her clients: families and friends of the individuals who explain the likes and dislikes of the people she writes to, and she corresponds with them along these lines. She advertises her services in nation tabloids and charges a few dollars per letter.

Several small concerns in the US and Canada do fairly well by drafting custom letters. Among their requests are love and hate letters, eviction notices, prank letters, "Dear John" letters, termination notices, even notifications of damage done to a friend or neighbor's property. In short, they specialize in writing letters that their clients for one reason or another, would rather not write themselves. They also make phone calls for the same reasons.

Custom letters such as these can fetch from $10.00 to $50.00 depending on the subject matter and research involved.

The best clients are office workers, executives, salesmen, professionals and secretaries, people who know the value of a well-turned phrase. If you're handy with a word and would like to try this, you may have to advertise heavily and provide a bit of complimentary service until you become established, as this is a most unusual and little known service.

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Publish a Contest Bulletin

Many people are entering various contests to reap the benefits their jobs cannot provide them. These optimists rationalize that "one day they will win".

You can help these individuals discover a whole new world by providing a series of contest bulletins. One man in Florida who publishes a monthly bulletin realizes large profits through his service. Using a computer and printer he lists various contests, rules, and the addresses where entries are to be sent.

He gets his information by reading the latest issues of many national magazines. His customers are obtained from ads he runs in local and national media. At $5.00 per copy, this type of business can be successful and profitable as well. According to the latest notice sent out by this man, his circulation is in the thousands.

Children's Letter of the Month Club

Here is a really simple business anyone with a flair for communicating with children can turn into a great income.

What you do is create a subscription "letter of the month" club for children. Every month you write a personalized letter on a specific theme and mail it to the child.

For example, if your theme is exotic places, you could call yourself Traveling Tina and write a letter that both entertains and teaches about a different local each week.

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You do not have to write a personal letter to each child. Simply create a "boiler plate" document and use your computer to insert the child's name in relevant places. You can also have the parent fill out a form that further personalizes the letter with the names of pets, playmates, food likes and dislikes, etc.

To make your service really unique, include a low cost gift with each letter, like a bookmark or picture.

Market your club in national parent's magazines and sell one year subscriptions for $20-$30.

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Tamaira Sandifer
Owner: Fun Mail For Kids
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Case File

http://www.FunMailForKids.com

Fun mail for kids has become a fun and successful adventure for me. It began as a simple tool to encourage my four year old to read and write. Now we touch children all over the world.

Here's how my adventure began . . . I came home from work one day to find my 4-year-old daughter entrenched in a letter writing campaign to a popular children's show. She wrote many letters and drew a picture of her favorite character. She placed the letters and the picture in an envelope and sealed it carefully. Then she wrote what was supposed to be their address and drew a stamp in the corner. Finally, she rushed the letter to our mailbox and returned with a triumphant grin that began at one ear and ended at the other.

For about 6 weeks following, my daughter met me at the mailbox and asked me everyday, 'Mommy, did anything come for me ?' And everyday I dreaded answering, 'I'm sorry honey, not today.' I realized that there are not many services out there that offer to send personalized mail to children. Especially fun mail that is designed just for them.

After researching and giving up in frustration a few weeks later, I wrote her a letter myself, pretending to be her new colorful and exciting 'Pen Pal'. My daughter carried this letter with her for 3 straight days. Needless to say, she and her 'Pen Pal' have been writing each other every since. She tells her Pen Pal about her new accomplishments, hobbies, and experiences, and in return she receives personalized letters, and cards filled with fun stuff, to say 'congratulations' and 'job well done' !

As my children grow and change, so does my business. It encourages me to keep developing new characters and products to support them. For example, when my daughter started loosing her teeth, we created the Tooth Fairy Kid Pal. When she started becoming what I call 'girly', we developed Flora Friendly. My little one loves to tell jokes, we developed Silly Lily for her. Fun Mail For Kids has turned out to be such a wonderful adventure. Everyday, we are reaching children from California to New York, Australia to Japan.

As you can see, the idea for Fun Mail For Kids to encourage self-expression and to get our children excited about reading and writing. Take a moment to browse our website. You can send your special little one fun and personalized mail from the Tooth Fairy, Santa Claus, the Spring/Easter Bunny, our Kid Pal Pen Palz, and much more. We also offer membership packages for fun every month. Every greeting is personalized and filled with prizes, stickers, family crafts, & more. Whether your special person is young or young at heart, each greeting is guaranteed to bring a smile the their face. Our greetings are a perfect gift for birthdays, holidays, or anyday! I thank you, in advance, for your valued support.

You can find out more about Tamaira and her adventure in starting Fun Mail For Kids by visiting her website at: http://www.FunMailForKids.com, by reading her ebook "Starting your own Personalized Letter Service for Kids", visiting a chat hosted by her on the site or by taking a Bizy Mom Online class.

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Home Based Newsletter Publishing

Newsletter publishing is a hot, hot home-based business with a high profit potential. It can also be a very low cost business to start. For example, a $99.00 a year newsletter, published monthly, would cost less than $12.00 a year to product, print and mail. With just 1000 subscribers you could net $87,000 a year.

Currently there are more than 15,000 consumer and business newsletters covering everything from Astrology to Zoology.

Anytime you have a large group of people with a common interest, there is a newsletter waiting to be published.

If you can gather information, or have access to original information -- either through your job or your own special interests -- newsletter publishing just may be the perfect home based business for you.

The best way to find a topic for a newsletter is to look for groups of people who already have an interest in a specific subject.

One way to find these groups of people is to look in the Standard Rate & Data Mailing List Directory. You can find a copy of this huge reference book at any large library or you can buy a copy at their web site: www.srds.com (Note: try to find a copy at the library as the book is very expensive)

What you want to do is look through the different categories of mailing lists. Concentrate on the categories that interest you or that you have specific information about. Find out how many people have bought or shown an interest in that specific category of product by looking at how many names are on the list.

For example, if you are interested in fitness and health, you might find a list of 150,000 people who have bought a book called, "101 Fitness Tips For Seniors." This group of people would be perfect

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prospects for a newsletter targeted toward seniors who are interested in fitness.

Another good way to find a topic is to look at existing newsletters and dig out a niche. Look in the library for the "Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters" to get an idea of the types of newsletters being published.

Here are a few unusual ones I dug up:

- La Belle France -- This 8 page monthly caters to people who vacation (or dream of vacationing) in France. The newsletter has over 8000 subscribers at $47.00 a year. If you like to travel, a similar concept could be used for just about any popular destination.
- Family Travel Times -- A newsletter, which focuses on interesting vacation getaways for the entire family.
- Rural Newsletter -- A newsletter, which caters to people who want to "cash out" of big city life and move to the country.
- Daytime Serial Newsletter -- A monthly newsletter that summarizes the daily plots of 14 different soap operas.
- Old-House Newsletter -- A newsletter catering to people who own old houses. Articles include advice on renovating, restoring, cleaning and refinishing brownstones. 20,000 subscribers pay $25.00 a year for the monthly newsletter.
- Photoletter -- A twice-monthly newsletter for freelance photographers that reports the needs and requirements of buyers of photographs.

Newsletter publishing can be a fun and profitable business. Find a topic that interests you and explore the opportunities.

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Publish A Home Business Index For Fast Profits

Publish and distribute an index (or directory) of home businesses in your community. If you can't think of an ideal business for yourself, then start a business that helps others to build theirs -- by publishing a directory of who sells or does what, what they charge, and where to find them!

Something like a weekly Bigtown Bargain Bulletin containing listings, little write-ups and possibly, some advertisements.

Statistics tell us that some 25 MILLION people are now operating businesses out of their homes -- and that figure is climbing daily.

Most of these enterprises could handle much more business if they could get and would greatly appreciate any assistance in this department.

On the other hand, many consumers would just as soon do their business close to home if they could get the same quality and service and didn't have to waste their time looking for a reliable source. A HOME BUSINESS DIRECTORY serves both the businesses and the consumers!

Collect the name, addresses and phone numbers of home businesses in your area (place ads in local advertisers if necessary).

Contact them and explain your intention and find out more about their products or services. You can ask them particulars about their business over the phone, but it would be much better to mail them a questionnaire with plenty of room for comments. Be sure to include details of any types of warranties or satisfaction assurances they give (money-back, exchanges, etc).

Explain that you are making up a directory and that there is no cost to them for an initial listing unless they want to place an

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advertisement. They should be able to select the heading under which their business will appear, and POSSIBLY given one line for a slogan or brief explanation.

Those who want to be listed under more than one heading (like Service and Word Processing) would be charged for the extra listing--even for the first listing. Then you can sell larger ads, just like the phone companies.

Stress it that businesses must honor their commitments and offers made through your publication - or risk being omitted from future issues. You want them to offer specials in exchange for the free mention. The objective is to give your readers an incentive reason to read your publication to see what bargains are available this week.

The first few issues will probably have fewer paid ads than you would like. This is the time to place several of your own -- but do it wisely. Make sure there is a variety of ads; some with illustrations, borders, all different sizes, style of print. This is a good time to spell out any requirements for advertiser honesty (like honoring commitments).

Although the ad is aimed at potential businesses, your readers will notice that your standards are high. Include a small code number in each ad so you can tell your customers that an ad the size and make up of "14-d" costs $10. Tell your customers how long their ad will be valid.

For example, you can say it will be at least 3 weeks until re-publish. Then, if you wait 4 or 5 weeks, the ad purchaser gets a better deal; but never republish earlier than promised without making it right" with your advertisers.

An incentive that many directory publishers use successfully to keep their advertisers in every issue is to place classified ads according to the number of consecutive insertions.

New customer ads would appear at the end of their respective listings and work up as older advertisers stopped (or dropped out temporarily). Of course, they would have more choice with display

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ads, which can be priced according to position (for example more for first or last page.).

Another incentive to use display ads is to give free bold print in regular listings to the ones who also purchase a display ad. Some would call this pressure (it is), but there is ample precedent: the phone company routinely inserts a "see advertisement" comments as well as bold print name in the main listing for those who buy display ads. Other incentives are discounts for listing under more than one heading; repeats in succeeding issues and various package deals you make up.

Your first issue will be very important. It should be as complete as you can possibly make it (which is why the first listing must be free) and it should have all sorts of ads. This is true even though selling ads for that first issue is very difficult because it is "sight unseen."

Consider offering not only a free listing to each home business in your area, but also a free ad! Each new client would not only be listed in your directory, but would also get a free ad. Of course, the free ad will be small (perhaps a 1" display), but they certainly can't argue about the price. The purpose of the free ad is twofold: first is to "fill up" that first issue (which would have few ads otherwise); the second is to get customers used to placing an ad.

Other Benefits Are:

1. Virtually every businessperson will want to be included because this is where potential customers will look for home businesses.

2. When they contact you for inclusion and give you the ad info, you find out a good deal about them - at a low cost (to you). This is a cheap way to build a mailing or customer listing.

3. When the business get additional calls as a result of their being listed, they will see the wisdom of continuing to be included (and paying for an ad that brings them business).

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4. All businesses will read the index -- if only to check out the competition and look at their own ads.

5. As your customers business grows, they will be able to spend more money on advertising (take out larger ads).

6. Even if some clients do not get calls they can specifically identify as to having come as a result of their listings in the INDEX, they will want to stay listed if only because their competition is.

7. Since you now have their name and addresses - and know something about their business, they are already on your mailing list as customers. Call them to offer specials whenever you wish.

8. Because your first issue has all (all you could find) home businesses in the area, it is a unique and valuable tool. It will be much better accepted because it is more representative than if your first few issues were skimpy.

Another option is to include articles or features in your INDEX. This can be general information of interest to the community, things that would interest either the advertisers or their potential customers, or special features (on advertisers, local citizens, school events, community calendar, etc).

Under features, you could print little summaries of your advertisers -- even a picture here and there. Items like this could be paid for a bonus for taking out a large ad (many local papers use this technique). They can even furnish the copy, so long as you retain editing rights.

Your publication can be simply a Directory of Home Businesses or it can be incorporated with something else. It could be a "bonanza of specials," tourist guide, county map or sports schedule. It can be given away or sold. Most of these directories are restricted to home business with short filler items of general interest and are given away.

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The publisher has them printed, takes them home and assembles them, and then has them distributed door-to-door in the area (often by school kids). Some index publishers place their directories in stores where they are given away -- but some stores will refuse because they consider some of the home businesses as competitors. Either way, all of the income from this business is sale of advertisements contained in the index.

If your directory is limited to a current list of area home businesses and what they offer, it will probably not be necessary to publish more than 2-4 times a year.

On the other hand, there may be enough information for monthly or even weekly publication that feature specials or "what's hot" this period. If this is the case, consider publishing a special issue periodically 1-4 times a year) with a complete list of businesses -- even those that don't advertise with you. One way to list would be alphabetically by service or subject (much like the yellow pages).

The cover of your index should be something to catch the eye of both the advertisers (since they pay you) and the public. Slogans are nice (Support Your Community and $ave), as are names Bargain Bulletin) and logos (your town or school mascot) or one that you create. Pictures or drawings are also good attention-getters. If possible, the cover should be in two colors, or at a minimum, printed on heavier colored paper.

The title of your index and any accompanying motto should remain constant -- so it can build recognition. Its size is optional; there are pro's and con's to just about any size; pocket size is nice, but easy to lose and probably involves more waste. Larger sizes will fit into the glove compartment or purse, but not a pocket. Telephone size is too big for either, but might be placed by the phone book.

If you decide to place your index in stores for free distribution, make up some holders -- preferably some with your logo and/or name that stores will be proud to display.

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Consider a stand that can be placed in supermarket entries and large aisles. Perhaps a stand that fits under a tray -- which would be suitable for either a counter or aisle. One trick is to build your holders or stands with wood and hardened Masonite. Nails and glue work well, and the Masonite is very easy to paint or silkscreen.

While in the preparation (compiling your business names and descriptions), also be checking on places and methods of distribution. It might be possible to combine your publication with another, non-competing freebie, where you could share holders. At any rate, remember that your advertising rates will be governed by the number of indexes that are taken or given out -- the more you give out, the more your ads are worth!

The amount and frequency of issues you publish will vary with the location, number of advertisers and your own capabilities. A good starting place would be quarterly. You must tell your advertisers when each issue is due -- and stick to that schedule as close as you can. It is very important to publish on schedule; otherwise, you might be viewed by disappointed advertisers as a fly-by-night operation.

When a client pays for an ad that is to come out February first, he expects and often schedules some of his operation around that ad. If it is late, he will feel cheated! A customer that stops advertising for cause is much more difficult to get back the second time. As a publisher, you will make all sorts of decisions. One of your first will to be to decide whether or not to continue not to charge for listings -- and if you should still offer free ads to first time advertisers. If you can list sufficient businesses that are fairly representative of what is available in your area, you may be in the position to charge a small fee for listing in addition to charging for ads.

But if your publication would look skimpy with only those who are willing to pay for listing, it would be prudent to protect your publication by including all businesses, whether or not they take out paid ads. This way, your publication is a complete directory -- and a more useful tool. Of course, you can offer various deals that you

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design specifically to correct weaknesses or increase participation and revenues.

Unless you plan to do your own printing, check with several printers) and copy services) in your area for the best prices, but be sure they can meet your deadlines. Don't overlook a desktop publisher who can produce masters that can be photo copied. Write for prices from some of the listed Business Sources for a price comparison.

Publish Your Own Best Sellers: Cookbooks!

Every year, cookbooks are high on the list of the nation's best sellers. There are tens of thousands of them sold each year with no suggestion of any weakening of the market. Trouble is, there are so many cookbook writers and publishers that the odds of any one particular cookbook becoming a best seller are not much better than a new novel. But, it can be done!

Two things that make cookbooks different from other projects are subject matter and author recognition. Prospective buyers don't have to read part of several chapters to see what the book is about, and the author of a cookbook need not be a world famous chef -- so long as the recipes sound desirable.

Basically, there are three approaches to this business:

1. Accumulate recipe collections and have them published.

2. Publish recipes for organizations.

3. Print private recipe collections.

The first category is the collection and publication of recipes from any sources where you are he publisher, author and/or editor.

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The recipes can be in virtually any category (diet, ethnic, geographical area, beef, vegetarian, all desserts, etc.).

Don't overlook recipes for specific groups, such as diabetics or those allergic to milk products. They can be your recipes, from your family cookbook, purchased, or collected by many different legitimate means.

About the only major "no-no" in this area is to copy one from a copyrighted publication. Aside from satisfying yourself that the recipes are accurate and actually produce the desired results, it is usually necessary to convert some of them so that they all produce about the same number of servings (e.g., 1 or 2).

This would be especially important in a cookbook for singles or dieters. There are computer programs that automatically convert recipes to a desired yield (one is Meal Master, a Shareware program available from most any computer user club.

A recipe for 12 loaves of bread would be too big for the average home recipes book. So all the ingredients (cups, teaspoons, tablespoons, etc.) need to be cut by about five sixths and still be in recognized recipe terms (no easy task for the average person without a Ph.D.

When publishing your own cookbook, the greatest challenge is selling it.

There are an awful lot of cookbooks on the market today, so if you are to compete successfully you must offer something different. It must be something calculated to meet (or create) a demand so people will want to buy it.

The "trick" is to convince potential buyers that your cookbook has recipes they want, don't already have and that other cookbooks don't offer -- at least in the same form yours.

Probably the best way to prepare yourself is to come up with a novel approach is to study what is selling currently and in particular, how it

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is being sold. Check the book stores, advertisements and offers you see in supermarkets and department stores. What do they cover, and more importantly what DON'T they cover.

The third option is to "publish" a private family cookbook. Here, you would gather recipes from one or more members of the family and arrange them into a collection.

Make sure to get comments for each one: who's favorite dish; where it came from, or interesting remarks -- anything that will help make the cookbook truly "family." The recipes should be arranged by category, and there should be good representation in each section to produce a well-balanced product.

Naturally, the easiest way to compile such a cookbook would be on a word processor or desktop system. It would be extra nice to include illustrations (from clip art), and the cover and at least the main title page should be highly personalized. It could bear the family name and "grandma" as the author, for example:

The Jones Family Cookbook, edited by
Sally Jones-Smith

Then, each section title page could have a cute comment, so that the complete product would reflect as many members of the family as possible. The initial copy would be for mom (or grandma), but as you might guess, there would be ample opportunity for extra copies -- for the in-laws, cousins, and of course, one for each daughter when she marries!

Charges for this type of cookbook would be for your time and expertise as well as the amount and type of materials used. The pages can be plastic covered; it could be printed on a color printer, the covers could be embossed or hand done and inserted under the plastic on a three ring notebook -- and many other possible combinations.

One (of many) idea for an inexpensive but impressive cover is to obtain a good (high contrast) black and white picture, silhouette or

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drawing of the lady, couple or family involved and use that as a centerpiece, around which you place clip-art and/or rub-on letters to make a "master."

This could then be copied and inserted under plastic on a three-ring notebook. It is also possible to purchase decorated sheets to which you can add the photograph or drawing. And, if you have or can use the services of a good desktop publishing system, there are many other options easily within your reach.

Your profit will not be on the first book. You should just about break even on it (e.g. get paid for your time and materials). Your profit will come from sales of duplicates -- for sisters, uncles, in-laws and for daughters and daughters-in-law when they marry. Once the family owns a single copy of this Heirloom, they will want to pass it along -- especially when they learn that additional copies are half price!

This particular option has an additional potential profit source: when you prepare the Jones's cookbook, you will undoubtedly "save" it onto a disk that cost a quarter or so. There is no need to erase this disk -- just file it, and let the customers know you have it and can update, re-issue or add to it whenever they wish.

For example, you can add a page or two of recipes from the newer family members (along with their comments); correct a mistake in one already printed, or you can run off another complete copy whenever you wish. You would make enough on one correction or page addition to more than pay for the 25 cents you have invested in the disk -- and plenty more when they want more copies!

Within these three major divisions are countless other variations that could never be covered in one volume -- in fact, you may well come up with a new one that does great. Some try to sell recipes one or two at a time, other group them by desired result (diet), food groups (all meat, game, vegetarian), health (salt free), ethnic (soul food), nationality (Hungarian), regional (Midwestern), special groups (senior citizens, Toronto Teetotalers), or specific courses (all salads). Cookbooks can be all inclusive (large volumes) or short, inexpensive

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booklets for specialties. They can be loose-leaf or bound, large or small.

Note the advertisements that keep appearing over and over -- as compared to those that appear and then disappear. For example, there are ads in the National Enquirer for one or more "special" recipes, as many others for cookbooks, collections and special purpose diets.

Ads that appear only once or twice indicate that they don't work (the ads cost more than they bring in). The problem can be the product, pricing, wording of the ad, or the fact that there simply isn't sufficient demand for what is being advertised. You will have to make that judgment, but it can be made easier by using a little logic.

If a diet food ad disappears, it is not because the demand for the diet food was "reduced" (sorry "bout that!), so it must be the price, wording or marketing method. You can eliminate price if the item wasn't overpriced and marketing if there are many other ads in the same publication that do seem to "pull." In this case, the wording of the ad was the culprit -- hopefully, you can spot the problem and avoid it when you write and place yours!

Many printers will be glad to publish and promote your cookbook -- but very few (probably none) will be willing to do so on a percentage basis -- they will want their money "up front!"

You can probably get several quotes on printing a certain number of copies, which will help equip you to get a pretty good printing price -- obtain perhaps 5,000 copies at a dollar or less per copy. But the real job is selling them.

Many printers will give you a package price for printing and promotion, but you can't be sure of just what their idea of "promotion" is. Most of them will send out sample copies and price lists and then wait for the orders to come in. If they come in, you do fine. If they don't -- well, the printer kept his part of the bargain!

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As a general rule, unless you have the funds to spare, it is best to promote your own cookbook. You do that by sending copies and price lists to possible buyers, by advertising it, personal appearances, fair booths (samples of its cuisine), giving it away as prizes, running specials or any other way you can think of!

The second method is to publish a cookbook with a "guaranteed readership." That is, collect recipes from individuals, list the names of the contributors, and sell copies to them! This is not as far fetched, as it might seem at first.

An example is a recipe book for a church group or club, where the completed cookbook is purchased by the recipe contributors as well as other members of the congregation or club -- to raise money, and also promote the organization.

As the promoter of such a cookbook, you collect, edit and organize the cookbook, arrange for printing, and then help sell it (both within and outside the organization) for a fee or percentage of sales.

Or, you could promote a community cookbook featuring the cuisine of your area, and again giving credit to contributors (credits help ensure sales). In this case you may not need to share your profits with anyone, yet people whose names are in the book will buy it, as well as those who want to "support the city."

Although there are thousands of possibilities as to the content of a cookbook, consider something like all "southern fried chicken" recipes; meals for RV park potlucks, Cook County Cuisines, or Lake Charles Fish Recipes.

Still another possibility would be a booklet for the band-boosters, Soccer Moms or a collection of recipes from senior citizens, with a percentage of the proceeds going to their organization. The latter might include family heirlooms that will be lost if they aren't preserved in your cookbook!

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Perhaps the most inexpensive way to produce a small number (less than 500) cookbook is to prepare your pages for reduction onto legal sized paper.

Four typewritten sheets can fit on one sheet of 8 1/2'x 14" paper if they are reduced in size and placed side by side on the 14" width.

The legal size paper is then folded and stapled to form a booklet 8"high by 7" wide.

The page numbering can be tricky in this system, but a copy or booklet service can advise you how to number the pages once they know how many pages the booklet will have.

You should be able to produce this type of booklet, complete with a stiff paper, titled cover for 3 - 5 per page.

When having small jobs printed, always check with both copy services and printers for the best deal.

The bottom line in successful cookbook publishing is to plan carefully and know exactly what you what to do before beginning.

Plan what type recipes you want to feature and consider who would be most interested in buying them. Next, figure the best way to attract those potential buyers to your product.

Work on your recipes until you are certain they are just the way you want them, then design a cover for your book, have them printed, and start advertising.

One problem that can surface in this business is bad recipes -- those that have not been tested and tested by someone who knows food.

Sometimes small publishers run recipe contests and get hundreds of recipes for good (looking) dishes -- but they won't all TASTE good!

After all, they were sent in by various people, some of who undoubtedly jotted down something from memory and others who

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just copied them. The warning here is to include only recipes in your cookbook that you KNOW are good.

How To Get Paid Writing Simple Greeting Cards

Most of us enjoy getting greeting cards from time to time. Birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, the birth of a baby, and other occasions mean even more to us when we are remembered by friends, relatives and colleagues.

A well written card can make a genuinely personal statement for any occasion. That's why greeting cards continue to be a sincere and effective means of communication. In fact, the demand for greeting cards is such that it is now a multi-billion dollar industry and still growing.

Since there will always be birthdays, holidays and other occasions appropriate for card sending, the market remains stable and prosperous for talented and creative writers. Besides the ever popular traditional greeting card messages, greeting card companies are constantly looking for fresh and innovative ideas and concepts.

And although most companies employ staff writers and artists, the opportunity for free-lance writers is very real and substantial. Many greeting card companies actually encourage free-lance writers to submit a regular stream of card ideas.

Writing greeting cards on a free-lance basis is a creative way for writers to make excellent part-time money. In some cases, extremely talented and prolific writers can write greeting cards full time and make a comfortable living.

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Of course, the amount of success a free-lance writer can expect from writing greeting cards depends on talent, initiative, knowledge of the industry, and time devoted to creating new ideas and concepts.

Many free-lance writers are attracted to writing greeting cards simply by the nature of the work. Everything is usually accomplished from the writer's own home. All that's needed is a typewriter and a fairly consistent supply of new ideas. There are no agents, or complex contracts to deal with, and most business transactions are done by mail.

As a rule, writers who have success in the greeting card industry are creative people who not only love to write, but also understand what other people want in greeting cards. These writers have learned the secret of "marketability and send ability" and as a result are able to express, in a minimum number of words, a multitude of sentiments.

Getting started writing greeting cards on a free-lance basis is not at all difficult. You don't have to possess a college degree, or live in New York.

What you will need is the ability to create messages that people want to send and receive. You'll also need to be familiar with what is already on the market; what people are buying and sending. Then you'll need to know which companies are most likely to accept your particular type of submissions.

This report will offer information and suggestions about the greeting card industry and how to create and submit material that could earn you $150 or more per idea. It is not intended as a guarantee against rejection. Even the most successful writers are familiar with editor's rejections. But, if you are creative, enjoy writing, and are willing to follow specific company guidelines, you could soon be making good money doing something that is both fun and challenging.

What Greeting Card Companies Are Looking For

While the greeting card industry is not stagnant, and new ideas and trends are frequently being developed, the three basic card

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categories remain the same -- traditional, studio (or contemporary) and alternative.

And when publishing a line of greeting cards, in any category, a company must cater to the people who are most likely to buy and send cards. In most cases, that means women between the ages of 18 and 50. So the majority of companies are looking for cards that target issues these women care about; relationships, success, religion, money, health, and so on.

Even though traditional and contemporary cards continue to be a staple of the greeting card industry, there may be an even better opportunity for the free-lance writer in tune with relevant issues. Issue oriented, or alternative cards, are becoming increasingly popular even with smaller companies that are expanding their lines in order to reach this growing market.

Alternative cards offer a response to non-traditional card-sending situations and can be just as viable a means of communication as traditional cards. Some of today's best selling cards are non-traditional cards commemorating new jobs, promotions, and salary raises.

Other top selling alternative cards deal with relationships, even the break-up of marriages. Still another significant line of alternative cards is aimed at people who have experienced, or are experiencing, drug and alcohol addictions. At least one greeting card company has already created a complete line of such cards, in cooperation with a drug and alcohol abuse foundation.

Whether the sending situation is traditional or non-traditional, it's safe to say most companies prefer a personal, conversational style message rather than a verse of rhyme.

However, rhymed verse is often used for inspirational cards, which also have a fairly large market. Most companies specify their individual preferences in their writer's guidelines. That's why it is essential to know what a specific company is looking for before you make a submission.

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Another ingredient many companies are looking for is humor. Cards that convey a message with humor are very popular, especially with the baby boom generation, which makes up a large portion of the card-sending market. The preference, even with humor, is for short messages that are immediately understood and funny.

The ideal is to have an attention-getting, one-sentence lead in on the outside (or front) of the card, with an equally brief, but effective, punch line inside. The intention is to get the potential buyer/sender hooked by the lead-in message so she/he can't resist opening the card to get to the punch line.

Companies that are looking for humorous card ideas are usually emphatic and clear about the kinds of humor they will accept. As a rule "corny" or sentimental humor is not preferred. Most companies request humor that is "off-the-wall," "laugh-out-loud," "irreverent," "outrageous," and in many cases, "risqué."

In other words, try to make your humorous ideas as "cliché'-free," unpredictable, and funny as you can.

In general, most greeting card companies are looking for cards that are appropriate for traditional sending occasions, as well as cards for newer "issue" oriented situations. Here are several of the most sought after types of card ideas:

1. Birthdays. Since there's never a shortage of birthdays, the market for original birthday cards, both humorous and serious, remains a steady market for writers. Birthday cards can make us laugh about getting older, or they can be sensitive, serving as a reminder of the positive side of life, past and future.

2. Friendship. Good friends are hard to find, and keep. That's why friendship cards continue to be a profitable part of the greeting card industry. Most friendship cards deal with the general value of friendship, or the significance of a specific friendship. Again, both humorous and serious card ideas are acceptable to most greeting card companies. The main thing is that the ideas must

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be original and genuinely and clearly express some positive aspect of friendship.

3. Get Well. Like birthday cards, the need for get well cards remains constant. Most people with not-so-serious illnesses appreciate humorous get well cards. But, prospective writers should be cautioned to stay away from over-used and worn out hospital humor concerning hospital gowns, hospital food and so on. Greeting card companies are looking for fresh ideas, not a re-working of old ones.

There is also a need for non-humorous get well cards that express appropriate and sensitive sentiments toward someone experiencing a serious illness. What greeting card companies are looking for here is a sensitive approach to a serious and even grave situation. Sometimes the sentiment "get well soon" is not appropriate, even for get well cards.

1. Sympathy. Unfortunately, sympathy cards are always needed. To fill that need, a writer must be able to address the loss of a loved one with good taste and sensitivity.

2. Love and Romance. Writers of love and romance card ideas will do well to address all kinds of love and different aspects of romance; first love, long-term romantic relationships, marriage, sharing, trust, commitment, renewing an old romance, and so on. The market is good for both humorous and serious cards addressing the themes of love and romance.

3. Support and Encouragement. This type of card has increased in popularity over the past decade and offers creative writers a good deal of opportunity. These cards can be given to friends, relatives, colleagues, lovers -- anyone who might need to know that they are not alone. The most common message with this type of card is "I'm here for you." These cards offer both encouragement and support, and can be treated in either a serious or humorous manner.

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4. Inspirational Cards. Most companies looking for inspirational cards request messages that address spiritual or human potential. These cards normally deal with some aspect of personal growth, are non-humorous, utilize sensitive language, and require an understanding of the spiritual and human condition.

5. Alternative Cards. These cards are designed for non-traditional sending occasions. The most common card ideas in this line are those offering congratulations for a new job, job promotion, or raise in salary. More serious issues, such as divorce, terminal illness, and substance abuse, are also top-selling themes in the alternative card line.

The main thing a writer should remember is that greeting card companies are all looking for fresh ideas and messages, not time-worn clichés and sappy sentiment. Greeting card messages should be immediate and clear. Writers should avoid wordy or complex messages, and be direct and original. In short, most greeting card companies are looking for ideas they haven't seen or heard before.

How To Submit Ideas

Most greeting card companies have their own specific guidelines for submitting editorial, verse, and artwork. You can find out what each greeting card company requires by writing a brief letter, asking for a copy of their writer's guidelines. You should always include a Long Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope (LSASE) with your request.

And if the guidelines are available, you should receive them in two or three weeks. Your request letter need not be more than a simple, polite request. For example:

Jane Doe
Locust Lane
Jackson, OH 45640

American Greetings

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10500 American Rd.
Cleveland, OH 44144

(Your letter does not need to be addressed to a specific person.)

Please send me a copy of your writer's guidelines. I have enclosed an SASE for your convenience. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

In order to send your request letters, you will, of course, need a list of greeting card company addresses. You can get this information from several different sources.

One good source is the Writer's Market from Writer's Digest Books in Cincinnati, Ohio. Another source is The Writer's Handbook published by The Writer, Inc., Boston, MA.

Both of these publications contain sections on greeting cards, featuring alphabetical listings of many companies with assorted information, including addresses and the availability (or not) of writer's guidelines. Some libraries have these books in their reference sections, but if not, be prepared to spend $20 to $25.

While both the Writer's Market and The Writer's Handbook" are valuable tools for free-lance writers, there are a couple of more economical ways to get the information you need. One way is by writing to: Artist and Writer's Market, The Greeting Card Association, 1356 New York Ave. NW, Suite 615, Washington, DC 20005.

Be sure to include an SASE with your request. You can also visit card racks in various stores and select the lines that appeal to your particular creativity. Jot down the companies that interest you and send them a request letter.

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Trade magazines such as Greetings, published by Mackay Publishing Corporation of New York, also offer specific greeting card company information, as well as information about the latest trends, trade shows, and seminars.

While submission guidelines may vary from company to company there are some generalizations that can be made.

1. Each message or verse should be typed on a separate piece of paper (8 1/2" x 11"), or 4" x 6" or 3" x 5" slips of paper or index cards. Most companies require submissions on 3" x 5" index cards, but in some cases studio-card submissions may be required on 9" x 9 1/2" folded paper.

2. In most cases you will be required to use only one side of the submission card or paper. Your name, address, and phone number should be placed in the upper left-hand corner of each submission, and the message or verse in the center.

3. Most companies will allow from 5 to 15 separate card ideas with each submission. If you are not sure how many ideas or verses a specific publisher will accept in one group, send no more than 10.

4. Each submission should be accompanied by a brief cover letter. The letter should be addressed to the editor or editorial staff, and briefly indicate what you are submitting. The cover letter should be no longer than a short paragraph. Also include an SASE for return of any submissions not accepted.

5. If you make a lot of submissions, you'll need to keep organized. The best way to do this is to create your own coding system. Your system doesn't have to be elaborate or complex -- just something you will understand. One simple coding system is to place your initials, the company initials, and a number in the upper right-hand corner of each submission card.

Here's a sample card submission:

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Jane Doe JD-AM-1
Locust Lane
Jackson, OH 45640
(Phone number)

ANOTHER BIRTHDAY!

I'm Glad I Haven't Known You
All Of Your Life
I Couldn't have afforded FORTY
Birthday Cards!

Most greeting card company writer's and artist guidelines will follow the general format outlined above. However, you should never take submission guidelines for granted. Before you submit, get the company guidelines and follow them to the letter.

Artwork

It's not necessary for free-lance writers to furnish artwork as well as the editorial for card ideas. As a rule, greeting card companies have artists on staff, or they commission artists to illustrate accepted new card ideas. That doesn't mean writers cannot submit their own artwork too.

Many companies are pleased to hear from creative individuals who can provide both the editorial and the artwork. Again, you should refer to each company's writer's and artist's guidelines to familiarize yourself with individual company policies.

If you are an artist, illustrator, designer, or photographer, and wish to submit some concept to a greeting card company, you should understand that most companies do not accept original artwork of any sort. Instead, you'll be required to submit slides, photocopies, photos, promotional pieces, or some other reproduction of your work.

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Generally, greeting card companies like to see an artist's style before they ask for an original work or contract for an assignment. So don't send any original artwork unless a company specifically requests that you do.

Whatever representations of your artwork you send, you'll most likely be required to reduce your submissions to standard sizes -- 5" x 7" or 4 3/4" x 6 1/4" for cards, and 4 1/8" x 5 1/2" for postcards.

Photographs are often required to be submitted in the form of transparencies. And color or hand-colored work is usually preferred over black and white.

Every piece of artwork you submit should include your name, address, and telephone number. And while it is not necessary, you can place the copyright symbol next to your name.

You should also include an SASE if you want your material returned. Make sure the envelope is large enough to hold your submission, and be sure it's stamped with the proper amount of postage.

Usually, the relationship between copy and artwork is significant. It's a good idea for writers to think of, or plan, the card as an entire concept. Even if you are not artistically inclined, most card company editors appreciate intelligent suggestions from writers about an overall concept.

Novelty Ideas

Writing messages and verse for greeting cards is not the only way a free-lance writer can use such a talent to make money.

There's also a good market for writing messages for posters, t-shirts, buttons, telephone answering machines, wedding invitations, and other items. In fact, many greeting card companies also feature a line of novelty items.

Some of these companies pay the same flat fee for a novelty message as they do for a greeting card idea.

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The greeting card companies also involved with novelty items are usually in need of editorial and/or concepts for buttons, mugs, key rings, plaques, bookmarks, refrigerator magnets, and other such items. In most cases novelty humor as well as serious themes are accepted.

Mugs, which are popular gift items, work best with strong personal me-to-you messages.

Some popular themes companies look for include birthday, get well, and personal relationships. The messages are similar to greeting card messages, but must be expressed in one line since the message is only on the outside of the mug, rather than the typical two-line greeting card.

In general, slogans, sayings, or any copy for non-card products should follow several guidelines.

First of all, a novelty product must accurately reflect the lifestyles, attitudes, and personalities of the people who use or wear the product. That also means that the written message must be some catchy and relevant statement about a multitude of life experiences.

The messages on novelty products are usually philosophical statements about relationships, dieting, school, sex, work, men, women, hobbies, etc.

When creating slogans and statements for novelty products, it's important to keep in mind that the end result should be a means of self-expression. People use or wear such products as a fun way to make personal statements.

In many cases novelty products are humorous items that allow us to make fun of life's ups and downs as well as ourselves.

Potential Earnings

Since greeting cards is a multi-billion dollar industry, there is good potential for substantial earnings. Most companies pay from $25 to

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$150 for each free-lance idea or verse they buy. Some pay as much as $500 for a single idea or verse.

If your work is especially original and creative, a submission of ten card ideas to one company could bring you anywhere from $25 to $1,500 (or more) depending on how many of the ideas the company buys, and how much they pay per idea.

In most cases a company's writer's guidelines will tell you how much they pay per idea. That information is also available for most of the companies listed in the Writer's Market and The Writer's Handbook.

If you feel your ideas are worth more than $25 apiece, submit them to a company that pays more. The choice of companies you wish to deal with is entirely up to you. Just make sure your submissions fit the specific guidelines and needs of the company you are sending them to.

Usually, if an editor buys 2 or 3 ideas out of a batch of 10 to 15 submissions the writer is doing very well. But it isn't unheard of for an editor to buy most, or all, of a writer's ideas from one submission. Admittedly, for that to happen all the writer's ideas and/or verses must be highly original, creative, and exceptional. And they must be exactly what the company is looking for.

While most companies pay per card or idea, a few pay small royalties. Other companies may prefer to test a card before buying it. In that event, the company will pay a small fee to test the idea before they make a final decision.

Many companies also give a writer's credit on the back of the card. Some companies will even include free samples if they accept your idea(s).

How much a company pays per card is certainly a consideration when deciding where to send your ideas, but it's not the only consideration.

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You must also be reasonably certain your ideas fit the particular needs of the company. You should also consider whether the company pays on "acceptance" or on "publication."

Being "paid on acceptance" simply means that shortly after a company accepts your idea(s) for publication you'll be getting a check.

On the other hand, being "paid on publication" means you'll most likely have to wait a good deal longer before you get any money. The time that elapses between acceptance of an idea and its actual publication can be several months. That's why most experienced free-lance writers prefer to work with companies that pay on acceptance.

The important thing to remember regarding potential earnings from writing greeting cards is that there are no guarantees. Anyone who has ever written anything for publication, from greeting cards to novels, has suffered rejection. Not every editor will find your ideas and verses as witty, original, or creative as you do. But if you are truly creative, prolific, and persistent, you will eventually be successful. To a large degree, your potential earnings from writing greeting cards is only as limited as your imagination and creativity.

Some Tips

1. As a general rule, the most successful greeting cards are those that are short and to the point. Concentrate on creating card ideas that work with a one-sentence front and a one-sentence follow-up on the inside. Since most stores that carry greeting cards have from 500 to 1,000 cards on display, a quick glance is all each card gets. So a short, catchy, readily understood front-of-the-card sentence has a decided advantage over a more lengthy and ponderous message.

2. Since birthday cards are usually a company's biggest seller, it's a good idea for beginners to concentrate on birthday ideas and concepts. It's not only a good way to learn what companies are

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looking for; it may also be the best opportunity for initial success.

3. When writing card ideas, consider sending occasions such as birthdays, Christmas, job promotions, etc., and imagine someone (a friend, colleague, or relative) to whom you would give the card. In effect, you should look at your card ideas and ask yourself if you would actually buy them and send them to people.

4. If you think you've heard it before, then forget it. Originality is one of the main keys to success in writing greeting cards. One way to insure that your ideas will be fresh and innovative is to keep in touch with what's going on in the world around you. Read newspapers, popular magazines, go to the movies -- anything that will keep you abreast of the latest issues, fads, and fashions. You'll be amazed at the amount of inspiration you'll get simply by "paying attention."

5. Even if you are not an artist or illustrator, it's always a good idea to have a complete concept in mind when you create a specific message. It's also a good idea to suggest the entire concept to an editor when you make your submission. Don't worry about artwork. If the overall concept appeals to the editor, a company staff member will take care of the card design.

6. Send your rejections to other companies. Take a careful look at all your rejected ideas. Eliminate the weakest ones, and send the rest to another company. Rejection of an idea may simply mean that a specific company doesn't need it. That does not mean another company can't use it.

7. Don't get impatient. If you haven't heard from an editor 3 or 4 weeks after you've submitted material, don't write, and don't call. You should allow at least eight weeks for a response. Some companies may not get back to you for 12 weeks or more. Many companies state their typical response time in their guidelines.

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8. When most card companies buy an idea they "buy all rights." Many of these companies will also require the writer to guarantee that the material they are buying is original and has not been sold to any other company. If a company requires you to sign a release form and/or a contract to sell all rights, make sure you understand the terms of the agreement before signing.

9. Keep records. Use a 3"x 5" card file to hold duplicates of your submissions. You can arrange your ideas any way you like -- subject, season, prose, verse, one-liners, etc. Keep on file what you send, where you send it, and the date it was sent. Of course, you should also record whether an idea was purchased or rejected.

Summary

How much money can you make writing greeting cards? The answer to that question is really up to you. Certainly a creative, motivated writer can make excellent money on a part-time basis. But it is also possible to make a comfortable living freelancing for greeting card companies' full time. Obviously, the more time you devote to creating new greeting card ideas and concepts, the more money you are apt to make. Just don't expect great monetary rewards over night. It takes time.

Before you make any money writing greeting cards, you'll have to take the first step. Become familiar with the greeting card industry. Browse through card racks and see what the market is offering. Get a list of greeting card companies and send for their writer's guidelines and market list. And before you submit your ideas make sure they fall within the company's requirements.

While there are no guarantees, there is a great opportunity for free-lance writers to make big money writing greeting cards. An initial small investment in index cards, postage, and envelopes, can easily be recovered with one purchased idea. If you are creative, love to write, have initiative, and are willing to make the effort, you can see

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your words and ideas become greeting cards and make money as well.

Case File

Sandra Miller-Louden
Owner: Greeting Card Writing DOT Com
Email: greetingsjester@greetingcardwriting.com
Web Site: www.Greetingcardwriting.com

The way I began card writing—which I talk about in detail in my book—was by flipping through a mail order catalogue that sold greeting cards and sending in a batch of ideas to the editor. That's what I figuratively today call "pounding the pavement" as you scout out companies and editors on your own—and I still stand by that method as one of the best.

In harmony with that individual effort, there are other avenues. The Writer's Market, published by F&W Publications, Cincinnati, puts out an annual edition of freelance markets—and includes a greeting card company section. It is a small section and updated once a year.

Addresses included in my book are updated (for direct orders through Greeting Card Writing DOT com ONLY) as I receive the updates from companies or past students who have written for guidelines—by way of an addendum added to your order. The complete name and address list I provide to students who enroll in my classes (both "live" in Pittsburgh and on the Internet) includes between 70-80 companies and is updated quarterly. Besides this active list, there are informational "asides" that include companies that have recently requested removal, companies no longer in business and targeted companies that are particularly suited for the beginning writer.

There is no more complete, accurate list of greeting card companies that accept freelance work around. I am currently working on tailored-made packets for people who may not be interested in an entire 6-week course, but would benefit from an address/exercise/critiquing packet. This will soon be available exclusively through Greeting Card Writing DOT com.

By whatever means you obtain company addresses, you should then send for guidelines from the companies that interest you. Always remember to include a long (#10) SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope) with your request. (Note: if you're a greeting card artist or photographer, the same procedure applies). Some companies will send their guidelines via e-mail; if you have a cyberspace address for a company, inquire. (AND always inquire before sending actual ideas for consideration—some companies accepted e-mailed submissions; others do not).

While you wait for the guidelines, there are important things to do—gather supplies, set up your home office, study the racks and spinners, read books on card writing or take a greeting card writing course such as the ones I offer through WritersCollege.com and Bizymoms.com

Once your guidelines arrive, follow what the company wants. A good set of guidelines should contain specific information, which I carefully outline in my book. Consider the guidelines as a writing blueprint meant to direct and polish your submissions.

For more information about **Writing Greeting Cards for Pay** visit Sandra's website at: http://www.greetingcardwriting.com/

The Booklet Journey

Way back in 1991, when my organizing business was already 8 years old, I spotted an offer for a free copy of a booklet called "117 Ideas For Better Business Presentations". Well, because I do business presentations, and because the price was right, I sent for it. My first reaction was, 'geez, I could knock something like this out about organizing tips.' Then I threw it in a drawer.

Six months later I was sitting in my office, bored, baffled and beaten down by the difficulty of selling my consulting services and workshops. I had no money. I mean no money!

I remembered that little booklet. I had no idea how I was going to do it, but something hit me, and I knew I had to produce a booklet on organizing tips.

I started dumping all those ideas I ever had about getting organized onto a file on my computer. These were all pearls that came out of my mouth when I was with clients or when I did a speaking engagement or a seminar. I could do one booklet on business organizing tips and another on household organizing tips. Two 16-page tips booklets, each fitting into a #10 envelope. The first one was "110 Ideas for Organizing Your Business Life" and the second one "111 Ideas for Organizing Your Household".

My first run was 250 copies. That was the most expensive per-unit run I made, but I had to get samples to distribute to start making money. It took a few months to pay the printer only $300.

The only way I could think of selling the booklets was by sending a copy to magazines and newspapers, asking them to use excerpts and

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put an invitation at the bottom for readers to send $3 plus a self-addressed stamped envelope. I had no money to advertise.

Then the orders started dribbling in, envelopes with $3 checks in them or 3 one-dollar bills. This was great stuff. I remember the day the first one arrived. It was like manna from heaven:$3! Of course, the fact that it took about 6 months from first starting to write the booklet until the first $3 arrived somehow didn't matter at that moment.

I cast seeds all over the place, hoping that some would sprout. I found directories of publications at the library and started building my list.

Finally, February of 1992 'the big one hit. A 12-page biweekly newsletter with 1.6 million readers ran nine lines of copy ABOUT my booklet. They didn't even use excerpts!! That sold 5000 copies of my booklet. I distinctly remember the day I went to my P.O. box and found a little yellow slip in my box. It said, 'see clerk'.

There was a TUB of envelopes that had arrived that day, about 250 envelopes as I recall, all with $3 in them. In April, that same biweekly newsletter ran a similar nine lines about my household booklet, starting all over again. This time I sold 3000 copies.

Round about June, I stopped and assessed what had happened. Was I making any money? By then, I had sold about 15,000 copies of the business and the household organizing tips booklets one copy at a time for $3. When I checked my financial records, I realized I had tediously generated not a ton of money. And some of the lessons I had learned along the way were expensive ones. I didn't realize my bank was charging me $.12 for each item deposited until I got my first bank statement with a service charge of $191. Some very wonderful things happened while selling those 15,000 copies though.

- A public seminar company ordered a review copy to consider building another product from my booklet. They did, and I recorded an audio program based on the booklet. I can sell that tape to my clients as well and it led to a 20-minute

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interview on a major airline's in-flight audio programming during November and December one year.

- I was sorting through the envelopes, ...$3, $3, ,$1000, $3, ... wait a minute. Well, a manufacturer's rep decided to send my booklets to his customers that year instead of an imprinted calendar.
- A company asked me to write a booklet that was more specific to their product line.
- I got speaking engagements from people who bought the booklet.
- I found out that the list of people who bought my booklet was a saleable product.

Things were starting to pick up. So, back to June and taking stock of where I was. You know those advertising card decks in the mail? Well, that day in June I was so bored, I opened one. Glancing through it, I said, 'jeez, here's a company that oughta see my booklet. And here's another one, and another one.' I sent booklets to each.

Less than a week later, a woman called. At first, it sounded like a prospecting call. Fortunately, I wasn't too abrupt with her. She was calling to ask me the cost of 5000 customized copies of my booklet for an upcoming trade show. She wanted to know if I could match a certain price.

I slightly underbid her price, she was thrilled and the sale was a done-deal. I thought, 'oh, this will be easy to sell large quantities now'. Wrong. It was another three-four months until the next large-quantity sale. But, the trade show they were attending was an organization I had contacted about getting my booklet into their catalog. They rejected it because I wasn't in their industry. So, my buyer had bought 5000 copies of my booklet, with my company information in it, to distribute at that trade show. I loved it!

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One day, a guy I know from a major consumer mail- order catalog company said, "Why don't you license us reprint rights to your booklet. We can buy print cheaper than you, so if you charged us a few cents a unit, you wouldn't have to do production." Well, 18 months later after lots of zigging and zagging that sale happened: a non-exclusive agreement for them to print 250,000 copies. We exchanged a ten-page contract for a five-digit check.

They provided the booklet free with any purchase in one issue of their catalog and made a 13% increase in sales in that issue. They were happy. I was happy.

I looked for other licensing prospects (even though it took eighteen months for this sale to happen, and the five-digit check was low five-digits, not enough to sustain me).

Round about spring 1993, I designed a class on how to write and market booklets and wrote an 80-page manual. The class was small and mostly people I knew. They paid me money, and I had a chance to test-run the class. So now, I had another new product, an 80-page manual, a blueprint of how I had then sold more than 50,000 copies of my booklet without spending a penny on advertising.

I like teaching and now I had a new topic besides the organizing I had been presenting. I also like traveling. So I took the 3-hour class on the road and had great fun doing it.

I toured the country for about 2 years, 6-8 classes a year. Many people have written interesting booklets on all kinds of topics. Some have hired me to write a customized marketing plan for their booklet or to coach them by phone to develop their booklet business.

Midway through that year (August 1994), I discovered CompuServe. My sole purpose for getting online was to market my business. The third day I was online, I saw a forum message from a guy from Italy who had a marketing company there. He told me his client base was small businesses and companies who served small businesses. I told him I had a booklet he might find useful. I sent it to him, he liked it and we struck a deal. He translated, produced and marketed it, and

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paid me royalties on all sales. This January he wired several thousand dollars to my checking account from Italy. He made the first sale of 105,000 copies to a magazine that bundled a copy of my booklet with one issue of their publication.

That meant I have sold more than 400,000 copies of my booklet, in two languages, without spending a penny on advertising.

One slow week, I posted a message on some CompuServe forums about the story of the Italian booklet as an example of an online success story. Even though blatant selling is not allowed, creating mutually beneficial relationships is. I had received money from someone I had never spoken to and had only communicated with online, by fax, earth mail and EFT.

Folks who read those postings replied that they would be interested in doing the same thing with my booklet, but in French and in Japanese. This never even dawned on me.

At this moment, I have discussions open with people in 10 different countries. Once these relationships are established, it makes sense to discuss brokering some of the other booklets I have access to among the people from my classes or whom I've coached or who have bought my manual. I've also discovered licensing opportunities for my booklet content in other formats.

- Two different companies who produce laminated guides (one hinged, the other spiral bound) licensed my content and will launch these next year. They are also interested in other content so I expect to broker the content of booklet writers.
- An in-flight video information service is interested in expanding their content and is looking at my proposal.
- I've created a new division in my company called Tips Products International.
- I've started writing tips for booklet production and other uses by developing three different packages of 25-100 tips and

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recommended uses. The tips packages are created from the clients' materials recycled into tips or doing original research for them.

- I've been writing customized marketing plans for people's booklets for a while now, which fits into the menu of services for this division.

I never could have written a business plan for how this has all unfolded.

Paulette Ensign has never taken a business course in her life. She taught string instruments in public elementary schools for eleven years, and did all her computer online work with no hard drive and a 2400 baud modem until recently. She has a complete how-to manual/video/booklet package and by-phone Tele-classes for the do-it-yourselfer, consulting services for those who prefer partnering, and full writing and production services for the delegator.

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Genealogy Name Listing

The hobby of genealogy -- researching one's heritage and family tree -- has been going strong for the past 25 years and is showing no signs of slowing down. Each year hundreds of thousands of people buy books, software, consulting services, etc. in order to track down their family history.

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One way that you can cash in on this phenomenon is by compiling a directory based on people with the same last name. Take the name Martin, for example. You could create a directory that has the names and addresses of thousands of Martins. The names and addresses can be found in phone directories. You can sell the directory via mail order by mailing a postcard or letter to people in your directory.

If you are successful with the first directory, you can compile more directories based on different names.

Business Anniversary List

Research and compile a list of companies that have upcoming anniversaries in 25 year increments. The 25th, 50th, 75th and 100th anniversaries are almost always celebrated by companies. And these companies will need to buy products and services to help them celebrate -- advertising specialties inscribed with the anniversary and founding dates, printed items -- such as invoices -- that tout their 25th anniversary, new advertisements that work the anniversary into their marketing campaign.

If you can compile a list of these companies about 1 year before the big anniversary you can sell this list to companies that stand to profit from the anniversary celebration. These companies include advertising specialty companies, award and recognition companies, printers and PR firms.

A specialized list such as this could sell for $200 -- $300 or more per thousand names. Contact a mailing list broker for lists of companies which would benefit from such a list. Then, mail these companies a sales letter that explains exactly how your anniversary list will benefit them.

Personalized Poems

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“Roses are red
Violets are blue
It’s your birthday
And I love you.”

Let’s face it. Most people aren’t poets. No matter how hard they try, they always revert to the old standby of roses are red; violets are blue.

If that old worn-out old stanza makes you cringe, then you’ve got the opportunity to change the face of personal poetry. There’s a reason greeting cards are so popular. Most people want to send loving sentiments—whether serious, funny or off-the-way—to their loved ones on special occasions like holidays, birthdays and anniversaries and to commemorate life changing events like engagements, weddings and births. The problem is a lot of people either don’t have the time, the inclination or the knack for writing personal sentiments.

That’s where you come in.

You can offer personalized poems, for any occasion, to your customers. Best of all, you don’t have to limit yourself in how you present those poems. For example, you might sell them as greeting cards, or you could write the poem in calligraphy, mat and frame it. You could also create little pocket cards with the poem on one side and a “To: Name; From: Name” on the other side. You might ask your customer for a special photo and write the poem in script below the poem then frame it. If you’re good at wood burning, you may want to offer your poems that way. Your imagination will take you a long way.

Marketing is important all year around, but you’ll probably find your busiest time to be around the Christmas holidays. When you market—whether it’s through classified ads or flyers—really emphasize how unique a gift a personalized poem is. After all, anyone can walk into a Hallmark store and purchase a generic card, right? A personalized poem requires time and effort, thus making it even more special than a normal greeting card.

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A great way to advertise your poems—in addition to classifieds—is to have a booth at a craft or church fair. You can showcase some of your previous work, and you already know the people at the fair are looking for something different. Offer to write the poems on the spot (this may be easier for some than others since all writers work differently), or get the customer's information then write and send the poem at a later date.

In order to write the best poems for your customers, you may want to have them fill out brief "order forms." On the forms, have them tell you what they want to say and whether they want the poem to be funny or serious. Also have them tell you a little bit about the recipient. Get as much pertinent information as you can, so you can write a poem that really fits the recipient.

"Your Town" Booklet

Did you know...

- The only state capital in the United States that doesn't have a McDonald's is Montpelier, Vermont?
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the home to the United States' first zoo, erected in 1876?
- Juneau, Alaska, is the largest city in the United States at 3,108 square miles?
- Los, Angeles is the smallest American city at 458.2 square miles?
- Washington D.C., our nation's capital, was built on a swamp?
- The first outdoor mini-golf courses were built in 1926, atop NYC roofs.

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Every city and town has thousands of unique facts that are just waiting to be uncovered. Start digging into the facts about your hometown, or a variety of other cities, and publish a fun, fact-filled booklet called “1001 Unusual Facts about Your Town.”

You’ll find this booklet is a fun way to learn more about different towns and cities. Of course, it will require you to spend time on research, probably the most time consuming part of the process. Discover the 1001 facts by visiting the library, local historical society or thumbing through the archives of local newspapers. An online search may also help you during the research process.

Once you’ve compiled the 1001 facts, you’ll want to determine how to lay them out in the booklet. Will you include photos? Will you include artwork? How will you present each of these facts? Will you present them simply stated as the facts are stated above, or will you go into more detail, perhaps a paragraph per fact? These are all things you want to think about when you’re designing the booklet.

You can get the booklet printed at a local print shop or at one of the chains like Kinko’s. Once you finish the booklet for the area you’ve chosen, you may want to move on and start producing booklets for other cities and towns. Consider producing booklets on towns or cities that are popular tourist spots like Atlantic City, Washington D.C., Boston or Los Angeles.

Have your booklets stocked on the shelves of local bookshops, tourist, gift and novelty shops.

Specialized Who’s Who Directory

There’s always that one point in time when a business owner or manager needs help—and fast. Maybe his computer has been infected with a virus, and he has absolutely no idea how to fix it.

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Worse, he has no idea who to call. After all, he's just a small business owner, used to doing everything himself. Even in non-business settings, people run across this problem every day. There's a leak in the roof or a broken pipe. Who should you call?

Finding reliable people—no matter what their profession—can be a difficult task, but finding someone right away can be even tougher. That's where the specialized "Who's Who Directory" comes into play. By publishing a "Who's Who" directory, you're offering business owners and employers a valuable service that will save them hassle, time and potentially money.

First, you'll need to decide what professions to include in your directory. Think about the many areas in which employers may need help: administrative, computer, creative (including writing, graphic design, photography), and technical, to name a few. Brainstorming should help you come up with many more potential professions you may want to include in your directory.

Once you've decided what professions to feature, you'll now have to find professionals in your area you'll want to include. You can do a search through your local Chamber of Commerce's website for local professionals. The Small Business Administration (www.sba.gov) has a section called "Business Cards" where small business professionals list their contact information. You might also consider placing a classified ad, stating anyone who would like to be included in a professional directory should send the business name, services or product offered and contact information.

You can publish a variety of "Who's Who" or divide the directory into several sections such as Administrative, Computer, Creative and so on. Make sure to list the name of each person, or their small business and their contact information including email address and website, if applicable.

Once you've got your list compiled, you actually have several options. You can publish the directory in hard copy. You can also publish it online with a password protected website. The employer can

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purchase a yearly (or monthly, however you choose to offer it) subscription to the directory, which you can update periodically.

Find a creative way to market the directory to employers in your area, keeping in mind that people are extremely busy. Whether you send a brochure or call employers, make sure you keep your message short and to the point.

Category: Computers and Internet

$150,000 a Year Internet Business

A couple of years ago a woman, Sheila, came up with a very simple, but powerful, method for making money on the Internet. A method that anyone can copy and profit from.

Here is what Sheila did:

On America Online there is a forum called "Business Know How." Within this forum there is a section called, "File Libraries."

The file libraries contain articles that people have uploaded (posted) to the forum. These people may be marketing consultants, software publishers, book publishers or writers and other experts. They post the articles in order to get exposure to people who may be interested in their services, kind of like free publicity.

By looking at the download statistics for the articles, Sheila was able to determine which ones were the most popular with the members of the forum. As a matter of fact, the number of times a file is downloaded is posted right on the main screen. And since you can

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sort the articles by number of downloads it is an easy task to find the most popular titles.

Now, these articles are usually only 3 or 4 pages long but they contain a wealth of information on just about everything to do with operating a business including advertising, management, pricing, startups, business plans, organization, marketing, etc.

Sheila downloaded several of the most promising articles and wrote the authors to ask for two things:

1. Permission to reprint the reports on floppy disk.
2. Permission to transfer the reprint rights to others.

Now, why on earth would these authors give her permission to reprint their copyrighted material? For the same reason they had uploaded the articles in the first place:

FREE PUBLICITY!!!

You see, they know the more people who view their articles, the more exposure they get for their products and services and the better chance they have of making a sell. For them, it's free advertising.

And Sheila gets a never-ending source of fresh, new reports.

After Sheila got permission from the authors to reprint their articles, she grouped them together according to subject matter and produced 12 disks that featured a different business topic. Each disk contained 5 - 8 different reports that related to the topic. At the bottom of each report there was a "plug" for the author.

This "plug" is sometimes called a resource box and generally contains the author's name, where to contact him and information about the product or service he is offering. It looks just like a classified ad.

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Now, this is where Sheila got really smart. Instead of just selling the disks herself, she came up with a opportunity catalog and offered the disks for sell four different ways:

1. Retail -- You could buy each disk for 12 to 15 dollars.
2. Reprint -- You could buy the reprint rights to a disk for 100 - 250 dollars and sell the disk to others at retail.
3. Unlimited -- You could buy the reprint rights to a disk and also the right to sell the reprint rights to others. This option cost 300 - 400 depending on the disk.
4. Or, if you were really serious about making money, you could buy the "Business in a Box" which included unlimited reprint and resell rights to all the disks for $3,000.

Many people went for the Business-In-A-Box option because Sheila included a discount coupon for $1,500 if they ordered within a certain date that was stamped in red on the coupon.

The last I heard, she had sold 100 Business-In-a-Box packages for $1,500 each in less than a year.

Coaching and Training Business

People are beginning to discover the benefits the Internet affords to facilitating coaching and training through interactive websites, real audio and video, and software products.

This is a industry that is getting ready to explode. Here are several ways to exploit it:

CGI Programming Tutorials

If you know CGI programming you can develop online tutorials that

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teach others how to write programs. You can then either sell access to the tutorials or offer them for free but sell more advanced courses. For an excellent example of this, see....

CGI 101

Web Connectivity Tutorials

There is a lot involved to getting your first website connected on the Internet. If you have the skills to put it together, people would pay to have a step by step guide -- either a book, video or CD -- that show them exactly what to do and what software to use.

Java Tutorials

Java is the programming language of choice for developing database applications on the web. It allows much more flexibility, speed and bandwidth then CGI.

However, Java is much more difficult to learn than CGI. I would approach this business by catering to software programmers who what to learn how to leverage there skills on the web. For example, you could create tutorials that show programmers how to establish database connectivity to websites.

Lead Generation Coaching

As long as there are sales people, there will be a demand for prospect leads. And if you can teach sales people how to generate more leads, they will beat a path to your door to get your products.

The key to this business is to specialize in one specific industry, ie: insurance agents, real estate agents, car dealers, stockbrokers, mortgage brokers, financial advisors, etc. You could create a website that gives them some free information, tips, etc and then sell them more advanced courses in the form of videos or manuals.

Here is an example of a site that sells a course to insurance agents:

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Internet Marketing Tutorial

There are tons of internet marketing courses being sold on the internet. Most of these are in the form of manuals that are downloadable.

I think there is a need for a muli-video Internet marketing course. This video course would take the viewers from A to Z and SHOW them how to develop and market a website. They would also show how to use software tools, where to advertise, and how to install simple CGI scripts to boost their traffic.

Sales Coaching

Unlike lead generation coaching, sales coaching does not necessarily need to be targeted to a specific market but can teach sales techniques in general to a wide variety of sales professionals.

Weight Loss Coaching

Develop a website devoted to helping people lose weight. One way to approach this business is to develop a referral center to help people find partners in their quest to lose weight. Then sell weight loss videos, manuals, and menu planning or even weekly teleclasses.

Health and Fitness Coaching

Similar to weight loss coaching this concept could be adapted to helping people get in shape. Offer videos and manuals on exercise, weight lifting, nutrition, etc.

Online Golf Coach

Help people improve their golf game by offering free tips on driving, putting, posture, etc. Sell videos, teleclasses, or manuals.

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SAT Test Coaching

Offer software training for college bound students who want to increase their SAT scores.

Build a High Profit Internet Community

The heart and soul of the Internet are Communities. Usually focused on one particular subject, they provide information and allow people with a similar interest to interact and exchange ideas and information.

Revenue from Internet Communities can be generated by offering advertising on the site and by selling products related to the subject. Here are some possible ideas for an Internet Community:

Sports Related

A site devoted to a particular sport, football for example, could sell all sorts of football related products including: Autographed footballs, jerseys, helmets, etc. Videos, football cards, fantasy football league software, etc.

Software Downloads

Offer free downloads of software demos and sell software manuals, templates, videos and other training tools.

Internet Marketing

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Provide free access to articles and information about Internet marketing. Sell your own or others courses and manuals.

Pets and Animals

Specialize on one particular type of pet or animal. Sell products related to that pet or animal. For an example of a niche site for dog owners see:

Dog Problems

Health and Fitness

This is a hot topic and will continue to be for many years as the Baby Boomers entering there 50's and 60's. There are a lot of different angles you could approach with this subject. For example, you could provide information and products on losing weight, body building, reducing the effects of aging, Jogging, etc. It's tempting to try to cover everything but you will do better to concentrate your efforts on one narrow market.

Genealogy Site

Provide information to people who are searching their family tree. Provide free resources and sell genealogy software, Census information, and directories of families by state. Provide a family tree research service for a fee.

Shopping Site

Build a site that sells a particular type of product and build a community around the product. Provide free articles about how to use the product.

Work at Home and Telecommuting

Build a site that offers people information and articles about work at

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home opportunities or telecommuting jobs. Sell guides, manuals, books, and video's about working at home.

Auto Related

Target owners of a particular genre of auto -- muscle cars, classics, Volkswagens, etc. Provide a way for them to interact and sell related accessories, repair manuals, etc.

Employment Site

Target a specific industry -- Computer Programmers, for example, and charge companies a fee to post help wanted ads. Provide job hunters with free access to ads and informative articles on the industry.

Develop a Database of Useful Information

If you can compile information that is needed by a certain niche market, you can charge for the privilege of accessing the information.

A database, or collection of related information, can be stored and accessed directly from the Internet. You sell access to the database interface that allows the user to search for the specific information that they need. Here are a few examples of databases that could be set up on the Internet:

Ezine database

Compile a list of e-zines that sell classified ads. Include information such as: category, number of subscribers, ad cost, frequency, etc. You can sell access to the information to marketers who are looking

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for targeted places to advertise. For an example of this concept, see...

E-zine Database

Media Contacts for Press Releases

Similar to the ezine database, you could compile a list of media contacts. This information could be sold to marketers who wish to send press releases to targeted media.

Newspaper Advertising Database

A list of all the daily and weekly newspapers in the United States along with their classified ad rates, circulation, etc.

Magazine Advertising Database

A similar list of magazines that accept classified ads.

Resume Database

Allow job hunters the opportunity to post their resumes in your database. Charge employers to access and search the resumes from the web. The best way to approach this is to target a specific industry, such as computing or accounting or sells.

Industry Specific Database

Every industry has a need for specific information in a searchable format. Look at your own field of expertise and see if there is a need for compiled information that can be easily accessed from the web.

US Census Database

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As you probably know, the US Government conducts a census every 10 years. You can repackage this information for use in a specific industry.

For example -- one company uses the demographics compiled by the census department to cross reference zip codes by income level. It then sells this information to direct marketing companies who use it to determine the most desirable zip codes to target their direct mailings to.

Employment Database

Compile a lists of jobs available for a particular industry. Sell access to job hunters.

Sports Stats

Compile a database of sports related information for use by fantasy sports players.

College Scholarship Database

Compile a database of all public and private scholarships available to college students. Sell access to the information to the parents of the students and school guidance councilors.

Make Money With Your Own Ezine

E-zines are newsletters that are usually emailed to a list of subscribers. They are generally offered free but recently I have seen a few niche e-zines that charge a fee. In this section we will discuss free e-zines. Just keep in mind that there is no law that says an ezine must be free.

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E-zines are considered by many to be the "work horses" of the internet. The reason why is obvious when you consider this:

Web Sites are not the best way to generate sales on the Internet!

Does that surprise you?

I know it surprised me until I actually started using e-zines -- and then watched as my sales exploded!

There are a couple of reasons why e-zines are better sales tools than web sites.

First, with a web site, it is very easy for a visitor to become distracted and leave your web site before they have had a chance to read your sales information. After all, they literally have the world at their fingertips.

On the other hand, with an ezine you have a chance to reach your prospect when he has the time and interest to read your material. Since most people still access the Internet with a dial up account, they can read your ezine anytime. Even if they are not online. Once they receive your ezine it will stay in their email box until they choose to delete it.

Second, e-zines allow you to build relationships with your reader because they will see your publication on a regular basis. This consistency leads to sales.

Now, let's talk a little bit about the profit streams that your ezine can tap into:

1) You can sell advertising in your ezine.

This is far and away the most popular way to generate income with an ezine. Actually you would be hard pressed to find an ezine that

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does not sell advertising in one form or another. There are several different types of ezine ads:

Classified ads -- these are generally short ads either grouped together at the end of the ezine or sprinkled throughout the articles.

Sponsorships -- this is generally an ad that appears at the very beginning of the ezine. Usually the sponsor has exclusivity -- that is no other ads appear in the issue. A sponsorship ad is more expensive than a classified ad because of the exclusivity and placement at the beginning of the publication.

Direct Email -- this is where an ezine publisher will email an ad to a part of, or the entire subscriber list. While this can be quiet lucrative for the publisher, he must always guard against over saturating his subscriber list with offers. Direct email works best when the publisher has a large subscriber list. With a list of 30,000 subscribers the publisher can sell 6 direct mailings of 5000 each per week. That way he can be sure that no one on his subscriber list receives more than 1 promotional email per week.

2) Promote your Products and Services.

More and more people are starting to see the benefit to promoting their products and/or services with their own ezine. And with good reason. As mentioned earlier, an ezine is much more effect as a sales tool than a web site. That's not to say that a web site isn't a valuable tool. It is. I like to think of my web site as a funnel that captures prospects and filters them to my ezine. The ezine then makes the sale.

One effective method of promoting a product or service is to publish an article in every issue that deals with one benefit or advantage the reader will gain by owning your product or using your service.

But, don't write sales letters. These articles should be rich in content and give the reader valuable information while at the same time

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highlighting the reasons why they should buy. Give them some insider secrets. Show them how they would use your product or service to save time or money.

Just imagine that you have an ezine with 30,000 subscribers and you sell a product to just 1/10 of 1% of them in each weekly issue. A $40.00 product would produce $1200.00 in income every week.

3) Product Endorsements.

Ok, so you don't have your own product. Tough luck? Not necessarily. There are plenty of people who would love to give you a piece of the action if you will promote their products to your readers. Generally, you split the proceeds 50/50 with the product owner.

Product Endorsements work best when you:

Work with product owners who have products that closely match your reader's interests. For example, if you publish an ezine about grooming dogs a good product may be a book or video on dog training. A better product would be a manual or video along the lines of "Dog Grooming Secrets of Professional Groomers." However, a product called "27 ways To Bathe Your Cat" would not be a good match.

Use the product yourself. If you don't use the product you won't know if you like it. And if you don't know if you like it your readers will sense your lack of passion for the product and they will not buy.

Endorse the product to your readers. Don't just send a sales letter to your subscriber list without first telling the reader why you are excited about the product. Your passion will come through and get them excited about owning the product.

4) Promote Affiliate Programs.

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Another way to generate income if you don't have your own product is to promote affiliate programs. Affiliate programs are revenue sharing programs that many Internet businesses offer participants. Affiliate programs are usually free to join and only require you to provide a link to their web site. The link includes a tracking code that uniquely identifies you as the affiliate that provided the prospect.

If the prospect buys the product or service you will receive a commission. Commissions range from 5% of the sale to 50% or more.

There are literally thousands of affiliate programs available. Like joint ventures, for best results pick affiliate programs that closely match your prospects interests.

You can find a searchable directory of thousands of affiliate products at:

http://www.clickbank.com/marketplace.htm

Types of Ezines

There are many types of e-zines that you can publish. Here are a few ideas:

News Ezine

You provide timely, interesting and current news articles on a specific industry. To find these articles, scan news sites in your area of interest and summarize the news items into concise snippets of information.

Tip of the Day

Short, concise tips on just about any topic. Examples include --

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Marketing tip of the day, Software tip of the day, Stock tip of the day, Windows 2000 tip of the day. A variation of the "Tip a Day" are, Quote of the Day, Joke of the Day, or this Day in History e-zines.

Web Site Update

If you don't have the time to publish a full-blown ezine, you can send out regular weekly updates about what is happening at your web site. Someone post an interesting message on your discussion board? Publish an informative article? Let ‘em know with a weekly update ezine that practically writes itself.

Special Interest Ezine

This is the most common type of ezine. These are e-zines that contain articles, news, events, and tips that cover a specific topic or industry. Think of any topic and odds are there is an ezine or two (or two hundred) being published about the topic. And there is always room for more provided you put your own unique twist on the subject.

Ezine Based Training Classes

Publish a lesson a week to teach others a specific skill. Examples include: Sales Training, Software Development, Lead Generation, Web Design, Dog Training. Use your knowledge to teach others and develop a following of loyal subscribers.

Web Based Ezines

Instead of an emailed ezine you could publish a weekly or monthly web based ezine (or e-magazine.) This type of ezine is more difficult to produce but it also allows you to take full advantage of the technology available to web developers including: real audio and video, interactive discussion board and chat rooms, Flash, etc. Many technology e-zines are starting to adopt this format.

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Affiliate Marketing Ezine

If you have a product that you sell through affiliates, you will definitely want to publish an affiliate ezine. Devoted to helping your affiliates sell more of your product, an affiliate ezine can provide marketing strategies, tactics, tips, and success stories from your top producing affiliates. An affiliate ezine will help the newbie's and yourself make more money selling your product.

Cool Site of the Day Ezine

Similar to the Tip of Day E-zines discussed above. You basically surf the Internet and find interesting and noteworthy sites within your particular niche. You then write a brief review of the site and publish it in your ezine along with a link.

Resources List

Publish a list of resources in your field. What types of software tools do you use? What sites do you visit? What equipment do you use? Keep a list of these resources and publish them in a weekly ezine.

Multi-Step Promotional Ezine

Promote your product or service to your opt-in list with a regular, timed campaign of emailed letters that both teach and sell.

Offer High Profit Services to the Internet Community

Can you provide a specific service to other webmasters that will save them time or money? Or, can you help other businesses establish a

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web presence? If so you have the basis for a profitable service based Internet business.

Even if you don't have the skills required you could quickly learn them right on the Internet -- and usually for free! Actually, most service providers I know started this way. They had an interest in some aspect of web development or marketing and found resources on the Internet that taught them how to provide these services.

In this section I am going to tell you about a few services that you can offer and give you some resources to learn how to provide these services to others.

CGI Script Installation

CGI, or Common Gateway Interface, is the most popular programming language used to build interactive web sites. If you have ever signed a web site's guestbook, participated in a discussion forum, placed a classified ad or used just about other tool on a web site, then you have seen what CGI can do.

A CGI program is more commonly known as a script -- or a series of instructions that tell the server what to do and then brings the results back to the browser to display.

For example, if you are using a search tool on a web site you would enter the word or phrase into the entry field and hit the find or submit button. This action would invoke a CGI script, which would look for occurrences of your search term in an index on the server. The CGI script then retrieves the matches from the server and bring them back for the browser to display. All this takes place in just a few seconds.

A CGI script installer doesn't actually write the CGI programs but rather installs existing scripts on the client's server.

So where do you find these existing CGI programs? There are several

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libraries on online that offer hundreds of free CGI scripts. Here is one of the best:

CGI-Resources

The best way to approach this business is to:

Read up on the CGI language -- even though you do not have to write the programs, as an installer you should be familiar with how they work. Understanding the inter-workings will help you get up to speed on doing the installations and help you troubleshoot problems. Go here for a great free CGI tutorial:

CGI-101

Install a simple script on your own server. This will give you a great education on script installation. A simple guestbook script would be a great first project.

After you have mastered a simple script move on to something more difficult. Like a discussion board or classified ad script.

Master 5 or 6 different scripts and then offer these scripts for free from your website. Offer to install the scripts for a fee -- the going rate is $25 - $50 for an installation that will take less than an hour.

Note: Be sure to get permission from the authors of the scripts before you offer them on your web site. Since you are offering them for free most will be happy to give you permission. They may also want a link back to their site included on your web site or in the script itself.

Press Release Service

This is a service where you fax a client's press release to targeted members of the media.

The Internet Maketing Warriors offer their members a free database

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of over 7000 fax numbers and email addresses of the media. For membership information go to:

The Marketing Warriors

Search Engine Positioning Service

In Real Estate the most important thing is location, location and location. The Internet equivalent to this adage is position, position and position.

A search Engine Positioning Service helps clients get their web sites listed within the top of the search engine results. This high positioning almost guarantees high traffic for the site.

A search Engine Placement Service keeps up with the latest tools and techniques for getting a high position. He then uses these resources to build doorway pages that rank high on the search engine indexes.

You can find out more about search engine placement by visiting:

Search Engine Forum

Key Phrase Discovery Service

This service takes web sites and produces a list of all keywords and keyword phrases that are relevant to the site. This keyword list can then be used to:

1. Build keyword specific doorway pages for search engine submission.
2. Use the list to advertise on Pay Per Click Services like Goto.com and Findwhat.com.

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3. Find link partners.
4. Find targeted advertising media.

A good tool to help find keywords is the Overture Keyword Selector Tool at:

Overture Keyword Selector Tool

This is a great resource that lists the number of searches on the site for a particular keyword during the previous month.

Traffic Building

Getting enough highly targeted traffic is
THE key to success on the Internet!

Here I am talking about offering your expertise rather than a particular tool. If you know how to drive traffic to a site you could offer this knowledge as a consultation service.

If you want to greatly improve your Web traffic and outsmart your competition, you must learn more:

This is a 3 in 1 tool which does..

A comprehensive list of all RELATED keyword phrases!

The number of searches that were conducted throughout the previous month for each keyword phrase!

The number of advertising campaigns that currently exist - for both Google AdWords AND Overture

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Web Site Design

If you have the HTML skills necessary, you can build web sites for businesses looking to establish a web presence.

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For the last couple of years, business owners have been hearing on the news and reading in the papers that if they don't establish a web presence they will be out of business. The problem is they have no idea how to build a web site themselves. And the investment required hiring someone to build a custom web site is out of the reach of most small businesses.

You can offer an inexpensive but lucrative solution by providing a template based web site.

What you do is put together a sample web site complete with navigation, a guestbook, discussion board and 5 - 10 blank pages that will be used to fill in information and pictures about local businesses.

Using this simple template take pictures of local businesses -- a picture of the store front is fine -- and put a picture of each business on a separate web page.

Then contact the business owners and show them what their businesses would look like on the web. Offer to put up additional pictures of their business and information about their products or services. Charge a minimum fee -- say $500.00 for the web design. In addition charge a hosting fee of $25.00 - $50.00 a month.

You can find free CGI scripts for guestbook's, discussion boards, etc at:

CGI-Resources

Web Copywriting

A web site's copy and how it is laid out can make the difference between a profitable web site that generates sales and one that simply exists and cost money to maintain. You can charge big bucks if you can write copy for web sites that produces sales.

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For more information on web copywriting visit:

Write 101

Web Graphics Designer

Do you have a talent for drawing or graphics design? If so you can make a good living creating graphic content and artwork for web sites. To solicit business, surf the web and find web sites that could use a graphics makeover. Contact the webmaster, whose email address is usually on the home page, and offer your services. If you are good, word will spread fast and you will have more work than you can handle.

Software Development and Marketing

Warning: Don't skip over the section just because you are not a software developer or programmer. You can make money in the software development industry without writing a single line of code.

Of course, if you are a programmer, this section will give you some ideas on how to channel your skills.

And if you ever wanted to be a software developer now may be the best time to start learning. Development tools that are now available allow you to build applications using simple point and click interfaces -- with very little coding needed.

So, no matter which category you belong to; check out the ideas in this section. You may not become the next Bill Gates. But, then again...?

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Develop a desktop application.

If you do have the necessary skills you can develop applications that people can download from the internet. The model for this business is to create the application with a 30 or 60 day timed limit. That way your prospects can download and try out the software. If they like it they can buy a code from you that register's the software and stops the timed limit.

To get ideas on the types of software to develop visit discussion boards in your area of interest. Pay attention to the types of problems that people are looking to find solutions for. Then develop software that provides the solution.

Develop an Industry Specific Spreadsheet Template

You don't need to be a programmer to develop a spreadsheet template. Simply write a pre-formatted spreadsheet that can be used for a specific industry. For example, in the financial industry, write spreadsheets that calculate mortgage amortization schedules or prepayment models. Or write a whole suite of plug-and-play templates and offer them as a package.

Write Custom CGI Scripts

We talked about providing a CGI script installation service in the section on High Profit Services. With just a little more expertise you could write and sell your own CGI scripts.

Writing CGI scripts is much easier than you think. Here, once again, is a very good, easy to follow tutorial:

CGI-101

You could either write CGI scripts on spec for webmasters who have a specific need. Or you could write several "off the shelf" scripts and offer them from your website. Here is an example of a site that sells several niche CGI scripts:

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CGI Toolbox

Develop a database of information

Put together a database of related information and sell access to it on the web. Or package the information as a database application.

The database doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as a website that has an alphabetic list of classified ad sites that you sell access to.

Create a Residual Income with a Subscription Based Web Site

Once the domain of adult sites, subscription sites are quickly becoming mainstream.

In particular, business and finance sites are embracing the "pay to view" model because it allows them to concentrate their efforts on building a web site that services a small group of paying visitors.

They are finding that this is more cost effective than trying to profit from the casual surfer who jumps from free site to free site consuming information without paying.

A subscription based web site charges a fee for access to the information and tools on the site. After a user pays the fee they are given a user id and password that will enable them to access the site for a given time period -- usually a month or a year.

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With monthly access the fee is usually set up to be automatically charged to the subscriber's credit card once a month. This is know as a reoccurring payment. However, the subscriber can cancel at anytime and avoid future charges.

Here are a few ideas for "pay to view" web sites:

Niche Solution Provider

Become a "complete solution" for a particular industry. Offer customized software tools, lead generation tools, articles, etc for your market. Examples include subscription sites for: Realtors, Internet Marketing, and Insurance Agents.

Discussion Board

There are a lot of free discussion boards on just about any topic imaginable. However, the problem with free discussion boards is that by their very nature they are prone to abuse and offer limited value to participants. Most free discussion boards are nothing but glorified spam factories. Unless they are constantly moderated they become a place for promoters to post their "affiliate program of the day" link.

A paid subscription only discussion board would be moderated by recognized experts in the particular market you are targeting. Participants would only be allowed to post messages and replies using their user name. Couple this with the fact that all the participants have paid a fee and are therefore motivated and you have the formula for a successful paid discussion board.

Tool Provider

If you can develop Internet tools that help people perform a task more easily or simplify their lives, you have the basis for a profitable

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subscription based web site.

Resource Center

Compile a list of resources that are used in a particular industry and sell access to the list. I have seen this used done with government contracting jobs, domain names and classified ad sites.

Traffic Building

Do you know an effective method of driving traffic to a web site? Or could you develop a software tool that builds traffic? This information could be developed into a profitable subscription web site.

Ezine Article Center

As discussed in Section I of this book, ezine publishing is an exploding industry. And all the thousands of ezine publishers have one thing in common -- they need fresh content for their publications. Combine this with the fact that there are thousands of writers who would love to have their articles published -- in exchange for a promotional link -- and you have the potential for a great subscription based web site.

Paid E-zines

If you can offer the absolute best information available for a particular industry you can charge a fee to receive your ezine. Since there are already many free e-zines available, to be successful you will have to offer your prospects a lot value by piling on free bonuses for subscribing. Here is an example of one ezine that charges $98.00 per month:

The Reese Report

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Referral Service

Offer homeowners access to a directory of reliable, recommended contractors, plumbers, painters, landscapers, handymen, etc. Charge a fee for access to the directory. For an example see:

Angie's List

Or publish a directory of Dog Friendly Hotels:

Dog Friendly Hotels

Information on Demand

Provide fast access to timely data for a particular industry or market. Companies that rely on accurate, timely data are willing to pay big money for access. Examples include: Stock, Bond and Commodities Quotes, Government Contract Bid Requests, Mortgage Rates, Pending Legislation and Government Statistics.

Develop a Vortal

A Vortal -- or Vertical Portal -- is a website that provides a one stop gateway to other websites with the same theme. Think of a vortal as a combination of a Portal and Theme Web Site.

A portal -- such as Yahoo or Google -- provides a gateway through which you can reach sites covering a wide range of topics. On the other hand, a vortal concentrates on one specific topic and covers that topic in as much depth as possible. However, unlike a theme site, a vortal does not have to provide its own content. It can be as simple as a list of topics and content with links to the originating websites.

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Your main job with a Portal is to find interesting and informative sites within your theme to link to. And, of course, you must also drive a steady stream of traffic to your site. This can be accomplished by asking for a link from the websites that you link to.

You can make money with a portal by either selling advertising on the site or selling your own products related to the theme of the site.

Here are some ideas for Vortal Sites:

- Pets and Animals
- Food and Recipes
- Business Opportunities
- Health and Fitness
- Sports
- Automotive
- Gardening
- Web Development
- Employment
- Collectibles
- Crafts
- Work at Home Women
- Teens
- Seniors
- Ethnic Based
- Religion Based
- Singles
- Parents

Password Hacking Service

You, a computer hacker? Not exactly. But, with the help of some specialized software programs you can crack practically any password

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used in Lotus 123, Word Perfect, Excel, Word and other commonly used applications.

Your market? People who have forgotten what password they have assigned to their document or spreadsheet. There would probably not be enough business to run this on a local scale but by using the Internet to transfer the client's file to your computer you could service clients all over United States.

Use an easy to remember 800 number like 1-800-PASSWORD so clients can find you easily.

Most corporations maintain a computer help desk for their employees to call with computer problems. A sales letter sent to the attention of the computer help desk along with a follow up call a couple of weeks later should start to bring in business.

Also, contact computer repair services. You could offer them a commission on any customers they send to you.

Since this is a highly specialized service, you can command a fairly high fee. $100 to $200 per file is not out of line.

The software you need to crack passwords is available from:

ACCESSDATA CORPORATION
2500 North University Ave. Suite 200
Provo Utah 84604

Web Page: http://www.accessdata.com

Category: Homeowners Services

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The "Instant Profit" Business

Anyone who lives in a city has ready access to an old standby that's always good for a daily income. In Los Angeles for example, it is not unusual to work about four hours, spend less than $3.00 for materials, and take home $50 - $100 for a day's work painting house numbers on curbs!

If you have even tried to find an address in a strange neighborhood, you have undoubtedly experienced the frustration of looking for a house number where there are none displayed. Most people understand this frustration, which is why it is not difficult to make money solving the problem.

To get into the curb painting business, all you need a set of number stencils and a couple cans of fast drying spray paint. Then find a neighborhood that needs house numbers on the curbs and go to work!

The procedure is to paint on the numbers first, then go up to the house, explain what you have done and ask if they would care to contribute $5.00 - $10.00 dollars towards your expenses and labor (leave the actual amount up to them).

That is all there is to it!

Although there are many variations, the system described here is recommended for beginners. You can always alter your procedure after you have a little experience under your belt. If you ask the people first you may do fewer numbers for nothing but you will also get fewer contributions.

Many people that would not otherwise pay (renters, visitors, people in a bad mood, or those with something else on their minds for example) will feel obligated to contribute when you tell them you have already done something for them and would appreciate a donation if they think it was a good job.

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After getting started, you can design your stencil holder so to hold 4 or 5 numbers that can be slipped in and out rapidly. Your holder should also be engineered to place all the numbers about the same height from the street (and the top of the curb).

Other extras may include a can of fast-dry cement colored paint to correct mistakes or cover curb blemished.

All of the number you paint should be the same size, style and color, and should be placed as close as possible to directly in front of the main entrance to the house. Most curb painters use 3 or 4 inch numbers (depending on curb sizes), plain block style, and a dull, fast dry black (or dark green) paint.

Most numbers advance by two's on each side of the street, odd numbers on one side and even on the other. When you are satisfied that you know the correct numbers, set up your stencils, "shoot" the street number, then go up to the house and ask if they would like to donate. Most will, but some won't -- or will not be home.

You can do nothing about the ones who do not care to donate without causing more problems for yourself, so just smile and let them enjoy their freebie. They may be financially embarrassed, just visiting, or planning to move out the next day.

For the ones that aren't home, have some small notices printed that explain what you did and tell them where to send their donation. You can type out several of these on a single sheet of paper, then have copies made and cut them into say 6 per sheet.

Some operators hire neighborhood kids to go up and down the streets the day before they plan to work, distributing "flyers" that say you will be there the next day or so paint on their number that the service is free, but they are welcome to contribute.

Home Marketing Consultant

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A Home Marketing Consultant evaluates the marketability of a house and provides ideas on how to make the house more attractive to buyers. They give ideas on things such as landscaping, furniture placement, room colors, background music, and other details that help to make home hunters feel comfortable in the home.

Business can come from for sale by owners or realtors. A Home Marketing Consultant only makes suggestions on what should be done -- the home owner or realtor takes care of actually implementing the ideas.

The service includes an initial walkthrough where the consultant takes pictures or videotapes the house and takes notes on improvements. The consultant then studies the material and provides a detailed written report on improvements.

Rates for such a service are $250 -- $500 per consultation.

Start Your Own House And Apartment Cleaning Service

House and apartment cleaning services are gaining in popularity. These are business services that are growing in demand as a result of more and more women seeking jobs outside the home. Their need to supplement the family income creates the opportunity for you to set up a lucrative business.

Ten years ago, businesses of this kind were serving only the affluent - homes of wealthy people where women didn't want to be bothered with the drudgery of household cleaning, and had the money to pay someone to do it for them. But times have changed, and today the market includes many middle-income families in every residential area across the entire country. The potential market among apartment dwellers is also great. All in all this is a business that has

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grown fast, and has as much real wealth building potential as any we can think of.

This is a cleaning service generally associated with women; however, men are finding that they can organize, start, and operate a very profitable home and apartment cleaning business just as well as a woman. It's an ideal business for any truly ambitious person wanting a business of his or her own, especially for those who must begin with limited funds. Actually, you can start this business right in your own neighborhood, using your own equipment, and begin making a profit from the first day.

Many enterprising homemakers are already doing this kind of work on a small scale as an extra income-producing endeavor. There's a growing need for this service. Organizing your efforts into a business producing $50,000 to $100,000 a year is quite possible, and you can get started for $100 or so, always using your profits to expand and increase your business.

Absolutely no experience is required. Everyone knows how to dust the furniture, vacuum carpets, make the bed and carry out the trash. But you must ask yourself if making a house clean and bright is important and uplifting work. If you look on it as degrading or as drudgery, don't involve yourself in this business.

Starting from scratch, you'll need a telephone and an appointment book. You also need an advertising flyer, such as the following:

> HOME OR APARTMENT CLEANING We do the work - You relax and take it easy. You get the best job in town at rates you can afford. Your satisfaction is always guaranteed! For more details, call Sue, 555-5555, ABC Cleaning Services.

You can either type this notice out of write it in longhand with a pen. Either way, it's going to be your first advertising endeavor, and bring in that first customer for you.

Once you have a circular designed, take it to a printers or copy shop, and have about 200 printed. You should be able to get two copies on a standard A4 sheet, and running 100 sheets of paper through will

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cost no more than œ6. For a little bit more, have the printer cut them in half with his machine cutter, so you will have 200 copies of the advertising flyer.

Now take these flyers, along with a box of tintacks, and put them up on all the free notice boards you can find - grocery stores, launderettes, beauty salons, office building lounges, cafes, post offices, and wherever else such posters are allowed.

When a prospective customer calls, have your appointment book and pen handy. Be friendly and enthusiastic. Explain what you do - everything from changing the beds to vacuuming, dusting and polishing the furniture and cleaning the bathroom to the dishes and the laundry. Or, everything except the dishes and laundry - whatever you have decided on as your policy. When they ask you how much you charge, simply tell them six to ten pounds an hour, but for a firm quote, you'll need to see the house and make a detailed estimate for them. Then without much of a pause ask if 4.30 this afternoon would be convenient for them, or if 5.30 would be better. You must pointedly ask if you can come to make your cost proposal at a certain time, or the decision may be put off, and you may come up with a No Sale.

Just a soon as you have an agreement on the time to make your cost proposal, and marked in your appointment book, ask for name, address, and phone number.

Jot this information down on a 3 x 5 index card, along with the date and the notation: Prospective Customer. Then you file this card in a permanent card file. Save these cards, because there are literally loads of ways to turn this prospect file into real cash, once you've accumulated a sizeable number of names, addresses, and phone numbers.

When you go to see your prospect in person, always be on time. A couple of minutes early won't hurt you, but a few minutes late will definitely be detrimental to your closing the sale. Always be well groomed. Dress as a successful business owner. Be confident and

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sure of yourself; be knowledgeable about what you can do as well as understanding the prospect's needs and wants.

Do not smoke, even if invited by the prospect, and never accept a drink - even coffee - until after you have a signed contract in your briefcase.

Actually, once you've made the sale, the best thing is to shake hands with your new customer, thank them, and leave. A little small talk after the sale is appropriate, but becoming too friendly isn't. You create an impression, and preserve it, by maintaining a businesslike relationship.

When you go to make your cost estimate, take along a ruled notepad, a calculator, and your appointment book. Some people find it easier to work with a clipboard and ordinary blank paper with carbon underneath.

Whatever you use, it's important to appear methodical, thorough and professional, while leading the prospect through the specifics he or she wants you to take care of: "Now, you want the carpet vacuumed and all the furniture dusted and those two end tables, the coffee table, and the piano polished as well, I assume?"

Simply identify the specific room at the top of each sheet of paper, then lead your prospect through the cleaning steps of each room, covering everything in it. Your implications of putting everything in "ready for company" shape will cause the customer to forget about the cost, and hire you to do a complete job. Always have a carbon paper under each piece of paper you're writing on, and always look around each room one more time before leaving it; then ask the prospect if he or she can think of any special instructions you should note for that room.

Finally, when you've gone through each room in the house with the prospect, come back to the kitchen and sit down at the table. Take out your calculator and add up the time you estimate each job will take to complete. Total the time for each room. Be liberal, thinking that if you can do the carpet in 15 minutes, it could take the ordinary

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person 30 minutes. Convert the total minutes for each room into hours and tenths of hours per room. Add the totals for each room to arrive at your total hours to clean the entire house.

Talk with your customer briefly, wondering how she can ever find the time to get everything done at home, especially when holding down a job. A little bit of small talk, a quick mental value of the customer's ability to pay, plus your knowledge that you can get everything done in four hours, instead of the six hours it would take most people, and you summarize by saying:

"Well, Mrs. Johnson, you've certainly got enough routine cleaning work to keep you busy all day every day of the week! I certainly don't know how you do it, but anyway, we'll take this whole problem off your shoulders, save you time, and actually give you time to relax. We can do it on a regular basis, every other week, for $120 per month, or the one single time for $75. I can well imagine how tired you are, when you get home from work. We'll take care of everything for you, and we guarantee that our work will more than satisfy you. So, would you like to try our cleaning one time for $75, or do you want to save $15 a call, and let us take over these chores for you on a regular basis?"

Here you begin finding a place in your appointment book, and tell them, "Actually, I have an opening at 8.30 on Tuesday morning. We could come in every other Tuesday at 8.30, clean the whole house, and have it done before you get home from work".

The customer agrees that 8.30 on Tuesdays will be fine. Then you ask her if she prefers to be billed with the completion of each house cleaning session, or on a regular monthly basis. Point out to her than by engaging you on a monthly basis, she picks up a free house cleaning every three months. Now that you have your first customer, you want to fill in every day of the week, each week of every month, with regular jobs. Once you have one week of each month filled with regular jobs, it will be time for you to expand.

Expansion means growth, involving people working for you, more jobs to sell, and greater profits. Don't let it frighten you, for you have

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gained experience by starting gradually. After all - your aim in starting a business of your own was to make money, wasn't it? And expanding means more helpers, so you don't have to work yourself to death!

You can operate this business successfully from the comfort of your home, permanently, if you chose to. All you'll ever need is a telephone, a desk, and a file cabinet.

So, just as soon as you possibly can, recruit and hire other people to do the work for you. The first people you hire should be people to handle the cleaning work. The best plan is to hire laundry to work in teams of two or three - two for jobs not including dish washing and laundry - three for those that do.

You can start these people at minimum wage or a bit above, and train them to complete every job assignment in two hours or less. Just as soon as you've hired and trained a couple of people as a cleaning team, you should outfit them in a kind of uniform with your company name on the back of their blouses or shirts. A good idea also would be to have magnetic signs made for your company and services. Place these signs on the sides of the cars your people use for transportation to each job, and later on, the sides of your company van or pick up trucks.

Each team should have an appointed team leader responsible for the quality and overall completeness of each job assigned to them. The team might operate thus: One person cleans the bathroom, makes the beds, and carries out the laundry, while the other person dusts and polishes the furniture and does the vacuuming. On jobs where you do the laundry and the dishes, the third person can pick up the laundry and get that started, ad then do the dishes and clean the kitchen. By operating in this manner, your work will be more efficient and the complete job will take a lot less time. However, it is important that each person you hire understands that the success of the business depends on the "crew" doing as many complete jobs as they can handle each day - not on how much they get paid an hour working for you.

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Your team leaders will check with you each afternoon for the next day's work assignments, and gather the team together, complete with cleaning equipment and material, on the next day. Your team leader should be supply with a stack of "handout" advertising flyers to pass around the neighborhood or within the apartment building before leaving each job site. A good supply of business cards wouldn't be a bad idea for them either, in order to advertise your services to others they come in contact with. The only other form of advertising you should go with would be a display ad in the yellow pages of your telephone directory. Design on paper a system of cleanup operations that can generally be applied to any situation, then drill your teams on speeding up their activities to make the system work even better. Just as firemen practice and practice, you should drill you're people as a team in there cleaning activities.

Probably the biggest timewaster in this business will be in the travel from job to job. For this reason, it's important to spread advertising circulars to the neighboring homes when you're doing a job or to the apartments on the same floor when you're in an apartment building. As the organizer, and person assigning teams to jobs, it will behoove you to line up, and assign jobs as close together as possible. Keep up efforts to cut the time it takes for your crews to travel from one job to the next. Work at lining up jobs all in one area.

Your equipment needs will really be minimal: Cleaning and polishing rags, mops, a couple of plastic buckets, and furniture polish. Most people will have the necessary cleaning materials, including vacuum cleaners, soaps, and cleansers. But it wouldn't hurt to have these items available just in case you get a job in a home or an apartment without these tools. As your business grows, you'll be able to purchase all your needs at huge discounts, and these are the sources of supply to cultivate as you grow.

One of the most important aspects of this business is asking for, and allowing your customers to refer other prospects to you. All of this happens, of course, as a result of your giving fast, dependable service. You might even set up a promotional notice on the back of your business card (to be left at each job when it is completed),

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offering five dollars off their next clean when they refer you to a new prospect.

This is definitely a high profit business, requiring only an investment of time and organization on your part to get started. With a low investment, little or no overhead requirement, and no experience needed, this is an ideal business opportunity with a growth curve that accelerates at an unprecedented rate. Think about it. If it appeals to you, set up your own plan of operations and go for it! The profit potential for an owner of this type of business is outstanding!

Child Proofing Homes

It's hard to pick up a newspaper or watch the evening news without seeing another tragic story of a child who was injured or killed in some type of accident at home. However, the really tragic part is that most of these accidents could have been avoided with some simple preventive measures and a little education.

As a Home Safety Inspector you will be providing a service that is needed in every community. Parents will pay you to inspect their homes and educate them on potential safety issues. You will also provide a few simple devices that will help keep their homes safe for the little ones.

Getting Started

What you will need to do is create a Home Safety Checklist that you will use to inspect homes for potential hazards. A great resource for this is The Consumer Products Safety Commission web site at:

http://cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/chld_sfy.html

There, you will find a wealth of information on such things as:

1) Safety guidelines for playground equipment.

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2) Pool, spa and whirlpool safety.
3) Specific safety issues for infants.
4) Fire safety issues.
5) Poison risks for children in the home.
6) General home safety guidelines.
7) Firearm safety at home.
8) Bulletins and alerts for just about every safety issue.

Other resources for information:

1) Check your local library for child safety reference books and articles.

2) Contact the local poison control center.

3) Write to the National Safe Kids Campaign at:

111 Michigan Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20010

Using the above resources, make a list of all the specific things to inspect in the home. You will want to subdivide your list by section for each area of the home.

For example, the kitchen section would list all the hazards particular to that area of the house. The outside section would list all the safety concerns for playground equipment, poisonous outdoor plants, and gates and fencing, etc.

You should also have sections for special safety concerns. Things that are specific to the individual home, like: pools and spas, firearms, homes with infant children, etc.

Once you have created your checklist, you should write a detailed guide that explains how to correct each of the unsafe points on the checklist. Once again, this information can be found at the sources listed above. Here is an example of the Checklist and Guidebook to get you started.

Home Safety Checklist and Guidebook Examples:

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INFANT SAFETY CHECKLIST

Bedroom:

___ Baby's crib should have a firm, flat mattress and no soft bedding underneath.

___ Make sure the baby's crib is sturdy and has no loose or missing hardware.

___ Baby's crib is away from window blinds and curtain cords.

Bathroom:

___ Medicines and cleaning products are in containers with safety caps and are locked away.

___ Bath water temperature is no more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

Kitchen:

___ Highchair is equipped with sturdy, working safety straps.

___ Household-cleaning products, knives, matches, and are locked away from children.

Living areas:

___ Smoke detectors installed on each floor, especially near sleeping areas.

___ Smoke detectors are in good working order.

___ Stairways blocked with safety gates.

___ Safety plugs in unused electrical outlets.

INFANT SAFETY GUIDEBOOK

Bedroom:

Put your baby to sleep on her back or side in a crib with a firm, flat mattress and no soft bedding underneath her. Follow this advice to reduce the risk of suffocation and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). To prevent suffocation, never put babies to sleep on adult beds.

Make sure your baby's crib is sturdy and has no loose or missing hardware. This will prevent babies suffocating or strangling by becoming trapped between broken crib parts.

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Never place your baby's crib or furniture near window blind or curtain cords. This will prevent babies from strangling on the loop of the cord. To prevent falls, keep children away from windows.

Bathroom:

Keep medicines and cleaning products in containers with safety caps and locked away from children. This will prevent children from being poisoned.

Always check bath water temperature with your wrist or elbow before putting your baby in to bathe. This will prevent burns to a baby's delicate skin.

Never leave your child alone in the bathtub or near any water. This will prevent children from drowning. In addition, keep children away from all standing water, including water in toilets, 5-gallon buckets, and pools.

Kitchen:

Don't leave your baby alone in a highchair; always use all safety straps. This will prevent injuries and deaths from the baby climbing out, falling, or sliding under the tray. Be sure to use safety straps in strollers and baby swings.

Use your stove's back burners and keep pot handles turned to the back of the stove. This will prevent deaths and injuries from burns. In addition, keep children away from tablecloths, so they can't pull down hot foods or liquids on themselves.

Lock household cleaning products, knives, matches, and plastic bags away from children. This will prevent poisonings, bleeding injuries, burns, and suffocation.

Living areas:

Install smoke detectors on each floor of your home, especially near sleeping areas; change the batteries each year. This will prevent deaths and injuries from fires.

Use safety gates to block stairways and safety plugs to cover electrical outlets. This will prevent injuries from falls and electric shocks.

Keep all small objects, including tiny toys and balloons, away from young children. This will prevent choking and possible death.

Getting Expert Advice

It's a good idea to have a pediatrician go over your checklist. She can give you information on items you may have left out or more in-depth information about recommendations in your guidebook.

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If you don't know a pediatrician, start calling the ones listed in the yellow pages. Explain what you are doing and offer to pay for a regular office visit if she will schedule an appointment to see you. Most are very receptive to helping with anything having to do with child safety.

You will also need to check with an attorney to see if there are any special licenses or insurance required for this business.

Marketing Your Service -- Part 1

Write a series of 2 to 3 page articles on child safety issues. One article could be, "How To Choose a Safe Crib for Your Baby," in which you would detail the dangers the parent should be aware of concerning cribs. Another article could be, "How to Recognize Poisonous Plants," or "Is Your Child's Swing Set Really Safe?" Using your safety guide you should be able to come up with 6 or 7 such articles.

At the end of each article include a resource box that explains what your service is and how to contact you.

Here is an example:

How To Choose A Safe Crib For Your Baby

According to the US Consumer Products Safety Commission, more infants die every year in accidents involving cribs than with any other nursery product. Thousands more infants are injured seriously enough to require treatment in hospital emergency rooms.

If You're Buying a New Full-Size Crib make sure that:

Corner posts do not extend more than 1/16 inch above the top of the end panel. Corner posts can be catch points for items placed around a child's neck or clothing worn by the child.

Mattress support hangers should be secured by bolts or closed hooks. All crib hardware should be securely tightened and checked frequently.

Bumper pads, if used, should (a) fit around the entire crib, (b) tie or snap into place, and (c) have straps or ties at least in each corner, in the middle of each long side, and on both

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the top and the bottom edges. To prevent your baby from becoming entangled in the ties, trim off excess length after tying. Use the bumpers until the baby can pull up to a standing position, and then remove them so that the baby will not use them to try to climb out of the crib.

Remove and destroy all plastic wrapping materials. Never use plastic bags as mattress covers. The plastic film may cling to a baby's face and cause suffocation.

If You Already Have a Crib make sure that:

The crib meets Federal safety regulations and industry voluntary standards (ASTM) and make sure it has a tight fitting mattress. Check the labeling on these products to make sure they meet safety requirements.

Check the crib and replace any missing parts, such as screws, bolts or mattress support hangers, before placing your child in it. Make sure all screws or bolts are securely tightened. Any screw inserted into a wood component that cannot be tightened securely should be replaced by one that fits. On cribs where the mattress support is suspended by hangers attached to hooks on the end panels, check frequently to be sure they have not become disconnected. Never use a crib with broken or missing parts.

Use a mattress that fits tightly. If you can fit more than two fingers between the edge of the mattress and crib side, the mattress is too small. An infant can suffocate if its head or body becomes wedged between the mattress and the crib sides.

Avoid older cribs with headboard and footboard designs that may allow an infant's head to become caught in the openings between the corner post and the top rail, or in other openings in the top edge of the headboard structure. These openings may lead to strangulation.

Corner posts should be less than 1/16 inches high unless the crib has a canopy. Do not use a crib that has decorative knobs on corner posts. If you already have a crib with such knobs, the knobs should be unscrewed or sawed off flush with the headboard or footboard. Sand off splinters and sharp corners.

Never use a crib that has loose or missing slats. Be sure that all slats are securely fastened in place and the space between slats is no more than 2-3/8 inches to avoid head entrapment/strangulation.

If you paint or refinish the crib, use only high quality household lead-free enamel paint and let it dry thoroughly so there are no residual fumes. Check the label on the paint can to make sure the manufacturer does not recommend against using the paint on items such as cribs.

Other Safety Tips:

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To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and prevent suffocation, put your baby to sleep on his/her back in a crib on a firm, flat mattress. Make sure there is no soft bedding underneath your baby.

Temporary beds: Never place your infant to sleep on an adult bed, waterbed, or bunk bed. Infants up to 18 months can suffocate in their sleep when their bodies or faces become wedged between the mattress and bed frame or the mattress and wall.

Never put a crib, childbed, or furniture near window blinds or drapery. Children can strangle on window cords or can fall through screens. If local fire codes permit window guards, install them. Make sure that all drapery or window blind cords are out of the child's reach. To keep cords out of reach of children, use these devices: clamp or clothes pin, tie the cord to itself, tie-down device, or take the cord loop and cut it in half to make two separate cords.

Never use strings to hang any object, such as a mobile or a toy or a diaper bag, on or near the crib where a child could become caught in it and strangle. If you have toys with cords or elastic for hanging, cut the strings/cords off.

To prevent strangulation, NEVER tie pacifiers/teethers around your child's neck. Remove bibs and necklaces whenever you put your baby in crib or playpen.

Always lock the side rail in its raised position whenever you place your child in the crib. As soon as your child can stand up, adjust the mattress to its lowest position and remove the bumper pads. Also, remove any large toys-an active toddler will use anything for climbing out of the crib.

When your child reaches 35 inches in height, he/she has outgrown the crib and should sleep in a bed.

Never use plastic bags as mattress covers. The plastic film may cause suffocation.

Check all crib hardware; tighten all nuts, bolts, and screws frequently. After a crib is moved, be sure all mattress support hangers are secure. Check hooks regularly to be sure none are broken or bent. Open hooks may allow the mattress to fall.

Secure bumper pads around the entire crib and snap or tie in place at least in each corner, in the middle of each long side, and on both the top and the bottom edges. Cut off any excess string length.

For more information about making your home **Child Safe** contact Joan Smith at 704-555-1212. She will be happy to arrange an appointment to inspect your home for potential hazards. Call now for a free no obligation telephone consultation.

Marketing Your Service -- Part 2

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Rent one voice mailbox for each article. You can find companies that rent voice mailboxes in the yellow pages under Answering Services. Then, simply record one article in each voice mailbox. If you don't feel comfortable recording the messages yourself you can either have a friend do it for you or hire a college student. Make sure whoever does this has a strong and confident speaking voice. Be sure to include information about your service and how to contact you.

Marketing Your Service -- Part 3

Place small ads in your local newspaper, penny saver, and other area papers. A great source for advertising is in the Parent/Kid type newspapers. Your ads should advertise your articles, not your service. Let the articles do the selling job for you. Here is an example:

> Warning: Your Baby's Crib Could Cause Serious Injury or Death! Free 24 Hour recorded message tells you how to identify common hazards found in cribs. Call 704-555-5555 NOW!

Marketing Your Service -- Part 4

After the parent calls and listens to the recorded message you can give her the option of either calling you or leaving her name and number for you to call her back. Regardless of who initiates this call, you will need to give her more in depth information about what your service will do to make her home safe. Make an appointment to inspect her home and collect your fee after the inspection.

Setting Your Price

Typical fees for this type of service range from $60 to $100. You can make additional money by selling safety devices such as electric outlet covers, cabinet safety latches, CO2 detectors, smoke detectors, batteries, gates, etc.

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Window Washing Profits

For about $30.00 in supplies you can be in business for yourself and making a profit within a day by washing windows for homeowners, apartment renters and retail businesses.

The first step is to buy your supplies. Here is what you will need:

- Sudsy ammonia
- Isopropyl alcohol
- Dishwashing detergent
- Wooden Pole
- Brush that attaches to the pole
- 6 Inch Squeegee
- Rags and sponges

Next, practice by cleaning your own windows. Mix 1/2 cup sudsy ammonia, 1 pint 70% isopropyl alcohol, and 1 Teaspoon dishwashing detergent with a gallon of water. Practice on your windows until you can really make them sparkle. Once you are satisfied you have the technique down, call on residential prospects. Distribute flyers house to house in middle class neighborhoods.

Charge by the window or by the hour. $20 - $25 per hour or $2 - $3 per window is standard. Make extra money cleaning screens and doors.

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Think of the last time you went on a long vacation and all of the little things that you had to take care of or make arrangements for before you left: feeding the cat, watering the lawn, paying bills, canceling the newspaper, etc.

Cynthia Clark of San Carlos, CA recognized that there was a need for someone to take care of these little details for vacationing home owners. That's when she started Travelers Home Care. For $20.00 an hour Cynthia will take care of the house, pets, bills, yard and anything else vacationing homeowners need.

Starting a similar business should be fairly easy. First off you will need to get bonded as people will be trusting you with the keys to their house while they are away. Then talk to real estate and travel agents and inform them of your services. After you pick up a few jobs word of mouth referrals should bring in most of your business.

Yard Signs

I am seeing more and more people use this unique personal service in my area. The service rents large colorfully painted wooden cutouts that are placed in the recipient's front yard. The most popular is the stork, which announces that the recipient has had a baby. Each card has a chalkboard attached, which allows it to be personalized with a message or facts about the baby.

You can have an art student from a local high school or college draw the outline for your card on drafting paper and then have a carpenter follow this design to make a plywood cutout. You or the art student could then paint the card. Start with one design -- the stork is the most popular -- and add more as your business grows.

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Rental fees for such cards range from $20.00 to $35.00 per 24-hour period. You can market your cards through gift or card shops by offering the shop owner a commission on rentals.

Category: Mail Order, Phone and Fax

Resume Faxing Service

If you live near a college or university you'll have plenty of prospects for this business. What you do is FAX resumes for job seeking college students to businesses looking for employees.

Here is how it works:

Get a copy of the Sunday newspaper for every large town or city within a hundred miles of where you live. Look in the Employment Classifieds and make a list of every company along with their fax numbers. Divide your list into the appropriate categories such as:

- Computer Professionals
- Engineers
- Medical Professionals
- Accountants
- Banking
- Etc, etc, etc

Then advertise your service with flyers on college bulletin boards and ads in the college newspaper. In your ad you offer to fax the students resume to 30 or 40 companies who are looking for employees in their field. You can fax their resume to companies in only certain areas or, if location doesn't matter to them, you can fax to companies all over the area.

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The going rate for similar services is 75 cents to $1.00 for every fax sent. You could create package deals to send out, say, 40 faxes for 35 dollars. The great thing about this business is your costs are so low; most of the money you take in is pure profit. With only 10 clients you could be making $350 - $400 a week for just a few hours work.

Another idea would be to get a fax number compact disk and target companies in specific cities. That way, if you had, for example, a C programmer who wanted to work in Miami you could charge him $100 to send his resume to 100 computer consulting firms in the Miami area.

The possibilities for this type of business are endless.

Martian Real Estate For Sale

Just when you thought you'd seen it all, along comes former car salesman Dennis Hope with an offer to sell you 2000 acres of property on Mars for a mere $19.99.

Dennis is exploiting a little know but legal loophole in the International Outer Space Treaty of 1967 which bars nations from staking a claim to a celestial body. But the treaty does not prohibit individuals from claiming the moon or planets. And a separate treaty that aimed to ban private property on the moon and planets was never ratified.

Each Martian deed you buy contains 2000 acres of Martian property for $19.99.

For your 20 bucks you will receive:

- A Martian Constitution Bill of Rights
- A Martian Deed

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- A Martian Sight Map (Showing the approximate location of your Property)
- A copy of a short story entitled "YOU OWN WHAT?" which includes a copy of the declaration of ownership that was filed with the US government to ensure that in fact, a legal basis for the ownership of the properties sold here can be claimed.

Seeing as how there are approximately 9,200,000 separate pieces of property on Mars, Dennis stands to make a fortune if he can find buyers for all the lots.

Think this is a dumb idea? Well, Dennis sold $200,000 worth of real estate in his last venture -- 177 acres plots on the moon for $20.00 each.

Hummm… anyone like to buy a Venusian vacation lot? Cheap!

You can visit Dennis' website at http://www.marsshop.com/

Giant Seeds

Bigger is better. Well, maybe not always better, but it sure attracts a lot of attention. Americans are always enchanted by the world's largest anything. Ball of string. Rubber band ball. Birthday cake. Cookie. Watermelon. Pumpkin. In fact, every year farmers compete to see who can grow the world's largest pumpkin: 2004's winner's pumpkin weighed in at a whopping 1446 pounds.

If you've got a tiny budget but big dreams, here a simple yet sure-to-be successful business idea for you: sell giant seeds. We've already established that people love the intrigue of the "World's Largest," so give them the chance to grow the world's largest cucumber, squash, pumpkin, whatever you choose.

To start, buy seeds at wholesale prices from seed suppliers. You can purchase seeds in bulk for relatively little and sell them individually

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for between three to five dollars. You're able to sell them for such a price because they may well produce the "World's Largest...pumpkin, watermelon, you name it."

Once you purchase the seeds, you'll want to market them by placing ads in national magazines. Create an ad that catches attention. You want to make people want to buy your seeds and get excited at the thought of growing the world's largest pumpkin. Charge between three to five dollars, and have customers include a self addressed stamped envelope (SASE).

Print an email address or phone number, and include them when you mail the seeds. Ask customers to mail their success stories to you. You can ask for their permission, and once your business grows, you can use those stories to help market your seeds. For example, take out an ad, featuring little blurbs with photos of your success stories.

Once you grow as a business and start generating revenue, you can eventually establish a website, if you want. You can then sell the seeds online and really use the space to market how great your seeds work. Have articles, with plenty of photos, of people who have written in and told you their stories. Run your own contests to see who can grow the biggest watermelon, or whatever you choose, and then award prizes—they don't have to be monetary but can be something fun like a magazine subscription of the winner's choice.

Mail Order Names of Animals

Wolfe. Fox. Deere. Eagle. Hawk.

People have a lot of pride in their last names. And people with one of the above names -- or other animal names -- are particularly proud.

You can build a unique mail order business around this affinity that people have for animals they share their name with.

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If the name is Fox, or a variation such as Foxx, offer them products with pictures of fox. You can find such items by looking for wholesaler suppliers on the Internet. Find one product that sells well then expand with a whole catalog of products.

Your prospects are easy to identify by looking through phonebooks for all the people in the country with the name.

Logo Chocolates

If you have an artistic flare and enjoy cooking here is a great moneymaker -- produce and sell chocolate embossed with company logos.

Companies are always looking for imaginative gifts to give to their clients. A sweat treat like this is both unique and memorable.

One lady, Judith Norton of Huntington Beach, CA, runs a firm that produces custom designed chocolates. She got her start by mailing 600 local companies with her offer. She received 60 orders, which is considered unheard of for a cold mailing.

Telephone Advice

When I was in college we had access to a free telephone service -- sponsored by the local hospital -- that would give recorded advise about various medical problems and general medical information. The information was divided into categories, such as Skin Problems, Cancer, Aids, Human Sexuality, Digestive Problems, Respiratory Problems, First Aid, etc.

Each of these categories was further divided into specific topics. For example, under Skin problems the topics might be Acne, Eczema, Tanning, etc. Each topic was about a minute in length and had a unique (ID) number assigned to it. Acne was 2001, Eczema was

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2002, etc. So if you wanted to hear about acne you would dial the number and then enter the ID 2001

One time the college newspaper did an article about this service and gave out the usage numbers for the categories for the previous month. They had a little chart that went something like this:

- Skin Problems --- 117
- Cancer – 124
- AIDS – 53
- Human Sexuality – 2893
- Digestive Problems – 99
- Respiratory Problems – 115
- First Aid – 77

I don't remember the exact numbers but it really was that dramatic. Human Sexuality accounted for 80+ percent of the total call volume.

What I am proposing is that you can set up a similar service in your community and charge local businesses -- such as drug stores, hospitals, medical equipment supply companies, doctors, dentists, chiropractors, etc -- a fee for a 10 second ad that is broadcast right before the topic. What makes this really great is that the ads can be targeted to the people who need the products advertised. For example, an acne cream advertised by a local drug store during (and after?) the Acne Topic message.

You can charge a set fee per topic, a larger fee for an entire category or a small fee for each individual call.

Personalized Christmas Cards

Every year, before the Halloween decorations have even been pulled down and packed away, greeting card stores start stocking their shelves with individual and boxed Christmas cards. It's no secret the

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greeting card industry is an ever-growing machine, and the busiest time of the year is undoubtedly Christmastime. Boxed Christmas cards are especially popular with families who send cards to neighbors, relatives and acquaintances. One of the biggest advantages of boxed cards is the big savings: the boxes can sell for anywhere from six dollars to twenty dollars or more whereas the price of individual cards increases every year. Finding a card today that you like, for less than three dollars, can often be a challenge.

Another problem is there are only so many choices a customer has when purchasing boxed cards. Anyone who's searched through boxes and boxes of cards knows that the choices don't seem to change much each year. That's where your personalized Christmas card business comes in. First, you can create cards that are unique. People get tired of the same old choices year after year. Here's your chance to really be creative and offer customers cards they will always remember.

Now, the unique twist about this business is how you'll market the boxed cards. First, go through the phone book. Some names like Smith, Jones and Williams have pages and pages in the phone book. Pick out the most popular, as many as to whom you want to market. Then, once you have a list compiled, you'll personalize your cards. For example, on the front, write something like "Merry Christmas...Love, the Smiths."

Considering you don't know the people you'll be marketing to, you might want to keep the inside of the cards blank or write a very generic message such as "From our family to yours...Happy Holidays." Getting too personal with the inside text will limit your market because every family is different.

Now that you have your list of families, you'll want to start preparing your direct mailings. Send each prospective customer a sheet showing the different designs you offer, so they can choose, and send a sample card. That way, they can see the quality of product

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you offer. Consider offering a variety of designs in each box, giving your potential customers more options. You might also place an ad in the classifieds, telling people how they can purchase their personalized Christmas cards.

Personalized Christmas cards are unique, lending a personal touch to Christmas greetings. They also offer customers a time-saving alternative to going to the packed mall or greeting card store, where they'll be forced to dig through piles of disheveled boxes, while people are elbowing them from all sides.

Monthly Business Tips Audio Cassette

Not everyone can stand the grind of the nine-to-five world. More and more people are throwing out the security blanket for the adventure of entrepreneurship. Success in starting a business takes enthusiasm, determination and—above all—knowledge. There are dozens of newsletters, magazines and websites devoted to helping entrepreneurs build and grow their businesses.

But, let's face it, business owners are busy people. Most don't have much time, after a long day devoted to business, left over to spend with their families let alone read. The only real free time most business owners have is when they're driving to and from work—and you can help them make the most of that time. Produce monthly business tips—on audiocassette—for a variety of business specialties such as booksellers, restaurateurs and owners of hair salons.

In order to produce effective audiocassettes that will really be beneficial to subscribers, you're going to need to do the legwork and research for which the business owners, your subscribers, don't have time. Keep up-to-date with all of the trade news to include in each month's audio.

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Like a magazine, you'll want to create a specific format you'll use each month. Among the topics you may want to include, in addition to the trade news, are management tips, suggestions for improving sales and business promotions. You may want to have features each month that include interviews with others in the field or business experts. Give subscribers an email address where they can write in their questions for business experts or comments for a "Letters to the Editor" type segment. Ask for feedback from your subscribers, so you can determine what needs adjusted, what they'd like to see added or what really isn't of use.

Recruit subscribers through a direct mail campaign. Highlight all the benefits your audiocassettes have over typical business magazines. If you find the cost isn't too great, include a sample cassette or give potential subscribers a website URL where they can hear sample audio. If you do not use audio, consider having a sample article so subscribers can get a feel for what to expect from the monthly cassettes.

You may want to start by producing and marketing to only a few types of businesses then expand your business once your subscriber base grows. You can market to business owners all over the country or start by concentrating on one section of the country all depending on what your overall goals are.

Products for Lefties

It's not easy being a leftie in a right-handed world. Sure, lefties are considered highly creative and intelligent, and there are plenty of famous lefties including President Clinton, Sir Paul McCartney and Prince William. All that creativity and intelligence sure doesn't come in handy when a leftie picks up a pair of right-handed scissors or tries to write, without smearing each word, in a right-hander's notebook. Even Beatle Paul was forced to play his right-handed guitar upside down because there were no guitars for lefties.

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There are a lot of frustrated lefties out there—and you're poised to help them. Products for lefties aren't easy to find. In fact, they're pretty much non-existent in most stores, and the few specialty stores that exist are scattered so sparsely across the country that getting to one is a big inconvenience.

That makes the market ripe for you to swoop in and sell products designed specifically for lefties. It's simple: find products for lefties, design a catalog and sell the products either via traditional mail or via the Internet.

So, what kind of products can lefties use? Here's a list you'll want to add to as you go on: notebooks, can openers, pencil sharpeners, scissors, baseball gloves, computer keyboards and mugs, to name just a few. For more ideas, check out www.thelefthand.com, www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk, www.andersonlefthandside.com.au or www.lefty.co.nz.

Finding products for lefties is as easy as doing as a search on Google or Yahoo. There are plenty of outlets and warehouses that sell left-handed products. You can either sell your products via mail order or online.

Selling via traditional mail will require you to design a catalog and establish an easy way for your customers to purchase products via an 800-number, by sending in a postcard or logging online to order.

If you choose to sell online, you'll need to establish a website with a shopping cart for the ease of customers. If you choose to sell online, make sure to read up on online marketing, so you can establish a good rating in the search engines.

Also, consider sending out a sort of "Lefties Newsletter" for all customers and visitors to the website. You can send it out on a monthly basis, often or less often, whatever you prefer. Include tidbits about famous lefties, lefties in the news or the latest in leftie

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products. And—whether you have a newsletter or not—make a big deal of August 13. After all, it's National Lefthander's Day.

Specimens for Collectors

A small child walks along the beach, kicking his feet in the hot sand, bending down to check out every shining object, inspecting it and either keeping it or tossing it into the ocean. That small child will pick up numerous different objects—from garbage tossed carelessly by beachgoers to rocks and perhaps even fossils washed ashore by the tide.

That same small child may well grow up to be an avid collector of specimens—whether they are fossils or mineral specimens. Collectors are often very passionate about what they collect, and they'll go to great lengths to find new additions to their collection.

Now you can make it easy for collectors to find new specimens to add to their collection. You can start a mail order service, which sells rocks, mineral specimens and fossils to collectors.

The first thing you'll want to do is find rocks, minerals and fossils to sell to customers. You can find rocks, minerals and fossils by walking along the beach, going to the mountains or doing research online.

To sell your specimens to collectors, you'll want to produce a glossy catalog complete with plenty of full-color photographs. Make sure you pack your catalog full of specimens, including short descriptions under each photograph along with the price. You may also want to include several short articles, spread throughout the catalog, that highlight certain minerals or inform collectors on how to preserve their collections. Make sure you include an order form, an 800 number to call or an email address to send orders.

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Don't just focus on selling specimens in your catalog. You also want to sell supplies and accessories. Make your catalog, or website, a one-stop shop for every collector's needs and wants.

To complement the catalog, you may want to establish a website where you can frequently update your stock. Include plenty of photographs on your website, along with descriptions of each product. Have an order page where customers can easily make their purchases. Make the most of your website by posting articles on a weekly or monthly basis. Include a "letters" section, or perhaps host a forum where collectors can post comments and exchange ideas. Use your imagination, and use the suggestions of your customers. Make your website work for you and for your business.

Tree Kits

Remember the bonsai tree craze that swept through malls several years ago? Every mall had one—or more—sidewalk kiosks selling dozens of bonsais in elaborate vases. The trees often sold for a steep price, sometimes well over $100 for a little tree, something not everyone could afford.

People found an affordable alternative by purchasing their own seeds, their own vases and planting the trees themselves. But, that takes time, and most people don't have an overabundance of time to go to the store to search for the right seeds and the right equipment then research how to get the best results for their efforts. By selling tree kits, you're offering customers convenience and guidance.

Your kit can consist of seeds for whatever type of tree you are selling, a small vase or pot, a small bag of topsoil and an instruction booklet. (Of course, you are not confined to only including these things in you kit; you can add whatever you like.) Including an instructional booklet is essential since many of your customers may

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well be novices at gardening. Write the booklet yourself or hire a freelance writer to write it for you. You want to make sure the book is well written and easy to understand. Be sure to include specific instructions to help your customers get the best results with their trees.

You can be creative with the outer packaging. You don't have to stick to the traditional cardboard box. Consider using something that will be useful again and again: perhaps a small plastic watering can or a plastic box.

Consider including a reply postcard with postage already paid, so customers can send you their feedback about the product, or they can order other products. Be easily accessible to customers—in case of questions, comments, problems or complaints—via an email address or a toll-free phone number.

Market your tree kits through ads in national gardening magazines including: Home & Gardening Magazine, Fine Gardening, Country Living Gardener, House and Garden,

Garden Design and Better Homes and Gardens. You can also contact suitable shops and have the tree kits stocked there. Shops may include gardening, novelty, gift and nature shops.

D-Day Sand Souvenir

June 6, 1944 marked a turning point in World War II, signifying the beginning of the end of Hitler's reign of terror over Europe. Of the more than 150,000 Allied troops to land on the beaches of Normandy, France, that historic summer day, more than 4,500 were killed. June 6 is a day the world pauses to remember all those who never came home and those who returned to their loved ones forever changed.

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Millions have visited the beaches of Normandy, and thousands more make the trek to the coast of France every year. Still, there are many who cannot make the long voyage overseas, yet want to somehow connect with that pivotal period of history.

D-Day Sand Souvenirs are the ideal gift for anyone who wants a precious piece of world history. Selling tiny bottles of sand collected from the beaches of Normandy allows customers to purchase a piece of history, a priceless gift.

The first thing you'll need to do is determine how you're going to obtain sand from the beaches—Gold, Juno and Omaha—of Normandy. Will you visit there yourself? If so, make sure to check into importing requirements. You can start your research at the United States Custom Service's webpage: http://www.customs.ustreas.gov/.

If you can't actually travel to Normandy, you'll need to find someone who will or someone in France who is willing to obtain the quantity you desire then ship them to you.

You'll want to put the sand in tiny bottles with a label denoting the beach the sand came from: Juno, Omaha or Gold. You can probably find tiny bottles at your local home improvement store or by doing an online search. Here are a few sites to help you begin your search: Specialty Bottle, BizRate and Proactive Packaging.

You can market the D-Day Sand Souvenirs in any number of ways, depending on what your preferred marketing technique is. You can sell them at a booth at craft fairs or rent a kiosk at your local mall. You may want to place advertisements in local publications or sell them to local gift or novelty shops. If there are any local World War II museums in your town, you may want to ask that the sand souvenirs be stocked in their shop.

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Revenge Calls

People are angry. They're angry at their exes, and while they are itching to tell them off, for some reason, they just can't or don't. They're not too happy with their nit-picky, stingy bosses and gossiping co-workers either. And, of course, there are a lot of half-bitten tongues from spouses who can't tell off their mothers-in-law even though they'd love to. Oh, and don't forget all those grounded kids whose parents just don't understand.

What's a person to do?

Call you.

That's right. You've just been handed the perfect business opportunity. Believe it or not, one enterprising woman made it her business to tell people off. Clients paid a ten dollar fee for the woman to anonymously tell off their former significant others, bosses, co-workers, parents, siblings, anyone who just got on their nerves. Needless to say, her business has proven very successful since there is never a shortage of annoyed people.

Starting your own "tell 'em off" or "revenge" business can be done on a shoestring budget. After all, all you really need is a phone, a bank account to deposit your earnings, and enthusiasm, and you're ready to start finding clients.

The good news is there are plenty of angry people to go around.

Finding clients should be a cinch, considering your market is virtually all around you. Word-of-mouth is always the best, and cheapest, way of attracting new business. Be creative. Perhaps you have a friend who works in a busy office. Ask her if you can call her and "tell her off." Once she gets off the phone, she can start talking up your business. "You'll never guess the phone call I just got." Have her star 69 your number in front of her coworkers to make it even more dramatic.

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So, in this age of star 69, what are you going to do if someone calls you back? Again, here's your chance to be creative. Perhaps leave a message on your answering machine, telling the person they've been "told off" and how they, too, can tell someone off with your help.

Put flyers up in colleges, grocery stores, offices, clubs, anywhere there's a lot of traffic. Send a press release to your local newspaper. Most newspapers highlight new businesses, and yours will undoubtedly be one of the most unique they've ever featured. You can also put small ads in the paper—what better place to offer your services than in the "Match" section, where you're likely to attract the attention of many spurned lovers?

Allow your clients to tell you what they want to say, and make sure you find out the recipient's name, phone number and best time to call. You might even consider offering a call back service. Call your client and tell him/her the reaction of the recipient.

Junk Mail

Junk mail can be a big pain in the mailbox. Your mailbox is probably brimming with the stuff every day, requiring you to wade through the junk to get to the real mail. If you're like most people, you probably give it a quick glance—if that—and toss it straight in the garbage.

Stop. Turn junk mail into your advantage. Think it can't be done? Think again. Take the case of one enterprising entrepreneur who turned unbearable junk mail into a profitable business. How? He became a collector of junk mail by making sure he is on every possible mailing list known to man. When the junk mail comes in, he categorizes it then files it. For example, he's got a file for credit card direct mailings, collectible items, *whatever* of the month clubs, etc.

Still scratching your head, wondering what on earth he does with this well-organized junk? Simple. He markets these direct mailings to advertising agencies who are working on similar campaigns. One of

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the most important responsibilities of an advertising agency is to keep abreast of what the competition is doing. This entrepreneur understood that and made a move. In fact, his junk mail nets him approximately $200 to $300 for each sale.

Now, you can turn your junk mail into a profit. There are literally hundreds of advertising agencies, which all are striving to be ahead in the game, across the country. Take advantage of their need to be at the top.

You can start collecting junk mail by making sure you sign up for every direct mailing list imaginable. Simply plug in something like the phrase “sign up for direct mailing lists” in any search engine to get you started. Before long, the junk mail will be piling up in your mailbox.

You want to make sure you have a strong, organized filing system to keep your junk mail straight. You can do this by purchasing file folders at your local office supply store and using a box as a file cabinet, unless you decide purchasing a file cabinet is more ideal for you.

Once the junk mail starts pouring in, you’ll want to start contacting advertising agencies in your area—or even throughout the rest of the country. Tell them of the different mailings you have available, and offer to sell them to the agency. With time, you’ll likely build a rapport between different people in different agencies.

When you send the “junk mail” to agencies, make sure you include an invoice with the negotiated fee as well as a business card. Let your connection know if there is anything he ever needs, he should not hesitate to call you first.

Court Transcripts

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Forget the primetime law dramas. Real life courtroom dramas are rapidly taking the place of the fictional, making anything associated with high profile cases, whether local or national, a hot commodity, especially when the case is not televised. Court transcripts are particularly popular, with enthusiasts willing to pay for transcripts of the day's proceedings.

Obtaining transcripts is as easy as going to the regional or district court where the case is being heard. The best part is the transcripts, being of public record, are free once they are filed with the court. Further, you can generally get the transcripts as early as 24 hours following the day's proceedings. Check with your local courts for their specific policies and procedures.

With a quick visit to CourtTV's message boards (http://boards.courttv.com), you'll realize how fertile your market is for court transcripts. In addition to all the avid court watchers, you may find a market in law students who want to study a lawyer's techniques and law professors who want to use the transcripts as an example for classes.

The great news is you can provide the transcripts to your customers with little overhead. Since most people are anxious to get the transcripts right away, you might want to opt with sending them via email or even providing a secure, password protected, webpage where they can upload and print the transcripts once payment has been received.

If you decide to mail the transcripts to customers, you'll want to figure in the cost of copying, which you can likely find for as little as five cents a page, envelopes and postage. There are still people who prefer the traditional mail system to email, so you might want to offer customers both options.

Receiving payment is as easy as signing up for an account with companies like the popular PayPal (www.paypal.com.) The positive side of using a system like PayPal is your customers can pay from

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their bank accounts or even their credit cards, making the transfer of money to you simple and quick.

To turn your customers into repeat business, you might consider sending out a weekly or monthly e-newsletter, alerting them to upcoming trials to which you will be providing transcripts. Also, make their purchase of court transcripts as easy as possible so they come to you when there's a big trial in which they are interested.

Wacky Mail Order Biz Idea

Have you ever lost your Social Security Card?

I lost mine a few months ago and let me tell you, getting a new one is a pain in the butt! I didn't even know where to begin so I tried calling the local social security administration office. I would have had better luck trying to reach the President!

So, I drove down to the local office. The line was out the door! Forget that.

Finally, I went online and found the website for the Social Security Administration at:

http://www.ssa.gov/replace_sscard.html

I found a form called:

"How to Apply For, Replace, Correct, or Change Your Name on Your Social Security Card"

I downloaded the form, mailed it in and in about 3 weeks I had a copy of my card. Pretty simple.

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But, I got to thinking: Is there an opportunity here?

Do you know there is a group of people who need this form but:

#1) Don't know they need it.
#2) Don't know how to get it.
#3) Will be happy to pay you for it.

Who is this group of people?

New Brides!

Think about it: New Brides have a thousand things on their minds.

Do you think they give a thought to a small, but important, detail like having their name changed on their social security card?

Do you think they would pay someone, say, $20.00 to take care of this for them? Do fish swim in the water?

All you would have to do is mail "Brides to Be" a letter telling them they can change their last name to their married name on their social security card and that you can take care of it for $20.00.

With the letter, include a copy of the form. When the bride mails back the form, you mail it to the social security office and they do the rest.

Now, it would be important to mail them a couple of weeks before their wedding date. This is the time when they are the busiest preparing for their wedding and usually have not even thought about the need to have their name changed.

Names and addresses of Brides to be are available from any mailing list broker.

Update:

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A question I am often asked about this business is: Is it legal to sell social security forms?

I really can't say for sure but here's how I suggest you approach this business in order to avoid the problem altogether:

Put together a "kit" of all the forms needed for change of name in the state in question. (Social security card change of name, driver's license change of name, voter registration name change and post office change of address).

After they send in their payment you would fill out all the info on the forms except for their signature and send the forms back to them with detailed instructions on what they need to do (like they may need to make a copy of their drivers license) and then they would mail all this back to you and you would mail to the appropriate office.

This way you are just offering a service (you are not really selling the forms)

Category: Personal Services

"How To Cash In On Your Skills and Specialized Knowledge"

Everyone has some sort of skill that others would pay to learn. In fact, you can take your skills and specialized knowledge and turn them into a lucrative income source.

People pay thousands of dollars to learn new skills - whether it be a college course, evening class or book or correspondence course. Why

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shouldn't they be interested in learning one of your skills - and paying you to teach them!

Quite simply, people will always pay to obtain new skills - and new knowledge. Many successful businesses are based on that principle. Teach others something you already know as a course and you can be well paid for doing it. Or, learn a new skill and teach others how to do the same.

For example, about a year ago I was listening to a radio talk show about cigars and the host mentioned that crafters were taking the wooden boxes cigars come in and making women's purses out of them. I thought that was an interesting idea so I did some research on the internet and found that there was a niche of thousands of people interested in making purses out of cigar boxes.

So, I found some cigar boxes and figured out how to make purses out of them. Once I learned how I created a video to teach others how to make them as well. You can view the website where I sell the video click here

Over the past year I have sold thousands of dollars worth of my video course about making cigar box purses.

What Course Can You Offer?

From the start you should choose just one skill you can offer as a course. Though, maybe in the future you can offer a full range. No matter how you look at it you do have something others want to know!

The skill you select does not need to be highly technical. And, it doesn't need to be something you are qualified in - unless you must be qualified by law to teach it. It should have a minimum requirement for equipment. The lower the cost of equipment etc - the more your students can pay you! In the first place consider how you could teach other people your job - no matter what it is - or how

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trivial you might think it. For example, a garage mechanic might teach car maintenance – an English teacher could teach English to immigrants - a sales manager could teach sales techniques. Whatever it is, someone else wants to learn it.

If a job isn't appropriate then look to interests or a hobby. This could be anything - sports, crafts, cookery, bird watching - you name it, it could be a course. In fact, interests are often a better course subject. People will pay more to enjoy themselves.

Unless you're a person with very limited interests then you might need to draw up a shortlist. All other things being equal choose the course idea that looks most interesting, since that will be the easiest to sell. If a course on that subject already exists then it could be an even better idea. It shows demand exists!

When you have decided which skill you are going to teach then you will need to draw up some sort of schedule. Decide just what you are going to teach - and how. Produce a fairly comprehensive list. Apart from organizing your thoughts this list can also be published as a prospectus - a good way of interesting potential students.

Exactly what your course consists of will very much depend on the subject. However, one good tip is to divide it up into 'units'. Your course can be made up of a number of sessions. At each you teach a new aspect of the subject, which is quite independent from the others. This makes your course easy to organize - and easy, and enjoyable, to undertake. For example, if teaching car maintenance, your first units might be:

- History and Principles of the Car
- A Look Inside the Engine
- Your Gearbox and Clutch
- The Braking System
- Auto Electronics
- Repairing Body Damage

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You can really just add as much (or as little) as you like to make a suitable course. In most subjects even just the basics can make an excellent and very valuable course.

When you have decided on your major units you should decide on the content of each. Just what are you going to say and do at each stage of the course? You might just give a talk or lecture - so why not write the script, or notes for it. Or, you might include practical work. A visiting speaker would be a good idea - or how about a film showing? You could also locate textbooks, or write notes that could be given to students to help them learn the subject in question.

The exact format of the subject is up to you - and what you think needs to be said about the subject. Then, try to make the course content as enjoyable, even exciting, as it can possibly be. Unless the subject is of a strongly vocational nature it should not be at all academic. Don't make it like going back to school for your attendees!

It is worth taking considerable time in the planning and devising of your course. Once it has been organized you can teach the self same course over and over again - and be paid for it each time!

Arranging the Details

Once you have decided on the course content then there are quite a few 'mechanics' to be undertaken in order to get that course to your students and get paid for it.

In the early stages you should decide how the course will run - closely connected with its length. The course you offer might be an evening class, running once a week for 3-4 months. Or, it might run over a weekend. Your course might comprise just 1 full day session.

The format and length is really up to you. But, you will need to decide this in conjunction with the fact it will need to be outside of working hours.

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Secondly, a venue must be decided on. This will very much depend on the type of course and the expected number of students. It may be possible to hold some discreet courses in the home. Others could be held in a local hotel suite. A popular venue for courses is a local school or village hall. This is especially true where certain facilities are needed. Or you could decide to create a virtual course – like I did with my Cigar Box Purse project – and sell it on the Internet.

If you are teaching the course in person, contact the owners of suitable premises in advance to determine cost and make booking arrangements. Also arrange to use any facilities that may be needed, e.g. AV equipment etc.

Decide at this stage how many people your course will accept. This needs to be decided in conjunction with the price you charge. For most courses you should plan on earning $40-50 per hour clear. On top of this you must add costs of preparing, supplying and advertising the course. Most courses will do best with around 10-25 students. So, your price will be very much dictated by this. One tip is to avoid offering courses too cheaply - high quality ones are better even if they are more expensive. A course of half a dozen evening classes might well cost $50 or so per student - and will be well supported at that!

At the planning stages you should also find out if any licenses or consent are needed to teach that subject – and obtain them. Sometimes the owners of the premises you use might have certain restrictions. Another requirement might be insurance to protect students - especially in a practical or sporting course. Be sure to allow for the cost of this.

It is always advisable to plan just how much as you can in advance. This will make your course run smoothly and generate many requests for repeat sessions. This will also relieve much of the pressure at the time of the course, leaving you free to teach your best.

Sell Your Course!

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The best way to go about getting money from your skill is to think of your course as a product. Sell it professionally! Having said this, there is little doubt that people want to obtain new skills and knowledge - and the right sort of course can be in very heavy demand.

Write up and have printed some smart looking sales literature. This should explain the benefits and attractions of the course. And, it should include a prospectus of the content. Also give full details of when and where it will be held, for how many sessions - and the total cost. People need to know all the details in order to undertake the course with confidence.

Be sure to include in your literature a reply form – ideally with a reply paid envelope. This can really get the bookings in fast.

Decide in advance whether you will ask for payments in advance - or collect them at each class. Advance payments can be discouraging - and some students might miss some classes. So, a good balance might be to collect what you are owed at the first class meeting.

Give tickets to all those who book - and, a list of what materials, equipment, tools, clothes, etc they should bring. If you are in the fortunate position of being over-booked why not arrange a second (or third) class?

Where and how you advertise depends very much on the type of course in question. However, local and regional newspapers are good places to advertise most popular types. A few classes can be booked direct from your ad. However, for others enquirers can be sent your sales literature - and be better persuaded into making a booking.

Try to think of other more novel and interesting ways of advertising.

For example, you might be able to leave your sales literature in the local libraries, community centers, clubs or shops. Consider mailing some of it to schools, colleges, businesses or other interest groups.

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For some popular courses door-to-door leaflets can be successful.

It very much depends on the amount and type of advertising you will need to do. Some courses will need very little. Others will need a bit more. However, once they become known word of mouth and recommendations will be very valuable. Then, you can just keep teaching the same course over and over again - for more and more money each time! Advertise professionally though and you will always attract more interest.

Conducting the Course

One of the advantages of this business is that, if a course is poorly supported, you can alter or even cancel it with very little loss. Hopefully though, this will not be the case and you will be able to look forward to teaching a full class.

When the time of the course does come round it can be the easiest part of your work. No formal teaching background is required. In fact, you should aim to make the course as informal and relaxed as possible. People will normally attend to enjoy themselves - so that is what you must give. A good course should certainly be nothing like a school!

The most basic type of class can be quite successful with you just giving a talk on the subject in question. Be very natural and just tell what you know. It doesn't have to be technical or complex to be enjoyable. If you can make this more interesting with visual aids, a film etc, then so much the better. A good teaching tip is to hold 'questions and answers' sessions. Few classes will involve any sort of academic or written work. But, one top for boosting attendance and popularity of the class is to give some sort of exam at the end of the course. Issue your own diploma to certify that each passing student has attained a certain standard in the subject. Sure to be very popular!

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Perhaps the overall tip is never to take your course too formally. If you've got experience - a skill etc. people love to hear about it - jokes and funny stories and all. Often the more personal and natural the subject the better! Whether you praise the joys of flower arranging – or how to rustproof a car - other people will pay to learn your skills!

Plenty of Scope

Needless to say education of this type offers some of the best scope for a large business. Education is not only a matter for schools and colleges - it can also be very big business. From just one small course you can go on to build a considerable 'evening class' or 'weekend course university' of sorts.

Once you are advertising and selling your course you can advertise dozens. So, it will pay to contact experts in other subjects and get them to hold courses on a small commission fee. You keep the rest of the profits. The great thing here is that many people will sign up for several courses!

An interesting business alternative is to see if appropriate local business would be interested in paying you to lecture their employees. Or, a local school, college or university might be interested in adopting your course. Either way, there rests considerable potential to enter a very well paid profession!

Always remember, no matter who you are, you have some skills. No matter what they are, other people want to learn them. And they'll gladly pay you for the chance!

How To Start A Roommate Finding Service

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The average income for owners of this kind of business in California is $65,000 a year. Best of all, here's a business that you can start with an absolute minimum investment. Practically anyone who lives in a city anywhere in the country can expect to do just about as well, and with a bit of imagination, mixed with some business "moxie", you should be able to do even better!

Income and market potentials for a service such as this are truly fantastic! Rent increases that have far outpaced wage increase have brought about a tremendous need for a method to alleviate the cost of housing. Also, many apartment complexes are being converted into expensive condominiums. These two factors have created a problem of gigantic proportions for millions of people who are concerned about keeping a roof over their heads.

You can make big money solving the problem with your own Roommate Finding Service. We're going to tell you how.

Many of the nation's leading economists are predicting this kind of living arrangement to be the "money-saving answer" for apartment dwellers for the rest of this century. Others are predicting the roommate finding service to become as popular as the employment agency by 1990.

This is an ideal absentee owner business. Most of those operating on the West Coast have a woman doing the managing - sometimes as just the manager, and some times as the owner - manager. This apparently has something to do with the nature of the business, and how most people seem to naturally trust a woman to find the right roommate for them.

As to the fee structure, I suggest something similar to the successful employment agencies. Charge everyone a $25 registration fee to start the ball rolling toward finding him or her a suitable roommate. You take a Polaroid snapshot of each registrant, have them fill out an appropriate application card which will indicate the kind of roommate they'd be happy with, and start searching through your files for people with similar likes and dislikes.

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To get started, you'll want a bank reference; a legal reference, a telephone; a business name, letterhead paper, envelopes and business bards; and office supplies such as a 3 x 5 index cards; typewriter; file cabinet; and a printed questionnaire-application form. You'll also need a responsibility disclaimer, which can be combined with the applicant's agreement- to-pay contract. Once you've found a roommate for your prospective client, you should have it spelled out in your agreement that each of the "matched room mates" will pay you 15% to 20% of the first month's rent. You could charge a bit extra for particular requirements, and perhaps somewhat less for older persons, or for persons with handicaps.

The approval or disapproval is left up in the parties involved. You simply look through your registration card file, pull out five or six apparently suitable roommates, call each of them on the phone and arrange separate meetings for them with your client. Your client reports back to you, and tells you of his or her decision, and you call the person chosen and finalize the deal.

Good advertising will play a most important part in getting this business off the ground. Make up a good circular or "flyer" detaining your roommate finding services, and listing your phone number. Get these flyers on as many bulletin boards in your area as possible. Get them in grocery stores, barbershops, community colleges, beauty salons, bowling alleys; the list of places to "billboard" your flyers is endless.

Another idea is to set up "take-one" boxes in as many retail places of business as you can. Don't overlook the value of placing your flyers on car windshields - particularly around apartment complexes, and in the parking lots of the colleges in your area.

You might even pay the downtown parking lot attendants to slip one under the windshield wiper of each car he parks on Monday. If you do a good job with the make-up of your flyer, and use your imagination in getting them into the hands of your prospective clients, you'll have no trouble moving your new business into the black quickly.

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Even so, you'll need to run regular ads in your area newspapers. The best headings to run your ads under are the Personals Column. Your ad might read:

Need A Roommate? We'll find the ideal roommate for you! Everything handled on a strictly confidential basis. For details, call Jan at 555-1212

Within only a couple of months, you should be well enough established, and with an income large enough to afford an office location.

When you establish your office, do some publicizing of your business with press releases to all the media in your area, and plan some fanfare that will bring attention to your services. Tacking up on your office walls the enthusiastic testimonials of people you've matched with roommates is a very good idea.

Later on, you might want to input all your client information on computer, and take video pictures of each client for showing to prospective roommates.

In the final analysis, once you have your business underway, your further success will be limited only by your imagination.

Make Big Money With Your Own Personal Shopping Service

With the fast-paced, high pressure professional lifestyles of today, more and more people have limited time to do their personal shopping. Holding down a full-time job, raising children, and maintaining a household doesn't seem to leave enough hours in the day to get everything done. That's why many people are now opting for a "service" to do much of their personal shopping for them --

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everything from buying groceries to planning and purchasing an entire wardrobe.

Within the past decade personal shopping services have emerged as a rapidly growing cottage industry with the potential for highly profitable large-scale operations. It's a service that appeals to a busy, above average income clientele, as well as to corporate clients. And an enterprising person providing this kind of service can make substantial profits.

Shopping for other people is not necessarily a difficult task. As part of the service, the personal shopper usually meets with clients to determine their needs and compile a list of items to be purchased within the client's specified price range. Then, the shopping begins. After the client's items have been purchased, the shopper and client meet again. The client looks over the purchases, and once satisfied with the shopper's selections, pays the bill. Most of the "work" involved with a personal shopping service, is in the shopping itself.

Start-up costs for a personal shopping service can be relatively minimal. There's little need for expensive equipment and hardly any initial investment in inventory. The biggest expense a home-based shopping service encounters is usually the method of transportation used by the shopper. Since most of a personal shoppers time is spent shopping, an efficient running, low-mileage car or van is essential to get to the many shopping locations.

Most of these services begin as part time, home-based operations. Beginning the service at home allows the novice entrepreneur to maintain a full time job while devoting ten to twenty hours a week to being a personal shopper. Once a profitable client list has been established, and depending on the market size, the service can expand to a full time, multi-employee business with yearly earnings of $50,000 or more.

Business Overview

Before starting up any new business venture it is essential to determine if the business is right for you. You must have the right

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temperament as well as the facilities and an adequate market for your service. Understanding these and other factors involved in operating a personal shopping service before you "take the plunge" will enable you to be prepared for any eventuality. It's also a good way to insure success and profit. Shopping can be a tiresome, demanding and frustrating undertaking. Obviously if you want to be a personal shopper, you must enjoy shopping. Most of the people who utilize a personal shopping service simply don't have time to shop for themselves. And some just don't like to shop. If you are not fond of shopping for yourself, you won't like doing it for others either, even if they pay you. You can draw from previous personal experience to help you determine if you would enjoy shopping for others.

Once you've determined that you have the ability, and would be happy shopping for other people, you'll need to focus on the "business" side of operating a personal shopping service. And that means you will have to be certain that there is a market for your service.

Generally, a personal shopping service cannot rely on clientele with average or below average income. You'll need a "pool" of clients who can afford to pay for someone to shop for them. Many personal shoppers have found that people with incomes of $40,000 or more are their best sources of clients. You'll need to do some research before you start up to determine if your market can support a personal shopping service.

The success of a personal shopping service depends largely on the quality of the service. You must offer professional service and quality merchandise. This type of service requires that you know the best places to shop, be familiar with brand names, and that you work within the client's price range. The most successful personal shoppers have established good connections with retailers and wholesalers and know where to get the best merchandise and the best prices.

You'll also need to be creative. Many times a client will need a gift for someone. The client gives you a description of the person, and then it's up to you, the personal shopper, to find the gift to fit that person.

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This requires not only creativity, but an understanding of people as well.

Another important factor to consider is how you will advertise and promote your service. This is especially important when you are starting up. You'll need to make your service known to your market area. You should investigate all the available avenues of advertising and determine what's best for you. Establishing a realistic advertising budget and implementing an effective advertising campaign will mean more business and bigger profits.

Equipment

Starting a personal shopping service at home is the ideal way to begin. No large facility is needed for storage or equipment. One room can serve as office space for administrative purposes, such as bookkeeping and record keeping. You should also have an answering machine for your telephone, a typewriter or computer and printer if affordable, and various office supplies.

Furnishing a home office can be relatively inexpensive. A desk, chair, filing cabinet and bookshelf are the only basic items needed to begin. Purchased new, these items will cost from $500 to $700. You may be able to find good quality used items for much less. Many yard and garage sales have adequate furniture for a home office, and at good prices.

The most important piece of "equipment" a personal shopper will need is a car. Transportation is also the biggest expense this type of service will likely incur. Since well over 50 percent of a personal shopper's working time is spent on the road, to and from shopping excursions and consulting with clients, an economical and dependable method of transportation is a must.

Most people operating home-based services use their own cars. This alleviates the necessity of buying a new car, or leasing a vehicle. If your car is in good working order and gets good gas mileage it makes sense to use it for your business. The government will

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reimburse you, via tax deductions, for the driving and other expenses incurred as part of the business.

Many personal shoppers also invest in a small camera. This is a relatively modest investment that adds an extra service to your business. A camera will allow you to take pictures of items you think particular clients may be interested in. Your clients will appreciate this extra service because it allows them the opportunity to see, and approve an item before it is purchased.

It's a good way to build an on going and trusting relationship with clients, increasing the chances for repeat business.

A good instant camera is sufficient for a personal shopping service. You can get one for about $50 and it's well worth the investment.

When starting your service, it is important to remember to "live within your means." There's no need to get several pieces of expensive office furniture, or buy a new car. Be sensible and get only the basics. Your total investment in equipment and office furnishings and supplies need not exceed $1,000.

Inventory And Pricing

Since a personal shopping business is service oriented, you won't be selling a specific product. That means there's not a lot of initial inventory as there would be if you were starting a retail business. However, you may on occasion find it necessary to deal with suppliers of wholesale merchandise, because some clients may demand such merchandise.

If you purchase wholesale merchandise for your clients, it is important that you maintain a good relationship with dependable suppliers of inventory. The better your connections with reliable suppliers, the better your chances of getting those special items for your clients at a good price.

Even though you usually won't be selling a product, you will be selling a service. And you'll need to take just as much care in pricing

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your service as you would a line of products. Most personal shoppers use one of two common methods for pricing their service:

1) Set a fee based on the total price of the merchandise.

2) Charge an hourly rate.

Whichever pricing method you choose must bring in enough income to cover any overhead you have, your time and labor, and leave you with a reasonable profit. This requires knowing what the market will bear, as well as how much you desire to make your service personally profitable.

Most home-based shopping services initially institute a fee based on the total cost of the merchandise purchased. This fee should be a percentage of the purchase price. The percentage will vary depending on the market area, the type of clientele and the total price of merchandise purchased. It's up to the personal shopper to determine an appropriate percentage.

Generally, the larger the total price of merchandise purchased, the smaller the service charge. For example, if you charge a service fee of 20% on a purchase of $500 or more, your minimum fee will be $100. For a smaller total purchase of merchandise -- say, from $200 to $500, your service charge could be 25%. That would leave you with a minimum fee of $50 and a maximum of $125.

This type of pricing makes good business sense if you do a lot of pre-shopping from newspapers, catalogs and by phone. That way, you've located your merchandise before you actually go shopping. This will save you time and result in a higher degree of profit on your labor.

Hourly billing for this type service usually works best if your service offers a good deal of consultation as well as shopping. In most cases, personal shoppers who also feature wardrobe consulting as part of their service, charge an hourly fee. If your service is in a market that has the potential to support a wardrobe consultant as well as a personal shopper, you may consider billing clients by the hour.

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Many personal shoppers who also offer consulting as part of their service charge as much as $45 an hour. The rate you set depends on how much you feel your time and efforts are worth, and how much the market can afford. You'll need to make a profit, but you'll also need to be affordable.

If you limit your service to shopping -- no consultations -- then an hourly rate isn't realistic. Sometimes you may only be shopping for $50 worth of merchandise and charging an hourly rate of $30 to $40 will not be appreciated by the client. Your rate should be such that every client feels it's worth the time saved to pay you to do their shopping. For shopping services only, a service fee based on the total price of the merchandise is more practical, and ultimately more profitable than an hourly rate.

Getting Clients

Any personal shopping service's client list depends, in large measure, on the variety of shopping and consultation offered. As pointed out earlier in this booklet, some personal shoppers also serve as wardrobe consultants, giving advice as well as selecting clothing items to show the client. Wardrobe consulting could be a profitable feature for a personal shopping service if the market has the potential clientele.

Generally, if you are located in a market of less than 100,000 people, there will not be much demand for wardrobe consulting. That's why most personal shopping services are located in, or near a relatively large population base with an abundance of working people, and a variety of stores. The services offered in such a market can be varied to cater to specific client needs.

If shopping for personal clothing is your forte, your client list will most likely be comprised of women. Many of these women will be making a transition into professional life and are in need of a business wardrobe. Your ability to consult with these clients -- to advise them and select an appropriate wardrobe will go a long way in determining your success as a personal shopper and consultant. If

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you do the job well, the chances of adding men to this particular client list will increase. In many cases, men are becoming more open to the idea of getting help in selecting their "professional" attire.

Some of your personal clothing shopping will be done for parents who need help getting their children ready to go back to school. You may also get women who are soon to be married and need assistance in selecting gowns for the wedding. Some people, planning exotic vacations, may require your help in choosing a special "vacation" ensemble.

In most cases, the previously mentioned clients are limited to large markets. If your market area is moderate to small, depending on "wardrobe" clients as a major source of your income is probably a mistake. You should rely on more generalized shopping. Personal gift shopping is a good way to realize profits in any market.

When you are shopping for gifts, most of your clients will be men. Many of these will be husbands who know what they want to get their wives but don't have the time to shop for themselves or have little, if any, idea where to shop. It'll be up to you to track down these items, usually in a limited amount of time.

Other clients on your gift shopping client list will include executives who need to get gifts for their clients and employees.

In most cases, these clients will also be men. As a rule, it seems that men prefer to have someone else shop for gifts rather than spend the time themselves going from store to store. So a personal shopper can usually count on men as a good source of clientele for this type of service.

Your client list will also include some elderly people, or physically disabled people who aren't able to do their own shopping. These people are most generally interested in a grocery shopping service. This type of client, while not a major source of your income, will be a steady source.

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One major source of income for many personal shopping services is the corporate client. This type of client may take a great deal of time and effort to land, but the results will make it worthwhile. That's because corporate clients normally make large volume purchases, and if they are pleased with your service will be a source of repeat business.

There's no doubt you'll have to work hard to get corporate clients. It requires a rather comprehensive study of your market in order to be familiar with all the potential clients, followed up by an impressive and convincing sales presentation. But if you can convince many of the businesses in your market that you can save them money, time and hassle by doing their necessary gift shopping for them, you'll have a valuable client list with a high profit potential. So you should be determined and persistent when pursuing these clients.

In the most basic of terms, a personal shopping service's clientele depends on the types of services offered as well as the market's need. The client list will include busy professionals -- both women and men, corporate clients with business gift needs, and senior citizens who are unable to do much shopping for themselves. Your market will dictate which segment of potential clients you should rely on. You'll need to know the kinds of people in your market area and what they need in a personal shopping service. Your service should cater to those needs.

Advertising Your Service

Even though your talents as a shopper may be formidable, you won't get much business if you don't let people know your service is available. That's why it is essential to develop an effective advertising and promotion strategy.

Since personal shopping services are a relatively recent innovation, many people aren't familiar with them. These people need to know

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what a personal shopping service is and how it can be of benefit to them. It's up to you to let them know what you offer and how you can save them time and get better merchandise. The success of your service depends on how effectively you "spread the word" about what you are doing.

Determining the best advertising campaign for your service will require some research of your market to understand the best way to reach the widest segment of potential clients. First of all, you'll need to have a good idea as to who your potential clients are, and how many of them there are. You'll also need to offer them something that isn't already available and then convince them to take advantage of your service.

This "pre-marketing" research doesn't necessarily have to involve a great deal of expense. One good and inexpensive method of obtaining information about your potential market is to conduct your own survey. Discuss your personal shopping idea with all of your contacts -- business and personal. You can also get a sampling of opinion by going through the phone directory and calling as many businesses and people as time will allow. Be prepared to ask specific questions that will allow you to obtain usable information. Some questions worth asking include:

1) Would the person or business pay a service to do their shopping? If the answer is yes, you should then find out if they would use the service on a regular or repeat basis.

2) What kinds of shopping would these potential clients pay a service to do? Try to get them to be as specific as possible about wardrobe consulting, gift shopping, grocery shopping and so on.

3) What's the potential client's idea of a reasonable service fee? You may have to do some prompting here. That is, you may have to suggest something like 20 to 25 percent of the retail price. You should soon get an idea as to what the market would be willing to pay.

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This isn't a scientific survey, but it should enable you to better plan and instigate your advertising campaign. You'll have a good idea as to who your potential clients are and what they would expect from a personal shopping service. The next step is to come up with an advertising budget you can afford and then find out where your advertising dollars can best be spent.

You'll have to use your own judgment as to how much you allocate as an advertising budget. However, you should keep in mind the importance of advertising to the success of your service. Many businesses, both small and large, budget anywhere from 1 to 5 percent of their projected gross sales for advertising and promotion. You should have at least some idea of projected gross sales from your pre-start-up research.

The important thing to remember is to be reasonable. Don't spend more than you can realistically afford. You'll need to be as financially sound as possible until your business is bringing in a healthy profit. At the same time, you don't want to undermine what an effective advertising campaign can do to help your business.

Once you have decided how much you can afford to spend on your initial advertising campaign you'll then have to select the media, which will bring you the best results. Generally, for a personal shopping service, advertising in newspapers, the yellow pages, and by direct mail gets the best results.

A less expensive, but more time consuming, means of advertising is through personal contacts. This form of advertising usually works better in small markets, but can be effective in larger markets as well. You'll need several hundred professional business cards to pass around. Impressive business cards are not at all expensive and are a good way to get your name and service known. You'll also need to set aside a good bit of time making personal calls on prospective clients. This is an excellent way to let people know that your service is available.

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When calling on a prospective client you must be well prepared. This means being able to explain your service in a clear and professional manner. Let your prospective clients know exactly what your shopping service offers and how it can be of benefit to them. And before you leave, make sure they have your business card as well as any brochures or flyers you may have detailing your service. Ask them to consider your shopping service, then follow up your presentation with a phone call a couple of weeks later. Don't let them forget about you and the service you are offering.

Newspaper advertising can be effective for a personal shopping service that gets most of its clients from the immediate community. Again, this type of advertising may work better in smaller to moderate markets. Most newspapers charge reasonable rates for display and classified ads and reach a high concentration of potential clients.

Another effective means of advertising your personal shopping service is in the yellow pages. Make sure you choose the most appropriate category for your listing or advertisement. You can have an illustrated quarter page spread or simply a one line listing with the name of your business, address and phone number.

The yellow pages can be one of the most effective methods of advertising at your disposal, so it is a good investment, especially when your service is just getting started. You'll have to be careful and get your ad in before the stated deadline, otherwise you will most likely be waiting an entire year before you can advertise in the yellow pages.

Other forms of advertising you should consider include; direct mail, which allows you to distribute information about your service to a selected group of potential clients, newsletters, flyers and brochures. All of these methods of advertising can be effective and are relatively inexpensive.

Knowing your market is the determining factor, along with your budget, as to the type and amount of advertising you do. It should

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be obvious however, that the more advertising you do, the better your chances of reaching the greatest number of potential clients. And that is, along with convincing those potential clients that your personal shopping service is the best in the market, what your advertising campaign should strive for.

Potential Earnings

To some degree, a personal shopper's business will be seasonal. The biggest profits are usually made from October through December, but there is still plenty of business for a highly motivated shopper throughout the year. The amount of profits depends on several factors including time devoted to the business; proper marketing and setting fees that bring the best return for services rendered.

Many home-based personal shopping services, operating part-time, have reported extra earnings of as much as $1,000 per month. This type of profit is usually realized by shoppers who take advantage of the services low start-up costs. In the beginning, these services are equipped with little more than a telephone and an answering machine. Advertising is done through some personal contacts, fliers posted on company bulletin boards, and business cards.

These services use their own cars for shopping excursions, which average about twice a month. Some of these shoppers get as many as five individual clients in a month's time. The result could be a handsome profit that more than covers the initial investment which does not need to be more than $100.

Conclusion

Because of the low start-up costs and high profit potential, a home-based personal shopping service can be the ideal business for many people. But, in order to be successful there are several key factors prospective shoppers should understand.

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(1) Shopping can be a tiresome and frustrating experience. If you don't like to shop for yourself, you won't like shopping for other people and your business will not succeed.

(2) If you are not located in, or do not have reasonable access to a fairly large market, a personal shopping service may have a tough time surviving. Before you start up, analyze your market -- know who your potential clients are and how many of them you can realistically count on to pay for your service.

(3) Knowing the best places to shop for the finest quality merchandise at the most reasonable prices, is essential. You'll need this expertise to convince clients that you are, indeed, the best person for the job. It's something you'll have to demonstrate in order to get new, as well as repeat business.

(4) This is a personal service. You will be shopping for other people's personal needs -- everything from groceries to apparel. In order to do this properly, you'll need to get as much information from your clients as possible. Let your clients know you understand what they want, and that they will be well taken care of. You'll need to be a good listener as well as a good communicator.

(5) Your service fee should be realistic -- both for you and your clients. You will, of course, need to make a profit. But you'll also have to work within your client's means. If your fee is too high for your market, potential clients will usually find the time to do their own shopping.

(6) A well-planned advertising campaign can mean the difference between breaking even and making substantial profits. Develop an advertising budget that will allow you to make your service known to the majority of potential clients in your market.

(7) Adjusting your service to fit the needs of your market will mean greater profits. If you specialize in gift shopping, you may be overlooking other potential avenues of income, such as wardrobe consulting. You should be as versatile as your time, resources, and the market will allow.

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A personal shopping service can be a personally rewarding and highly profitable venture. It is not, however, a means to "overnight" wealth. It will take a good deal of time and work to make your service known and understood, and to build a client list substantial enough to return big profits. But, if you like to shop, and you are good at shopping for other people, a personal shopping service could be the ideal business for you.

Birthday Cake Deliveries

Even college kids enjoy birthday cakes. It might seem like an obvious statement, but the truth is most college kids are also looking to break free from the constraints of their parents, and it's not unusual for them to be embarrassed by their parent's outward sign of affection.

Parents love to shower their kids with birthday gifts, but it's especially difficult to find ways to make that day even more special, with a homemade birthday cake, when their children are away at college—whether across the state or across the country. On the flip side, friends often want to surprise their friends with birthday cakes, but dorms aren't generally equipped with a full-kitchen.

If you enjoy baking, then you've just walked right into another excellent business idea: deliver homemade birthday cakes to college kids. This business will require very little overhead. You can go to your local grocery store and purchase cake mixes in brands such as Betty Crocker, Duncan Hines and Pillsbury, to name a few.

Or, you can also bake your cakes from scratch. If you don't have any "tried and true" family recipes you want to use, there are plenty of traditional and unique birthday cake recipes available at your fingertips, simply by doing a search on the Internet. Here are a few to get you started: Birthday Express, All Recipes: Birthday Cakes, An array of cakes, Chocolate Birthday Cake Recipes, Cooks.com Recipes and Chocolate Birthday Cakes from Cadbury.

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How will you find customers? You'll want to find student directories from local colleges and universities which you can generally do by visiting the school's website. Once you have the student directories, you'll want to start contacting parents about your birthday cake delivery service.

You can do this in many different ways by using your imagination to brainstorm. You might want to try a few to find what works best for you. You can create a brochure with photographic samples of cakes you offer, pricing and ordering information. Always remember to include your contact information, including phone number, email address and URL, if pertinent. You can also send out flyers or postcards advertising your service.

You can also market to college students themselves by placing ads in campus newspapers.

Care Packages For College Students

When I was in college my mom used to send me "Care Packages" -- boxes full of cookies, chocolate and other treats mailed to my college dorm address every week.

I just heard of a guy in the New York area who made a lot of money doing something similar. Rick Brudner calls his boxes, "Survival Packages" but the concept is the same -- contact parents of college students and offer to send their child a box of treats.

Brudner contracts with a wholesale food company to fulfill the orders. He charges $15.00 and mails his offer to parents whose address he gets from student directories.

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Starting a Scrap Booking Business

By Sue DiFranco

How can photos = profits? When you join the thousands of men and women across the world that is building businesses around the hobby of "scrap booking."

Scrapbooks, or memory books, take the concept of a photo album 100 steps further. The albums use only archival materials, guaranteed to preserve the photos and memorabilia for generations. Each page is a creative expression come to life: scrapbook enthusiasts "decorate" their pages with embellishments, such as stickers, die cuts, and specialty paper. "Journaling," or writing down the stories behind the photos, is also an essential element.

Entrepreneurial types began making money from scrap booking when it was first "introduced" in Utah in 1979, by opening stores selling only archival, acid-free supplies and albums. But it wasn't until the past several years that scrap booking as a business really caught on. The industry has jumped from $350 million a year in 1998 to $500 million a year in 2000. And 2001 saw the industry soar: the latest study indicates that scrap booking is now a $1.4 billion a year industry in the U.S. alone. It's no wonder The Wall Street Journal calls scrap booking the "fastest growing cottage industry in the world!"

How can you make money scrap booking? There are eight main areas:

Open a Specialty Retail Scrap Booking Store. There are thousands of stores selling scrap-booking supplies around the world.

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Launch an Online Store. Sell scrap-booking supplies from the comfort of your own home!

Design Products. Scrapbook enthusiasts are always on the lookout for the latest and greatest supplies.

Create Scrapbooks For Others. Take a client's box of photos, and return a beautiful, custom, handmade memory album.

Become a Direct Sales Consultant. There are several direct sales opportunities selling scrapbook supplies, including Creative Memories.

Teach The Craft. Set up classes at home, in schools, or in stores.

Write About Scrap-booking. Start a newsletter or magazine, or contribute articles to the several scrap booking magazines on the market. You could also write an entire book about scrap booking!

Organize Events. Avid scrap bookers get together and work on their pages together at "crops." Along with smaller crops at someone's home, scrap-bookers also attend conventions, weekend retreats, and even cruises! These events need to be organized by someone.

Like most people in the scrap booking industry, I got involved by "discovering" the hobby and becoming addicted! Soon I began to realize that most of the people making money from this craft were simply "regular" people who wanted to turn their scrap booking passion into profit. I began interviewing and researching, and wrote the first book on scrap booking careers, "Secrets of Scrap booking Success: Making Money, Making Memories," in 1998.

At the time, I was still working full-time at a dot-com, so the whole writing and self-publishing thing was more like a "hobby" - although I desperately wanted to work for myself! But I was still trapped in the whole "Need a steady paycheck" mindset.

It wasn't until I got laid off in January 2000 that my life truly began! Getting laid off is one of the best things that can happen to a person, if you've got the right attitude. I decided to take the next six months

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and work on my new "business." I gave it my all, working 14-16 hour days - writing more books, special reports, and a bi-weekly Ezine, answering emails, processing orders, updating the Web site, basically *everything.* It was the best time I have ever spent!

Today I make my living by helping thousands of others get started working for themselves, by providing them with solid information, inspiration, and support. This year I'll be traveling across the country teaching seminars and doing personal consulting. And I'm here to tell everyone that if I can do it, everybody can!

Sue DiFranco is the author of more than a dozen books on building and marketing a scrap booking business. Learn how to turn your scrapbooking passion into profit! Visit Fun Facts Publishing to read a library of FREE information and get started today!

Astrological Charts

Not everyone will admit it, but a lot of people check out their horoscopes from time to time, if not on a daily basis. Some people live by what their horoscopes say, especially if the outlook is positive. Just as many people journal or keep a daily diary.

Combine the two, and you've got a bestselling business idea. Create and sell astrological diaries. Here's how it works: you'll create a daily diary for each star sign. On each page of the diaries, for each day of the coming year, you'll have a new reading.

First, you'll want to sit down and make a list of the signs. Or, just write down the following: Aries (March 21-April 19), Taurus (April 20-May 20), Gemini (May 21-June 20), Cancer (June 21-July 22), Leo (July 23-August 22), Virgo (August 23-September 22), Libra

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(September 23-October 22), Scorpio (October 23-November 21), Sagittarius (November 22-December 21), Capricorn (December 22-January 19), Aquarius (January 20-February 18) and Pisces (February 19-March 20).

Now that you know the sign for each month, you'll want to pick a sign with which to start working. For each day of the year, create a specific reading. Be creative and remember to stay positive. People don't want to hear they're going to have a horrible day or they're in for some kind of heartbreak or let down. So, keep it upbeat. You can be as brief as a few sentences or as detailed as you'd like.

Once you've written readings for each day for each sign, you'll want to decide how you're going to design the diary. Each cover will have the sign to which the diary is dedicated, but will you have artwork, a photograph or just a plain background? Will the pages inside be lined or blank? How much room will you leave for writing each day? A page? Let your imagination run wild, and have fun on the design process.

Finally, after the diaries are printed, you'll want to start getting them to the public. Try to get the diaries stocked at local bookstores, greeting card stores and novelty shops. You can also sell them via a website, sell them on eBay, or place ads in local publications. Market them around Christmas as "the perfect stocking stuffer," that unique present for "the person who has everything" and a birthday gift "that will bring smiles all year round."

Personalized Drink Names

Spice up the party and make it more personal for guests by doing something fun, something different, and something that will have 'em talking until the next party and beyond. Isn't that every host's dream? To throw the best party their guests have ever been to? The problem is it's pretty much all been done before, and no host wants

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their guest to shake their heads and say, “been there, done that.” They want unique; they want fun; they want something that will make guests shake their heads and say “wow, I never thought of that.”

Help hosts maximize their opportunity to impress guests by offering to concoct personalized drink names and recipes for their special guests. Personalized drink names are a fun way to get guests involved in the party, wedding reception, graduation celebration or any other event with guests. Parties go into the wee hours of the morning all over the country every night of the week, and there is always a couple toasting their new marriage every hour of the day and night. That means your market is everywhere.

If you enjoy using your imagination, you’ll discover this can be a fun business in which to engage. First, you’ll want to create unique cocktail drinks and punches. If you need some help, do a search on the Internet. Following are a few sites to help get you started:

http://www.ourmarriage.com/html/punch_recipes.html
http://www.recipesource.com/side-dishes/beverages/punch/
http://www.barnonedrinks.com/index/punches/
http://www.cooksrecipes.com/beverages/punch-recipes.html

Try out some of the recipes before recommending them to customers.

Find customers by putting a classified ad in local publications, placing ads on bulletin boards or starting a website. When you talk to a customer, you’ll want to obtain relevant information in order to pick the best punch or cocktail and ideal name. For example, you might want to ask the customer sponsoring the drink a little bit about the recipient. What kind of personality does the person have? Are they fun or serious? Do they like to try new things or prefer to stay with what’s familiar? What do they like in terms of taste? You might want to create a simple form to fill out when talking to customers.

After you’ve got an order, sit down and concoct a recipe, either from scratch or from recipes you’ve collected in your research. Come up

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with a fun, snazzy and appropriate name. You may want to print the recipe on special paper, in card form, or frame it.

Multi-National Holiday Gift Exchanges

The world is literally at our fingertips today with the popularity of the Internet. Though, as easy as the Internet makes it for people all over the world to connect, it's still not the same as a personal connection like a letter on stationary, lined paper or in a card or a gift that one can hold, feel and use.

There are millions of people, who love the thought of traveling abroad, but they simply don't have the time or they can't afford it. There are millions still who have traveled to such beautiful destinations as England, Scotland, Australia and Canada and want to hold on to a personal connection.

Multi-national holiday gift exchanges are a fun way for people of English speaking nationalities to connect, share holiday traditions and maybe even form lifelong friendships. You can start your own business that matches people who are interested in holiday gift exchanges or even in becoming pen pals.

One way you can match people is by simply publishing a newsletter, listing all of the people in English speaking countries (The United States, England, Scotland, Australia, Ireland, Wales and Canada) that are interested in holiday exchanges. Publicize your directory with classified ads on the Internet, in travel publications, or do a search on "Google" for international house exchanges or pen pal magazines, anywhere you may reasonably be able to advertise your service.

You can also match people together by providing a more personalized service, either via the Internet or through snail mail.

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The way you offer this service is up to you, but there are several ways to approach it. Set up a website where people can fill out questionnaires, then for a fee, you'll match them with one, or several, matches. Alternately, you can create a website where people who are looking for people with whom to exchange holiday gifts, or even letters, can post their information. You can charge subscribers a one-time, monthly or yearly fee.

Whether you publish a newsletter or use a website, publish success stories or heartwarming letters you've gotten from people who have used your service and had a wonderful experience. Publish photographs, along with the stories, and include an email address where others can share their stories. To get even more input, consider having a contest where you award the person with the best story a free subscription or some other small prize, or have a monthly drawing.

Day Trip Organizer

How many times have you wanted to go to a concert and to a sporting event, but something stood in your way? You couldn't get tickets. Your friends had to work or just couldn't go, and you didn't really want to go alone. The drive is a little too long, especially after a long day, or a long week, of work. So, instead of watching the big game from the sidelines, you veg out on the couch and watch it at home. Instead of losing your voice singing every song with your favorite performer, you listen to CDs, kicking yourself for not being at the concert.

Day trips are not just popular with seniors anymore. More and more people are looking for ways to do the things they enjoy with others who enjoy the same things. Becoming a day trip organizer offers you a good way to make money, with little overhead cost, and it's also a fun business.

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The premise is simple: you organize day trips to concerts, sporting events, shows and outlet malls. For the concerts, sporting events and shows, you purchase the tickets. If the concert is especially popular, you'll have no trouble selling seats. In fact, you're more than likely to be turning people away. Your service will also bus people—via coach or mini-bus—to the venue.

You can take advantage of the bus ride to really impress your clients with your enthusiasm. After all, they're already going to be pumped, so here's your chance to make it even better for them. For example, if you're going to a Bruce Springsteen concert, play his music or videos on the bus. Take photos with a digital camera of each person before and after the concert, of the ride, of the venue and then create a CD to send to each person after the concert. This will serve two purposes. First, it will be a wonderful souvenir of a memorable evening. Second, it will keep your service in the forefront of their minds every time they look at, or show others, the photos.

Finding clients for your service is simple. Once you've started taking people on trips, you're sure to get plenty of positive word-of-mouth. After a trip, however, as you're saying goodbye to people ask them to tell others about your service. You can also contact seniors groups, like the AARP, singles groups or churches to tell them about your service.

And, of course, you can use classified ads. Most newspapers have a section for "Tickets Wanted." Inquire as to whether you can place an ad in this section.

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Category: Pets and Animals

Butterfly Ranching

Butterfly ranching is a hot new business field. A well-known national publication stated in a recent article that butterfly ranchers "typically make around $100,000 a year from their high-flying business."

Another publication featured a butterfly rancher with annual sales of $300,000. While these are full-time operations, a part-time butterfly business has the potential to make $25,000 to $50,000 or more a year.

Butterflies are a high value product that sells for big money. Butterfly ranchers typically sell their butterflies for $4 to $10 each. A specimen of rarer species can bring in as much as $50 or more. Gram for gram, butterflies are one of the most valuable creatures to ranch.

It's been said that if you create something unique, the world will beat a path to your door to buy it. When you start selling live butterflies, you will find out for yourself just how true this really is.

When you tell people about your butterfly business, they usually react with a lot of curiosity and excitement. Anytime a potential customer has a favorable and positive reaction to your product, you know you are in a business with excellent income potential. Butterfly businesses make big money selling their "flying jewels". The marketing opportunities are diverse and numerous.

Wild Ranch Enterprises at (303) 448-5618 specializes in developing new markets and they can assist you as you get started with your own butterfly business. Here are some excellent market avenues for you to make money with butterflies.

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Butterfly Releases

This market is huge and extremely lucrative. One of the most popular ways to make money with butterflies is selling them for releases at weddings and other special events. You can sell one dozen butterflies in this market for $90 to $100. Typical customer's orders range from 2 to 10 dozen butterflies. Butterfly business sales are soaring as these uplifting creatures are also being released at birthday parties, baptisms, graduations, grand openings and even funerals.

The Floral & Gift Basket Industry

A hot new trend with floral shops is to place a live butterfly in a small decorative cage and place it in a floral arrangement. Imagine receiving a bouquet of flowers with a live butterfly in it. The public reaction has been fantastic, creating a big demand. You can sell live butterflies to floral shops and gift basket businesses for $4 to $5 each. Floral and gift basket shops can use from 25 to 100 butterflies a week. There are more floral shops in the USA than supermarkets. Floral and gift basket shops need a constant reliable supply of butterflies.

Professional Photography Studios

You can make good money selling butterflies at $10 each to professional photographers. The beauty of a butterfly adds a wonderful charm to portraits of children and adults. Imagine having you or your child's picture taken with a live butterfly perched on your hand. The butterfly remains perched on a persons hand or shoulder by using a special manipulation technique.

Renting Live Butterfly Displays

A growing new trend is to set up live butterfly displays at weddings and receptions. Renting live butterfly displays, also known as hanging

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aviaries, is an easy way for a butterfly rancher to make great money. An easy to make decorative cage with 1-2 dozen butterflies typically rents for $100 a day. You simply hang up the cage prior to the event and then remove it afterwards. Your butterflies are making money by simply being on display for the viewing pleasure of the guests. The cages are easy to make and decorate.

Renting and Maintaining Live Butterfly Displays

A great way to make money with butterflies is to rent live butterfly displays to medical offices, hotel lobbies, malls and other businesses and maintain them on a weekly basis. The butterfly display is set up in an office or lobby much in the same way an aquarium is set up and maintained by an aquarium service. You can simply visit once a week to replace the older butterflies with new ones and replenish the nectar that they drink. You can charge $300 to $1000 or more a month for your service. There are literally thousands of medical and professional offices, malls, hotels and other businesses to offer your butterfly services to. This market is wide open. If you set up just 10 accounts you could realize and income of $3000 to $10,000 a month.

Real Estate Companies

When a real estate agent locates a home for their client, they give them a housewarming gift. You can make good money selling butterfly display cages to real estate companies to give to their clients. Realtors sell dozens of homes every week, which translates into a constant big demand for your product. Butterfly display cages make a wonderful housewarming gift. It is a unique way for real estate companies to thank their clients for their business and obtain referrals. You can sell butterfly display cages in the market for $39 to $49 each.

Live Butterfly Displays for Home

You can sell decorative butterfly cages for display in homes. They make wonderful gifts for birthdays, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, Easter, Christmas, Anniversaries, baptisms and other special events. Customers tell us that the butterfly display cages are one of the most

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talked about items in their house when guests visit. This is a great market because the observation of butterflies up close reduces stress, promotes improved relaxation and creates an invigorating and refreshing environment for people of all ages. Nursing homes are also excellent places for butterfly display cages. You can sell these cages for $39 to $49.

Wholesaling Live Butterfly Displays

Butterfly display cages are a unique and profitable product to sell through gardening and home centers, pet stores and gift shops. The typical wholesale price you can receive is $20 to $25 each. This is a good market to sell large quantities of cages in a short period of time. The stores may also want to use the display cages to promote a special in their store. A butterfly rancher can make additional profits selling butterflies to place inside the display cages.

Butterfly Aviary

Creating your own walk in butterfly aviary can be a very rewarding venture. It is a simple and easy way to open your own butterfly store to sell all your butterfly products and services. The beauty of this venture is how simple it is to create. A sunroom, green house or screened gazebo tent works well for starting out. It doesn't require a huge outlay of money to set up and maintain. The aviary can have host plants for the caterpillars and flowering butterfly plants for the adults to feed. Setting up temporary butterfly aviaries for businesses is a big money maker. The butterflies provide an addendum for the business to attract customer traffic. A butterfly aviary can easily be set up for under $500. That would include the screened gazebo tent, host plants, nectar flowers, butterflies and caterpillars. A butterfly rancher can charge businesses a fee of $1000 to $2500 to set up a butterfly aviary in the parking lot for a few days to a week.

The walk-in butterfly aviary gives a business such as a gardening store a great promotional tool to attract more customers. Just image reading a newspaper ad or hearing a radio ad that a store will be

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offering the chance to get up close with live butterflies. It provides an excellent motivator for people to visit the store.

Butterfly Gardenscaping

Good profits can be made from butterfly gardenscaping. This is an extremely enjoyable activity that goes hand in hand with butterfly ranching. Butterflies take you immediately into an awareness of the plant community because just about all butterflies have close and immediate ties to certain plants. Because of the unavoidable focus on plant animal associations, you will be able to capitalize on your special knowledge. Selling whisky half barrels with butterfly plants is a fun and profitable market. Butterfly gardens can help to beautify a store front. Anyplace butterflies flourish is a good place for people to be too. A whisky half barrel with butterfly plants can sell for $250 and up. A butterfly rancher can provide maintenance services to store fronts to keep plants and flowers healthy and manicured and provide livestock for the garden. Additional money can be made by simply providing butterfly gardenscaping consulting to residential and commercial customers. Working in this field never ceases to be a joy.

Butterfly Art

Butterflies can generate big money for a butterfly rancher when they are used to create butterfly art. You do not have to be an expert artist to do it. A dried butterfly can be easily mounted to a piece of tree bark or dried flower and placed under a glass dome. Butterfly art can sell for $30 to $100 and up. Some butterfly art sells for several hundreds and even thousands of dollars.

Butterfly Purchasing Companies

There is a great demand for butterflies from numerous companies that purchase butterflies for a variety of purposes. You can sell butterflies to these companies who in turn sell them to museums,

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scientists, collectors, schools, zoos, colleges, artists, etc. These companies are always looking for new suppliers of butterflies.

In Conclusion

The multiple high growth markets, limited supply of commercially grown butterflies and huge income potential are just a few of the many reasons that operate in favor of starting a butterfly business. Whatever marketing avenue you choose, a handsome profit can be realized.

Wild Ranch Enterprises offers a Butterfly Business Start Up Program to assist the beginning butterfly entrepreneur in raising and marketing these gorgeous creatures.

If you would like to start your own exciting and profitable butterfly business, order your Butterfly Business Start Up Program TODAY! Wild Ranch can be contacted at: (303) 448-5618.

Raising and Selling Crickets

By WormMan

Crickets are one of the best insects for feeding pets, bait, and for profit. I put this together for the small grower who wants to get started with crickets but doesn't want to spend a fortune on equipment. You can get started with crickets with some odds and ends that you can find around your house. Let's start with which cricket can be raised in confinement. The cricket that is raised and sold in pet stores is the Gray Cricket, Gryllotalpa vulgaris. This cricket is easily bred and raised in captivity and can become a great source of profit for the grower.

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To start, all that is needed is some sort of container to act as a brooder/incubator. The container must be large enough to provide room, but not so large that it cannot be heated. You can use a garbage can, a Rubbermaid container, a wooden box, an aquarium, or any type of container that will allow free movement, airflow, heating, and room for all of the components necessary to successfully breed crickets.

The first question to ask is, “How many crickets do you want to breed?” The answer to this question will determine the size of the container you will need and how many breeder crickets you will need. There are male and female crickets. Each female will lay about 100 eggs in her lifetime, and she will lay about 5-10 per day until 100 is reached. They sometimes lay more or less, but you can bet on approximately 100. If you want to have 1000 crickets, you will have to start with at least 10 female crickets and 10 male crickets. You will also have to provide space for 1000 crickets. One thousand crickets take up a great deal more space than 20 crickets, so you have to plan ahead. A 20-gallon Rubbermaid container, a 20-gallon fish tank, or a garbage can will easily hold 1000 crickets.

How do you distinguish the males from the females? The female cricket has three long extrusions on her back and fully developed wings. The male cricket has two extrusions. In the female, the extrusion is called the ovipositor. This is the sexual organ of the female cricket and is what is used to lay eggs. The female will stick the ovipositor into the soil and lay eggs. The ovipositor will deposit the eggs beneath the surface of the soil or bedding material you will furnish to house the eggs before hatching.

Back to the box. The container you will use must be escape-proof from the inside and out. You do not want critters getting in as much as you do not want crickets escaping. The enemies of the cricket are numerous: centipedes, millipedes, spiders, and a whole host of insects find crickets an attractive addition to their daily menu. Crickets are excellent climbers and jumpers, so the container has to be closed on all sides.

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The container has to also provide air and heat. Crickets need fresh air to stay healthy and to breed. The best way to provide air is to use some sort of cover that allows the passage of air but one that doesn't have holes. A piece of cloth secured over the top can provide air and no escape for your crickets or entrance for the enemies of the crickets. Use of cheesecloth, an old shirt, or any old cloth will work. Try to boil it first so that any bacteria in the cloth is killed before use.

Once you have decided upon a container, your next problem will be to figure out how you will provide heat for the crickets. Crickets breed and grow best in a temperature of about 88 degrees. They will breed at lower temperatures, but you will have a higher mortality of the young and a lower egg lay rate. There are a number of ways to heat the crickets. You can keep the crickets in a warm room. For instance, you can keep the cricket bin near a furnace or other heating source. Another way is to heat the bin. You can do this by using a heating element like the type used for heating reptiles, or you can heat the bin using a light bulb. In the case of a bulb, you have to make some provisions so that the bin does not get too hot and kill the crickets or start a fire. A thermostat can be added to the bulb. This will cost a couple of dollars, but you will be able to set the thermostat on 88 Degrees and get optimum growth from your crickets. I prefer using a warm room or using a reptile type heater. This will minimize the chance of a fire.

Choose your heating method and then gather up the rest of your supplies. You will need a food dish. A shallow dish will work well. A cap or cover from a peanut butter container works well. You will also need a water dish. Crickets should not have access to an open water dish. An open dish will cause drowning, bacteria growth and will sour the entire culture. Try to give the crickets water in a different way. There is a new product available that will allow water in gel form. This stops many of the problems that used to pervade breeding and raising crickets. You can also set up a "wick watering system." This type of system allows the crickets to get water from a dish through a sponge or cotton. If you use this method, you must remember to change the cotton or sponge every couple of days so that you will not have a build-up of bacteria. You can also give water another way,

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which is the way that we recommend, by using a slice of fruit or potato every couple of days. The crickets will get water and food from the slice.

Use chicken mash as a food for your crickets. Egg layer mash works well. Heat the mash in an oven to kill bacteria before giving it to the crickets. The container should also be cleaned really well so all bacteria is killed. You will also need some sort of substrate so the crickets can lay eggs in it. There are two ways of doing this. One way is to place removable egg laying containers in the main containers. These containers can be something like a margarine container or some sort of soup container. The other way is to place a substrate of soil or peat moss. On the bottom of the entire container so the crickets can lay eggs on the floor, in the sand. Then, you can use the entire container as an incubator. I like this way of doing it because you do not have to remove small containers all the time and place them into incubators. The problem of doing it this way is that you have to use a different container for each generation, or you will not be able to easily size your crickets for resale. If you use a separate container with the substrate on the floor, you will have to date the container, so you can ascertain the age of the crickets. If you keep detailed records like “Date Started” and “Date Babies Started Hatching,” you will have a system of keeping all one size together and will be better able to offer them for resale based upon size. You will not sell many mixed size crickets. Cricket customers are buying crickets to feed pets, fish, or to go fishing. They have needs for specific sizes, and if you can’t give them those sizes, you will not sell crickets.

After your crickets have laid eggs in the substrate for a few days, you can move the breeders to a second container to lay eggs in there, or leave them for the full ten days and then remove the breeders to feed pets, to go fishing, or for resale. After two days, you will want to remove the breeders so that they do not eat any crickets that have started to hatch. Breeders sometimes eat the babies if they can catch them. Removing the breeders stops this and ensures you will have all one size growing together.

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Keep the babies in the brooder/incubator until half grown. Then, move them to a storage container. A sweater box works well as a storage container. You can place the container in a cooler room to slow growth and development. At this stage, the crickets do not need the sand but do need food and water. Using chicken mash and fruit and vegetable slices will help provide these needs. Do not allow the vegetables to get stale or moldy. Replace the slices every couple of days.

That's it for care and breeding. You will now need to sell your crickets. Pet shops and bait shops buy large amounts of crickets. There are companies that raise and sell only crickets and do extremely well. You can market your crickets to local pet shops. In the year 2000, crickets will go for about five cents to ten cents each. This is a great price and can make you a great deal of money. Call pet and bait shops in the area and ask them if they would be interested in trying your crickets. Explain the plusses of buying crickets from a local breeder, such as: no shipping costs, no shipping strain on the crickets, and the ability of the shop owner to have you service their needs right away. You can also look into placing local advertisements telling customers that you have crickets. Advertise specials in free local papers or low cost papers. Find out what the shops charge per cricket and advertise a lower price. You will get buyers. You can easily make $10,000 per year in a basement or spare room.

Finally, shipping crickets is easy. A one-foot square box can hold 1,000 crickets. Make sure that the box is taped securely on all sides. In one of the sides, cut a rectangle with a knife and staple and glue a screen in the box so the crickets can get air during shipping. If you are shipping in the winter to cold areas, you may need to add heat packs to the boxes. These are usually 48 hour packs and will get your crickets where they are going with enough heat to keep them healthy. You can ship the crickets through USPS Priority Mail, Air Mail, UPS, or Overnight. We ship Priority and Air Mail and have had great results. As of now, there are not any regulations against shipping crickets. However, that may change some day.

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Good Luck with your cricket venture!

--WormMan
Order Crickets Here

Building An Animal Registration Business

An animal registry is a central bureau where information concerning certain categories of animals is stored in a computer bank and made available to owners in various fashions.

Member clients provide details of their animals (breed, size, individual identification, lineage, age, sex and owner interests, such as sales, breeding or showing. The registry is not equivalent to official registration, but may lend a degree of "class" to animals (and members) that are listed.

Your customer benefit by having their animals listed (registered) -- its sort of a status symbol in registering their animals that may help increase their value.

The bigger your registry grows the more of as status symbol it might become! Your primary service, however, is listing of animals, owners, events and sorts of information contained in the registry data files.

When people join your registry you send them form to fill out for animals they wish to register. There could also be provisions for herds or flocks or any information the owners feel is important. Since you can manufacture your own forms on your computer, you will be able to accommodate all of your clients.

The spaces in your forms hold information that equates to fields in your computer program, so the information can be typed in from the form and then sorted as needed.

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The membership fee may include an initial group of animals to be registered, with additions being considered on an individual basis. In return, you send out membership cards (for the owners) and a computer generated certificate of registration for each animal or group of animals (a fancy printout of the information sent in by the owner).

Members receive a monthly (or so) newsletter and/or listing, and may request specific information or listings at any time at any time (for a fee, of course). The newsletter has information about shows, results of contests, auctions and member comments, wants and a section for animals for sale.

Examples for one-time listings are Hereford Bulls for sale; red Dobermans listed or at stud, and owners of llamas or ostriches in the state. It takes only a few moments to obtain sorts of this type of information, so service can be fast and the price, reasonable. This information, however, can be extremely helpful to members.

There are many good reasons to register pets and stock animals: planning, breeding, selling, trading, consultation, etc. The information (data bank) is set up by animal and then breeds. It includes pedigree (if any), description, name (if applicable), owner interests, location plus anything else them member thinks should be noted, such as training or special markings.

Clients automatically receive an initial listing of the category in which their animals are listed and can order (and pay for) additional sorts of information at any time. Computer sorts can quickly find any information listed -- such as a 2-year-old brindle female boxer for sale under $200, or a complete list of all longhorn bulls.

Other possibilities include lists of breeders (who handles what), specialized veterinarians, animal hospitals, burial facilities, special shows, sales and fairs of interest to the breeder.

Some breeders or suppliers would gladly pay to be included (advertise or just receive mention) in listings that are routinely sent

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to potential customers. Some might even pay to have their advertisements included in all mailings.

Fees are charged for membership (retainer) and for registration of animals. The individual animal registration fee should include disposition (note when it is sold or dies and retire the record), but not re-registration to a different owner.

The new owner would need to become a member to receive member benefits and continue the animal's registration. Additional income is realized from sales of requested listings and sales of information to non-members.

One way to start an animal registration business is to set up your computer for listings of subjects of interest to your potential customers, as suggested above.

Then place ads in animal related publications and contact as many animals as you can. Offer an introductory price for listing their animals and for copies of information you have on file.

Of course, you won't have extensive listings at first, but you can supply these at a later (promised) date, after your bank has grown.

Be sure to give official listings certificates for each animal. The certificates may not sound like it to you, but they ARE IMPORTANT -- they are "proof" of registration!

A cheaper alternative method is to work with a printer to provide commercially printed certificates that you fill out with a typewriter and sign with a flourish!

Be sure to display your registry name prominently in any case; date and sign each certificate.

Although you may be well versed in the subject, it is a good idea to subscribe to animal and breeder trade journals for the animals you list. This way you will stay current and always be in a position to plan your sales activities according to the needs of the industry.

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For example, letting your clients know about forthcoming events that might affect them. This information is excellent filler material for your newsletters.

Alternative applications include compiling and renting specialized mailing lists, mailing out specialized information to your membership (which is a valuable special interest group), data bank searches, arranging meetings between interested parties, disseminating information on behalf of clients and offering technical books for sale.

Another interesting alternative is to keep total track of high value animals that are not eligible for purebred status.

An example word be Longhorn cattle, certain breeds of llama or ostrich -- where your registry could track the lineage and provide a unique and valuable service to breeders with large investments.

Possible problem area: be careful not to say or infer in your correspondence that animals listed in your service are registered purebreds - which might cause trouble.

You don't register the animal as a purebred, Democrat or Republication -- you simply make an official entry (anyone can use the word "register" so long as they don't intend to mislead.

With your register, you simply enter data about an animal or flock into YOUR records and provide statistical sorts of information to your clients.

Building Scientific Bird Houses For Fun And Profit

Build and sell attractive standard model and custom birdhouses and bird feeders that are scientifically designed for specific species.

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This business requires a wood shop and basic woodworking tools, paint, some basic knowledge of carpentry and birds, but not much else. It can be a very pleasant and uncomplicated but highly rewarding business.

To be effective, you need to know something about the birds in your area -- when they nest, what size houses, entry holes, whether one or more nest in the same area, and of course, how high off the ground they must be mounted.

If you aren't qualified bird-watchers don't worry - you can only build one type of birdhouse at a time anyway and you can find out all you need to know about the bird's nesting needs at your local library.

As you learn new birdhouse patterns, you can study up on the birds -- one species at a time. When your houses are ready to sell, you will be able to tell your customers all about that particular bird, what it eats, needs, where to place and how to take care of the birds and their birdhouse.

You can start with a single pattern or blueprint. These are available from many sources (some are listed below), which will be for one bird species. You are free to alter the patterns and colors so long as you maintain the basics -- keep the entries large enough for the target bird, but too small for predators.

Provide cleverly disguised trap doors for cleaning, different styles of perches and roofs and of course, a variety of color combinations and/or designs.

There are enough variables to allow you to make your own style of birdhouse for any species and still retain the required features.

Check with the local lumbar yards to find the best quality and prices on materials. You cannot used some types of treated lumbar due to its odor or even toxicity of the birds at close quarters, but you can use a silicone sealer like Thompson's (to prevent rapid weathering).

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Let the lumbar yard know you can use odd-sized pieces (which should be considerably cheaper) and many kinds of scraps. A variety of woods will serve you nicely -- then you can offer a variety of birdhouse models.

Arrange your working area to have separate places for sawing/sanding and painting operations. Experiment with building, assembling, painting and decorating techniques.

Make jigs and patterns for cutting out and fitting the pieces as close to assembly line fashion as possible. Cut out or buy stencils for decorative patterns (Dover has some nice, inexpensive ones - see Business Sources).

Build your birdhouses with hinged roofs or panels so they can be opened and cleaned each season - birdhouses that are not cleaned are seldom used again.

Commercially available, assembly line (most are put together with unfinished wood and staples) birdhouses and feeders start at about $5 each, but they are very poor quality at that price.

They are made with obvious scraps, some of which will not hold up outside (e.g. inside grade plywood and paneling) - and unpainted or treated.

You can get a much better price with attractive scientifically designed and well colorfully decorated.

Commercial birdhouses seldom specify the type bird they are designed for -- or how high it should be mounted. The reason is simple: they don't want to limit their sales!

You should start with the understanding that you cannot build and sell birdhouses as cheap as the discount stores. You can, however, offer better ones at nearly their price -- and make good money.

Since your birdhouses are scientifically built for a particular species of bird, you should provide a little info sheet with each house. tell a little

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about the bird, its habits and history, and how to get results with the bird house.

This info sheet should be no more than one standard sheet -- perhaps an 8 x 11 sheet folded to make two inside pages, each 8 x 5 1/2. The cover could have a title and silhouette of the bird, the back, plain. You can have a little booklet printed inexpensively (see Business Sources section).

Since you need to find out a little about the bird anyway to build the correct birdhouse, you already have most of the information. This little gimmick alone can help you get a dollar or two more for each birdhouse!

You can market your birdhouses and feeders through ads, bulletin boards and posters that feed stores or pet shops allow you to post. You can sell them at flea markets, at a stand along the road, or advertise them in the paper.

Check with real estate agent for a vacant store and arrange to rent a show window until the store is leased.

Set up a display there for your birdhouses and have a sign that tells people where they can get them.

Take pictures, make up a scrapbook of your different models, add prices and offer to wholesale them to pet shops and stores, or arrange to place them on consignment.

You can even advertise in bird watcher.

If you want to be different or expand your business, offer do-it-yourself kits with assembly, directions and all the parts, nails, hinges, glue, stencils and possibly even paint.

These could be sold for about half the cost of a completed bird house. Your instructions would be included in a plastic bag, along with the same little info booklet mentioned above.

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Other possible variations are to paint the birdhouses in patterns to match each other, or the customer's home; selling mounting and/or squirrel guards and other intruder accessories; mounting them, and custom designs (if you are artistically inclined, otherwise fancy stencils).

About the only problem area in this business would be to build too many birdhouses for unpopular birds (like sparrows).

If this is a consideration, it might be a good idea to build several models and see which ones sell best before going into mass production of any one model.

Raising And Marketing Exotic Animals For Profit

The business of raising and selling rare or unusual animals can be very profitable and rewarding. Llamas, angora rabbits, mink, pheasant, snakes, bullfrogs, spiders and miniature horses are but a few of the possibilities in this large category.

Which animals you raise will of course be influenced by your own preferences, the facilities you can provide, where you live, and of course the market in your area. You can go into this business from a hobby or just go out and buy a pair of whatever animals you would like to raise.

The primary advantage to "exotic" rather than regular animals is income potential. Raising ordinary rabbits requires far less investment in breeding stock, facilities, care and time than expensive, pedigreed angoras.

However, when its time to market ordinary rabbits, they are worth perhaps two to five dollars each. Pedigreed angoras would be worth

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many times that, especially if they had a blue ribbon winner in their ancestry.

With a $100 animal, you have an incentive to provide the best care and living conditions and call that $25 per hour veterinarian at the first hint of trouble.

A litter of ordinary rabbits would represent about $50; angoras, say $500. Needless to say, you have an incentive to invest more in care of the more valuable investment.

The first step after deciding upon an animal that would fit your situation is to learn all you can about that animal. Study its habits, feed and shelter requirements and learn something about diseases or genetic problems that might affect your ability to properly care for them.

Although there is a good profit potential expensive animals require more care and closer attention than ordinary farm stock or pets... It would be very good idea to discuss your plans with a veterinarian before going too far. Find out about normal health problems, which ones you can treat, the cost of preventive care (and the cost of veterinary treatment).

If you are not already equipped (facilities and experience), it would be a good idea to begin with "ordinary" animals of the type you plan to raise. Raise these until you are ready to progress to more expensive, exotic breeds.

In other words, learn and make any mistakes with $5 animals, not $50-$100! But be very careful when you change over. It imperative to keep pedigreed and ordinary animals apart to prevent inter-breeding. It is just as important to prevent the spread of diseases borne by ordinary species, which are unusually much, more disease resistant.

Before placing your expensive, exotic breeds in quarters formerly occupied by ordinary animals, take special precautions. Clean and

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treat the areas thoroughly so your prized exotics can get started in clean, disease and pest free-living conditions.

Study potential diseases of the animals you select. Learn how to prevent and even treat as many problems as you can. You don't want to pay expensive veterinarian fees for things you can take care of (or prevent) yourself.

Consider the weather in your area -- will you need heaters or cooling for the animals you plan to raise?

How about feed or bedding materials? Check will feed stores on the various types of feed (some have added vitamins and/are medically treated.

Can you raise any of these things yourself or make a deal with a nearby farmer to at least augment feeding costs?

When you have decided upon the animals you plan to raise, and have learned of their care and habits, its is time to start building pens, sheds and feeding areas.

Pay particular attention to safety of your charges (as well as neighbors, if applicable) Birds, for example, not only need wire cages to keep them in; they need strong wire to keep any predators out.

This may include snakes that only 1/4 inch wire mesh about three feet can repel. Also, take special care to arrange your pens or cages so the animals will not be frightened or excited by their surroundings, which could interfere with their development or well-being. In some cases, it will be necessary to fence off a buffer zone, build a solid fence or plant a hedge to make sure your animals feel secure.

The exotic animal business will probably take time to build, but can be especially rewarding for someone who is fond of animals.

Subscribe to a good trade journal and look into joining an association of people interested in the same or similar animals.

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Attend shows and fairs and enter your prize animals --not only for the prize money, but also for the recognition and prestige it will afford your business. A blue ribbon will change a $20 rabbit into a $200 rabbit instantly! Even the descendants of the prize rabbit will be worth more; especially if they are registered.

Exotic animals are raised for many different reasons -- as pets, for their fur, wool, or feathers or food, as oddities for special purposes or many combinations thereof.

Some of the businesses are quite unique: a man in California raises tarantulas and "rents" them to jewelry stores. He delivers them at closing time, places a large warning sign in the window and picks them up each weekday morning. It seems break-ins have dropped drastically in stores with "guard-tarantulas"!

Spiders are also raised for their webs (science labs use them); snakes for their venom (used to make snake bite serum). The business of raising laboratory mice is also very lucrative -- thousands are purchased by science centers every year.

For more ideas on exotic animals you might want to raise, check out some books in the library and do some research; check with discount book stores; exotic animal magazines, and spend some time with a good encyclopedia. If you decide to get into the exotic animal business, pick an animal you like and respect -- then treat it as something special. Not only is this right, it a sound business principle.

If you want to get exotic prices for you exotic animals (or products), "showcase" them as something special! Keep them and their area in top condition. Let everyone see that your animals are special (and valuable).

Start A Pet-Sitting Service

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Career Opportunities. Flexible hours, Promising salary. Holidays negotiable. Be your own boss. No experience necessary.

If you spotted the above ad in the Help Wanted section of your local newspaper would you laugh, "Too good to be true"? But it is true! Have you always said, "I'd never have the money or the skill to start my own business." But you do! One of the easiest businesses to start and operate requires very little money. The only necessary skills are patience, time, and lots of love. The business? Pet-sitting!

Jackie McDonald owner of Jackie's Pals in Houston, Texas, started her pet-sitting business after working eight years in a doctor's office. "I wanted to do something I enjoy," she says. "I love animals and I find this work is very calming." McDonald spoke with other pet-sitters in her area and discovered how busy they all were. She felt her neighborhood could support another pet-sitter. She was right. McDonald just completed a very busy and successful holiday season.

Pet sitting involves going into someone's home and caring for a pet when the owner isn't available. The service can include plant watering and mail and newspaper pick-up. The focus, however, is on the animal. Pet sitting saves a client and the animal the aggravation of dealing with a kennel. Clients expect a variety of services: feeding, watering, litter box cleaner, pill giving, and especially some Tender Loving Care for a lonely animal who misses its master.

Advantages, Disadvantages

Owning a pet-sitting business has many of the same advantages of owning any business - you are your own boss, you set your own hours (depending on the number of clients you serve per day), and your paycheck will be limited only by your willingness to work. McDonald especially enjoys the flexible hours. "I also work out of my home," she says, "and that's a big advantage,"

Another advantage of pet-sitting is the opportunity of getting to know some real characters: Missy, the cat that only eats facing north (a real example, believe it or not), or Rufus, the blue-footed Amazon parrot who refuses to stay in a cage. Your list will be endless.

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McDonald describes the pleasure she finds in meeting both pets and their owners, "Ninety-nine percent of the people are very nice. Most are concerned about their pets or they wouldn't call me. And the animals love me no matter what."

As with any business, pet sitting has a few disadvantages as well. If the business is to succeed, long hours and hard work is necessary. "This is not a get rich-quick scheme," McDonald says. Holidays will be especially busy. Servicing fifteen pets, each two times a day is not an unreasonable expectation. This doesn't leave much time for football viewing on New Year's Day. Unless you're a real animal lover some of the tasks can be unpleasant: Who wants to clean a litter box twice a day for two weeks? But that wildly wagging tail or the purr of a lonely animal that greets you at the door does make it worth the trouble. So do those paychecks at the end of the Christmas holidays. "You must truly love animals," McDonald advises, "or you won't enjoy this business."

Start-Up Costs

Start-up costs for pet-sitting business are small. Expenses can be divided into three categories: marketing, insurance, and transportation. Initial outlay can be as little as $200 or as much as $300 if you choose to pay for a visit to an accountant. That isn't a bad idea. An accountant can explain tax laws and policies governing this type of business. In some states, for example, he or she will tell you not to charge sales tax because you perform a service that is not taxable.

Although most clients will come your way by word of mouth, invest in a few marketing tools. Business cards are essential. Costing anywhere from $25 to $50, business cards can be placed anywhere pets are found - pet shops and vet clinics. Because most vet clients have kennel facilities, some may not allow you to place your card with them. Establish a relationship with a vet in your area, though, and he or she will begin to recommend you when the kennel facility is full. Design a flyer and place copies on community bulletin boards,

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church bulletin boards, at the grocery store, and any other place you can think of.

"Welcome-to-the-community" associations may be willing to give your card to new residents, too. Keep trying to get your business known. People will be delighted with this service when they hear that you are a top quality pet-sitter. If you can afford it, buy an answering machine. Once your business is booming, you'll need one to take all your business calls.

Clients will ask if you are bonded. This means that an insurance company finds you trustworthy and is willing to put this in writing. An insurance policy protects the homes you enter. If something is broken while you are there, your policy will cover it. Being bonded however does not protect against damage to pets while in your care. With this type of policy, your premium increases as your business increases. Initially your coverage cost $100 per year. As you client list increases, you can pay as much as $500 per year. Being bonded, however, is worth the expense. Clients are more likely to use your service if they know an insurance company backs you.

Keep a log of business miles traveled in your car. Also keep track of gas and auto expenses. These are all tax deductible.

Operations

What are the mechanics involved with pet sitting? When a client calls, arrange a meeting before his departure. This gives you an opportunity to see the pet, familiarize yourself with the routine, and get a key. The client also gets to check you out and give instructions. Appear professional. Have a printed instruction sheet ready for the client to complete. Include space for emergency phone numbers and vet information. Also include a section on pet preferences. A pet whose routine has no disruptions is a much happier one when his master returns. The master will be satisfied and you'll reap the benefits by gaining a repeat client.

"Suggest that clients limit changes to a pet's routine," McDonald advises. The pet will be happier and easier to care for. Provide

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references to all clients who ask. When you're just starting out, ask a neighbor whose cat you've fed once or twice if she'll be a reference. Most clients won't call references, but will be wary if you've got no one to vouch for you. An important note here: ask clients to be specific about when they'll return. Have them call you when they do get home. Avoid the disaster of one pet-sitter whose client was three days delayed and whose cat went unfed for that time. When you return your client's key, you pick up your payment.

What To Charge

Determining a fee is a personal matter. McDonald consulted other pet-sitters in the area to determine an appropriate charge. Fees range anywhere from $5 to $10 per visit. Some pet-sitters charge more for initial visit and less for subsequent visits. The fee will also depend on the number of pets involved and the amount of trouble they will be. Obviously the household with three cats, a turtle, two birds, and a hamster should be charged more than the one with a single dog. Decide in advance what your limits are, too. If you don't care to feed, water, and brush a horse each day be prepared to say no. Once your business takes off, one turned down request won't affect you.

A wide variety of people will use a pet-sitting service. Certainly vacationers will be a number-one market. Therefore, holiday times will be extremely busy. Some people own pets but have little time to spend with them - couples who both work full time and singles who travel.

A few words of advice and notes of caution:

Be prepared for a mess. Bored animals are messy little things. They knock over plants, break vases, and chew furniture. Although yours is not a house-cleaning service, your clients will appreciate your efforts to tidy things up.

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Follow your client's instructions to the letter. Even if no one but you knows Fido ate exactly at 6 P.M., do what is asked. Owners can detect when a pet's routine has gone awry.

Pregnant women should be aware of a condition known as toxoplasmosis. Caused by a parasitic organism found in cat feces, toxoplasmosis can cause severe damage to a fetus. Pregnant women should use extreme caution when disposing of cat feces or else wait until after the baby is born to start a pet-sitting business.

Expect a few complainers. Most clients will love you. Some, however will be annoyed that Fifi's nails grew too long while she was in your care, or that Bucky seems listless since their return.

A pet-sitting business is an easy one to start. The only requirement is a real love for animals. You will find that people are quite interested in your service and are more than willing to pay for it. McDonald sums it up this way: "this is a very time consuming business. But I really enjoy it and I've learned from it. You're certainly compensated and it is very satisfying."

Pet Boarding Service

Many pet owners turn to boarding kennels or professional pet sitters when they isn't a neighbor or relative available to care for their precious companion.

Rates for kennels often range from $14 to $24 for dogs and $9 to $13 for cats per day, depending on the level of service provided. Pet owners also can pay for additional services such as grooming, brushing, baths, walks, training and playtime. Some kennels also let owners bring in their own pet's beds and food.

Here is an example of a pet sitting service from the December 31, 1995 issue of The Tennessean:

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A couple in the Nashville area operated a pet supply store and kept being asked by customers if they knew of a good place to board pets. They decided to convert an outbuilding to a dog sitting service. Each dog has its private room, gets four meals a day and is allowed to play with the other 'guests.' It has proven to be so successful they were building a larger building with a 10-foot ceiling, linoleum floors, central heat and air and 72 rooms, each four-by-six feet. Each room has an individual exercise area in back and windows to the rooms on adjoining sides. The service is called Miss Kitty's Bed and Breakfast, after their own dog Kitty Bell. The cost is $15 a night per pet (with $11 to $15 the norm in their area). Thus, if all 72 rooms were filled, the gross income would be $1,080 a night. Even if just a fraction of the rooms are rented each night, the annual income potential is high. Although they only take dogs, having two facilities, one for dogs and one for cats, would seem to be feasible.

Is there a demand? In the Nashville, TN area it is common for all kennels to be booked solid for a week before to a week after major holidays six to eight weeks in advance, plus having a waiting list.

A boarding kennel concept need not be restricted to dogs and cats. What about keeping birds or exotic pets? In addition, the service could include a day care concept with drop off in the morning and pick up in the evening (with exercise and treats provided) during work days. At $5 per day, that is $1,300 per pet per year. In the Dayton, OH area one such service is called Home Sweet Home Pet Sitting.

House and/or pet sitting seems to be an excellent opportunity for retirees to supplement their income.

A slightly different takeoff on this aspect is the Bide-A-Wee Golden Years Retirement Home in Westhampton, NY.

No, it is not for human, it’s for dogs and cats!

For a fee of $10,000 pet animal, the home will ensure they will spend the rest of their life in posh surroundings getting the best of care. At the time of the ribbon cutting for the building, over 2,000 people had

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requested applications to have their pets included in the 100 openings available.

While $10,000 may sound high, if the pets live an average of five additional years, that is just $5.48 per day, plus whatever investment income might be from investing the bulk of the entry fee. (And yes, $10,000 times 100 pets is an endowment of $1 million.)

National groups include:

The American Boarding Kennels Association, 4575 Gallery Road, Suite 400A, Colorado Springs, CO 80915;

American Pet Boarding Association, P.O. Box 931, Wheeling, IL 60090-0931;

National Association of Pet Sitters, 632 Holly Avenue, Winston-Salem, NC 27101-2716

National Association of Professional Pet Sitters, 1200 G. Street, NW, Suite 760, Washington, DC 20005.

For further information see:

Kennel Building and Management by Mario Migliorini, Howel Book House, 866 Third Avenue, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10022.

Kennel Ideas: Tips from Other Breeders on All Aspects of Dog

Kenneling by Victoria Webb, Route 2, Box 294, Mocksville, NC 27028-0294.

Pet Sitting for Profit by Patti Moran, New Beginnings Press, P.O. Box 540, Pinnacle, NC 27043-0540.

Sit & Grow Rich: Pet Sitting and House Sitting for Profit by Doyle, available from The New Careers Center (303-447-1087).

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Dog Pooper Scooper Business

Don't Laugh!!!

OK, go ahead and laugh! Get it out of your system. Feel better?

Seriously, you can make a lot of money with this business. What you do is contact dog owners and set up a weekly appointment to come by and clean up the "gifts" their dogs have deposited in their yard. Obviously, this is a task that most dog owners hate doing. Don't you think they would be willing to pay you $5.00 a week to take care of it for them?

Here's all you need to get started:

1. Bucket
2. Small Rake
3. Pooper Scooper

To get started, go door to door, introduce yourself and ask the homeowner if they have a dog. If they do tell them about your service. Offer to do the first time for free and do it right then so the owner can inspect your work. If he is satisfied with your work ask him to sign a weekly service agreement.

Build your business by placing flyers on doors, in vets offices, bulletin boards, etc. Also, ask for referrals from satisfied customers. Just 200 accounts at $5.00 each would net you $1000.00 a week.

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Catch and Sell Scorpions, Wasps or Rattlesnakes

In the desert Southwest a popular tourist item is a scorpion encased in plastic for such items as paperweights, bolo ties and refrigerator magnets. The two largest producers, Western Heritage Company and Maack Wholesale Company, both located in the Phoenix area, buy several hundred thousand scorpions a year from a group of pickers who comb the desert at night with a portable black light and a pair of long tweezers.

A good picker can gather 2,000 or more a night, with prices running from 15 cents each for small ones up to 25 cents each for large ones. That can be $300 to $500 for a night's work. A good picker can earn $15,000, paid in cash, for the five-month scorpion-catching season. Some pickers live at campgrounds or out in the desert during the harvest season.

One The Discovery Channel program included a segment on a guy who caught wasps and yellow jackets, freezes them and sells them to a pharmaceutical company. This company extracts the venom from them and uses it to create anti-reaction medications.

If you live within a reasonable driving distance of Santo, TX, a buyer of live, uninjured snakes, particularly rattlesnakes, is Brazos River Rattlesnake Ranch, P.O. Box 1655D, Weatherford, TX 76086 (817-769-2626). Current price is $3 to $9 per pound depending on species and size. Some catchers have earned up to $5,000 for several weeks of harvesting rattlesnakes in early spring. There is a good article on this opportunity in the August/Sept-ember 1997 issue of AgVentures (888-474-6397).

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Harvest Snails for Escargot

Do you live on the West Coast where the snail Helix aspersa Muller is considered to be a pest? Did you know they is considered to be an excellent snail for escargot at upscale restaurants in the same area? Growers of artichoke, kiwi fruit, avocado and citrus in some areas may be more than willing to let you harvest all you want from their groves.

While they can be 'fattened up' on a variety of feeds, they will also take on the flavor of herbs, such as peppermint, rosemary and sage, provided in their diet. The U.S. imports over one million pounds of snails a year and chefs are said to prefer the taste of the fresh, bottled and chilled product produced in the U.S. over canned ones which are imported.

For future information on this aspect contact the National Agricultural Library at 301-504-6559 and ask for a copy of their report Raising Snails. AgVentures (888-474-6397) has complied several of their articles on raising and selling snails into booklet form.

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Rent-a-Horse

“Mommy! Mommy! I want a pony for my birthday.” Most parents have probably heard that plea at least once in their lives, or at least that’s what popular culture would like to have you believe. Little girls, especially, often dream of having their own pony or horse, to ride and brush and show off to all of her friends. Some amusement parks offer horse or pony rides, and the lines tend to bend far around the corner.

Kids and adults love horse and pony riding. The problem is it takes money, and a lot of it, to own a horse or a pony, with vet bills,

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feeding and housing to consider. People dream of horseback riding through the woods on a crisp fall afternoon, and little kids yearn for pony rides at their birthday party, making them the envy of all the other kids in school.

If you love animals, and have the cash to start a new business, then this is an excellent opportunity for you: start your own rent-a-horse or rent-a-pony business to riders who cannot afford to keep their own horse. Before you actually start this business, you'll want to educate yourself as much as possible on how to care for horses, if you don't already know how. Here's a good list to help you get started: TheHorse.com, Horse Care, Basic Horse Care Information and Horses and Horse Training.

Your biggest expense in starting this business, if you do not already own horses or have land, is to acquire the horses or ponies and find a place to house them. The good news is you don't have to break your budget finding horses or ponies. Visit www.petfinder.org, and you're likely to find many horses and ponies in desperate need of a home. While a donation is generally required, you'll be able to adopt horses, or ponies, thereby saving their lives while your donation goes to help other horses.

Contact your local realtor for affordable land in your area where you can house the horses or ponies, if you do not already have land.

Decide how you will rent the horses and ponies out. Will you charge by the hour or by the day? Will you require an appointment, or can people simply show up and ride, if there is a horse available? You'll want to decide the logistics before you start marketing your service.

You can market your rent-a-horse or rent-a-pony service by placing classified ads in the newspaper, contacting local outdoor groups like the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and hanging flyers in local outdoor, party, pet and other shops where potential customers are likely to see them.

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Dog Obedience School

One look at the animal shelters across the United States, and there's little doubt something needs to be done to curb the ever-growing number of homeless dogs. Between ten and twelve million dogs are euthanized every year; many of those dogs were relinquished to overwhelmed shelters because of their so-called misbehavior. After all, it's cute for a little puppy to rush toward guests and jump on them. It's not quite as adorable when that puppy becomes a fully-grown, 60-pound dog, lunging at guests. With the right training, that innocent puppy can grow into well-behaved dog.

Dog obedience schools are extremely popular, and they serve a common purpose: to help owners and dogs co-exist peacefully, thus conceivably reducing the number of dogs surrendered to shelters every year.

If you have little or no experience training dogs, you'll want to go to the library and read as many books as you can. Go to Yahoo Groups or other chat rooms dedicated to dog training, and start discussing the business with others. You'll also want to have some practice with training dogs before you begin soliciting paying clients. Many animal shelters and some pet stores hold dog obedience classes; offer to volunteer or observe several classes to get an idea of how they're run.

If you have little or no experience-training dogs, you may want to consider hiring professional trainers to run the classes. Or, you may want to hire a professional trainer to teach you how to train dogs.

Tip: The most important thing for a dog trainer to remember is you are training the owners, not the dogs. This is the definitive key to successful dog training.

You can hold classes at your local park or dog park, if your community has one. If you decide to go with this option, you'll want to check with park officials to ensure you don't need any special permits.

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Or, you might want to offer your clients a more specialized service by providing in-house training. Remember; if you offer this option, you'll want to plan get togethers with other clients and their dogs. It's important for the dogs to become accustomed to being around and interacting with other dogs.

Finding clients should be a relatively simple process. Spread the word at the local dog parks. Hang flyers at dog parks, pet stores, animal shelters, veterinarians' offices and anywhere you'll find dog lovers. Give dog owners your business card, and ask them to tell others about your service. Offer discounts to first time clients. For example, buy ten lessons and get the eleventh free.

Of course, the best way to get business is by offering the best, most affordable dog training in town. Word-of-mouth is always the most effective form of marketing.

Use your imagination, and you'll likely come up with dozens of creative ways to help your business grow.

Pet Food Delivery Service

Anyone who's ever purchased pet food knows that it can be downright heavy. Generally, the more you buy, the cheaper it is, and most people make use of that advantage. Then, there's getting to the pet store, which can sometimes be a hassle, especially when you run out of food at the last minute—that same minute in which a million other things need to be done.

What pet owner wouldn't rather be at the dog park with his dog, playing with his bunnies or teaching her parrot to talk? Time is precious in today's world, and everyone is looking for ways to economize their lives and make things easier. There are also elderly people with pets who aren't easily able to get to the store, and pregnant women who are unable to lift heavy bags of food. A pet food delivery service would be a beneficial and welcome service,

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especially if you live in a pet-friendly city or town.

The first thing you want to determine is what area your service is going to cover. Will you offer your service to people within a ten, twenty, fifty-mile radius? Remember, you can always start smaller and expand as your customer base, and interest in your service, grows. You'll also want to decide what to charge customers for deliveries and how long after receiving an order it will take you to pick up the food and deliver it to the customer.

Because having a web presence is so vital today, you'll want to seriously consider building a website. Your website can be as simple as an introduction to your service, an order form and contact information. On your order form, you'll want to make sure the customer specifies what type of food he wants to purchase (type of animal, brand of food, etc.), what quantity (how many bags, how many pounds per bad) and when he needs the order delivered. Unless the customer special orders the food, you should be able to purchase the food wherever you find it least expensive and most convenient for your service.

If you opt not to have a website, you'll want to find another easy, convenient way for your customers to place orders: you can advertise a phone number (an 800-number would probably be preferable, if you're covering a large area) or place order forms with a mailing address in various places. The mail-in order forms are probably the least convenient, since they add time to the entire process, but if you're unable to use the first two suggestions then it's certainly an option.

Marketing your service is simple. Hang fliers, with your website address and phone number displayed prominently, in places where pet owners go, particularly pet stores, veterinary offices and dog parks. Place an ad in your local Pennysaver or newspaper.

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Wildlife Excursions

Exploring the wonders of nature is the ideal way for many people to spend their weekends, time off or precious few free hours after a long workday. Treks along a mountainside on a crisp autumn day, a summer afternoon hiking through the forest or an early spring walk along an unspoiled coastal area all provide the perfect backdrop for bringing together nature lovers for wildlife excursions.

No matter where you live in the world, you're likely to be at least a car ride from an unspoiled, breathtaking area of nature—whether it's a forest, mountain, beach, gardens or a nature preserve. People are always looking for new things to do and new ways to spend a day, so offering wildlife excursions is likely to appeal to a wide range of people: from avid nature lovers to schoolchildren, seniors and families who want to get closer to nature.

First, you want to decide where you are going to offer the wildlife excursions. If you live near several wildlife areas, you may want to organize trips to each area. Once you've decided where to offer the trips, you want to start answering questions to better allow you to map the excursion. Will everyone meet in the parking lot? What time? Must people be pre-paid and pre-registered, or can they show up on the day of the trip? How will they pay and register? Are there any restrictions—will the trek be too difficult for pregnant women or the elderly, for example? Are trips weather permitting, or is it a go no matter what the weather? If it's an all-day trip, will people be advised to bring bagged lunches? Since you're in the wilderness, you'll want to make sure everyone carries an ample supply of water.

You'll probably think of more questions when you start, but these should provide you with a good start. Once you've answered all of your questions, map your route. Are you a wildlife expert, or at least relatively familiar with wildlife? If you plan to lead the excursions yourself, you'll want to educate yourself. Prepare a script to help you in the beginning. After a few trips, you'll probably find you don't need the script because a natural flow has evolved.

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Or, if you prefer, you can organize the trips and hire an independent contractor to actually lead the tours.

Advertise your excursions—with ads, flyers, brochures or business cards—in local newspapers, nature preserves, sporting good stores, museums, schools and churches, to name just a few.

Category: Low Cost Retailing

Gift Baskets

Finding the "perfect gift" for a special occasion is, for many people, an exercise in frustration. Going from store to store only to find exorbitant prices or poor quality merchandise can take most of the pleasure out of gift giving. Too often we settle for a gift that isn't what we want to give simply to be done with the whole process. Wouldn't it be great to have a selection of creative gifts to suit any occasion?

Gift giving isn't just a seasonal concern -- there's always an occasion. And today, many people are taking the matter into their own hands by creating affordable, unique gift ideas. These people have discovered the exciting new business of custom-made gift baskets.

Gift basket making has become a rapidly expanding cottage industry, allowing the entrepreneur to have fun, be creative, and make livable profits. The business of making gift baskets requires a small initial investment as a home-based endeavor and can grow into a multi-employee operation in a relatively short time. For the enterprising

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and creative person it is a great way to start a small business with an unlimited market.

Starting a gift basket business as a home-based operation is an ideal way to begin since a lot of equipment is not necessary and there's no rent to pay on office space. The biggest expense could be a car to be used for delivery of the gift baskets. Utilizing existing shelving and garage space for storage also helps this home-based business cut down on expenses.

Some people have found that by working an average of 25 hours a week an annual gross of up to $15,000 is possible. Of course, profit depends on individual initiative and efficient marketing. Once a handsome "home-generated" profit is realized, an expansion to a larger gift basket service could mean a sizable yearly income.

Business Overview

In order to begin a profitable venture in the gift basket business the individual entrepreneur must be well prepared. If the business is to be, at least initially, home-based, several basic steps need to be taken.

(1) Find the appropriate inventory at affordable prices.

(2) Create gift baskets that are not only marketable, but more pleasing and affordable than those of the competition.

(3) Develop an efficient system of delivery as well as selling retail for customer pickup.

(4) Price gift baskets for the highest profit.

(5) Promote the business at minimal expense.

These initial steps are not all that difficult. They will require time, a small monetary investment, and even a little experimentation. Once

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you develop a system for making gift baskets, you can begin to be more creative, making specialized "theme" baskets filled with exotic treats that will increase demand by your market.

Most people getting into the business of gift basket making have some experience at creating these delightful gifts. As a hobby, these people have made baskets for relatives and friends as gifts for special occasions. Creativity is essential. If you are skilled, or have some experience, in craft oriented ideas, creating unique and irresistible gift baskets shouldn't be a problem. However, the person who has no practical experience, and who is not "naturally artistic" might do well to hire a creative friend or relative as a partner in this business venture.

It's a good idea to test your ability to create marketable gift baskets before you get into the business. You can do this by purchasing some baskets and basic materials such as gourmet foods, fragrant soaps, colorful ribbons, exotic teas or baby-care items for a "new baby" basket.

You need not go to great expense. Get enough items to make two or three baskets and then experiment. You'll soon realize what it takes to make individual gift baskets -- patience, creativity, and imagination. Operating a gift basket service is most often an endeavor taken by people who relish the creativity involved in making the baskets. If you plan to establish a one-person, home-based gift basket service, you'll need the discipline necessary to perform a professional service. In some instances, usually during the holidays, you can plan on a six-day-a-week, 10 to 12 hour a day job. If you know where to find the customers, and you're willing to put in some long hours, the pay-off can be quite rewarding.

Getting Started

A gift basket service can be a successful venture operating out of a home. Since there is no "store" location involved there need not be a

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substantial outlay for rent or equipment. Inventory can be stored in existing storage spaces within your home and garage. You may have to add some shelves for proper storage, but these can easily be constructed at little expense.

Most homes already have some of the equipment needed for business use -- a phone and a typewriter. If your phone isn't equipped with an answering machine, you should get one since orders may come in while you are out making deliveries. Not much else in the way of equipment is essential. However, you may want to invest in some sort of file cabinet and cash box.

Another piece of equipment -- a shrink-wrap machine -- will add a touch of professionalism to your operation. This machine wraps your baskets in a clear or colored plastic film. Good shrink-wrap machines sell for about $400.

If you need to buy office furniture, don't get carried away. A small desk and chair, along with your file cabinet and bookshelves, are all that is really needed. This should be an expense you can hold under $500.

You'll also need adequate record keeping equipment as well as stationery, envelopes, business cards, sales slips, invoices, containers, labels and other miscellaneous items. Most of these items can be purchased at local office-supply stores. Again, don't go overboard. Buy only what you need.

Most gift basket orders can be taken at home by phone, and the finished product can be delivered to the customer's home or place of business. If some of the deliveries are not within reasonable driving distance, the local UPS can handle the delivery.

It is important that you keep a log of all your deliveries. Be careful to get the full name, correct address and phone number of the recipient. Should you get lost, you can call and get directions to put you back on course. Most home business owners average from 2-5

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deliveries per hour. All UPS deliveries should be logged the same as other deliveries, and you should keep a record of all postage costs.

Since as much as 80 percent of your orders will come in by phone, you'll either have to be available or have an answering machine. Scheduling deliveries for morning hours will allow you to spend the rest of the working day answering the phone and arranging new baskets.

If, for some reason, a home-based business is not feasible, another way to get started in gift basket servicing is to rent a space or office in your community. Specialty shops are good locations for a gift basket business because you will be providing a "special" service.

Renting or subleasing space in an existing shop can be beneficial to both parties involved. You will be getting adequate work space for your business while paying a percentage of the owner's monthly rent.

Once you've decided where you will start up your gift basket business you'll need to begin making "business" like decisions. After all, you will be the boss. You'll have to decide how much time you are going to invest in the business. You can plan your hourly workweek by determining how many baskets you are willing to make. This is an individual matter. It depends on how much time you have and how much profit you wish to make.

Inventory

To be successful in the gift basket business you must offer baskets that are unique and filled with pleasing and useful items. You'll need to locate a good source for the type of baskets you'll be offering, and you'll need to shop for the appropriate items to fill those baskets.

Initial inventory should be a combination of wholesale and retail items. The wholesale inventory should be made up of items to be used in large quantities as "fillers" and in the most basic basket

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arrangements. Retail inventory should consist of items used in making customized or thematic baskets.

Some people getting started in the gift basket business have taken the initiative to contact various stores and businesses that offer gift baskets for sale. Through these contacts, new owners can obtain information on what kind of baskets and themes work best. The beginner can then create gift baskets based on what has worked for others.

Most home-based gift basket services purchase baskets wholesale. Before doing this you must determine the type and size of the baskets you'll be making. You'll need to know if you'll be specializing in small gift baskets or large, or a combination. Depending on your location, you'll most likely need to go to a large city to purchase baskets wholesale.

As a small, home-operated service most of your customers will be interested in basic, relatively inexpensive gift baskets.

If the need arises for more elaborate and expensive "designer" baskets you can purchase those wholesale too.

To begin, you should purchase just a few types of baskets, such as planters, fruit bowls, baby baskets and candy baskets. These baskets are most likely to be in greater demand than other "special" baskets. When ordering baskets, it is a good idea to ask your supplier for recommendations. This is a good way to learn the proper styles and amounts of baskets you should have on hand. Of course, your customers will also furnish you with invaluable insight into the types of baskets best suited for your market.

Once you have located and purchased the types of gift baskets you plan to offer, you'll need to get items to fill them.

Keep in mind the kinds of baskets you are offering. Don't go overboard on expensive merchandise that isn't appropriate for the

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baskets you have in stock. The thing to remember is ... stick to the basics.

Since toiletry arrangements are very popular, you should have a good supply of lotion, shampoo, bath oil, soap, and fragrant powders. With these arrangements, it is also a good idea to have in stock several all-natural items, and children's products.

The initial inventory should also include items for popular gourmet food arrangements. You can shop around and find an intriguing selection of teas, coffees, crackers, cheeses, sardines, oysters and fruit. Some people include wine, beer, and champagne in these gourmet arrangements, but a special liquor license is needed to resell these items. That's an expense a beginner may want to put off until the business is turning a profit.

Your start-up inventory should also include popular items such as candles, toys, stuffed animals, dried flowers, small books, stationery, writing utensils, and an assortment of items such as golf tees, tennis balls, socks and gloves.

Another aspect of gift basket inventory is decorations. With each basket you'll want to include an assortment of trimmings, labels and cards. You'll also need a supply of ribbon, artificial grass, tissue paper, small cards with envelopes and tape. These items can normally be purchased in quantity, and that can save money on your initial investment.

To find current manufacturers and distributors of gift basket supplies you should scan the directories published by many giftware magazines. You can call or write to any of these magazines to find out if they have any directories to offer, and if so, how much they charge. You can also subscribe to trade magazines to keep abreast of new companies entering the gift basket supply market. A trip to your local library should furnish you with ample information about various giftware and relevant trade magazines.

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Usually, when starting up, a new gift basket service will only need a few suppliers. Besides locating these suppliers by the methods just described, you can attend tradeshows, wholesale showrooms and conventions. A thorough and patient research of suppliers will allow you to select the most reliable people to do business with. You'll also get quality merchandise at the most affordable prices.

When selecting suppliers you should decide whether you wish to deal with manufacturers, distributors, independent craftspeople, import companies, or some combination of the four. These are general categories, but they do describe most suppliers you will be dealing with.

Many small business operators buy from manufacturers because their prices are usually the lowest. One drawback to buying from manufacturers is that your business location may mean high shipping costs. Buying from a distributor usually results in paying higher prices than those to a manufacturer, but if the distributor is nearby, shipping costs are lower and delivery is quicker.

Some of the gift basket makers best purchases are made from independent craftspeople. Since most of their products are made at home, quantities of specific items may be limited, but often a working relationship between the craftsperson and gift basket operator is a profitable arrangement.

Depending on individual attitudes about buying foreign products, import sources can supply a gift basket service with both exotic and practical merchandise. The type of suppliers you use depends on the type of merchandise you plan to market, your budget, and your business location.

Once you have an adequate inventory of baskets and supplies you'll need to determine how to price the finished product. Most first-time business operators find that adding a 100 percent markup straight across is the least complicated method of pricing. This percentage of

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markup normally covers all expenses and still allows a reasonable profit.

You can determine prices in a more complicated fashion. This method requires keeping a log of how much time it takes to make each basket. You'll also need to figure in the cost of the basket, the "filler" items, and trimmings. If the basket is to be mailed, figure in postage. If it's to be delivered, add for gas, mileage and time. Also determine overhead costs, and then decide what you consider a fair margin of profit. Once you've done all that, you should be able to come up with prices for each basket.

The most important thing a new gift basket business owner should realize is that starting slow; with a small inventory is the most prudent and safest way to begin. It may take about one year for a new gift basket business to get established. After that amount of time and experience, the owner should be able to determine what sells best as well as monthly sales and inventory turnover. With this information, the owner can decide how much inventory to carry. If the business is to be profitable, it is essential to have the proper amount of inventory without an excessive outlay of cash.

The Market

One of the most appealing features of the gift basket business is the virtually unlimited market. Everyone loves to give and receive baskets, and gift giving is an almost constant occurrence.

The most significant customers for a gift basket service are women. A large percentage of these women are married with children and full-time jobs. For whatever reason, these women are still largely responsible for selecting and buying gifts. Since women make up the largest percentage of the gift buying market catering to their tastes and ideas will furnish the owner with a good source of information about what arrangements work best.

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Another important type of customer for a gift basket service is corporate clients. Often, these customers send gifts to business associates and their own clients. For corporations and businesses, gift giving can present a problem. Most businesses choose to give gifts not only during the holidays, but in recognition of employee's promotions, retirements, birthdays and anniversaries. The gifts they choose need to be appropriate and personal. Gift baskets are ideal for this type of giving.

A new business will have to do some promoting to let corporate customers know about their gift basket service. But the effort could be well worth it. Corporate customers could provide a sizable volume of sales, and on a repeating basis.

Even if your gift basket service is going to be home-based and in a relatively small community, you will need to have a good idea of the available market. A decision must be made as to the customers you will cater to. This will help you determine the type and price range of your product. In order to understand and best utilize the available market, you should conduct a market survey.

To conduct a usable market survey, several basic steps must be followed.

(1) Establish the limits of your market or trading area.

(2) Research the population within your potential market to understand spending patterns and characteristics. A population base of 25,000 is usually a sufficient market for a home-based operation.

(3) Figure the trading area's buying power.

(4) Find out the current sales volume of any competing businesses in your trading area. If there are no actual gift basket businesses, determine the sales volume of the type of goods you will be marketing.

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(5) Project a reasonable proportion of the total sales volume you can achieve.

Many government agencies, trade associations, or other businesses within the gift basket industry have compiled reports and studies that will furnish you with much of the market survey information. Some information you will pull together on your own.

Promoting Your Business

One of the most important keys to the success of any business is marketing. In order to make potential customers aware of a new business, advertising and promotion are essential. That's because a new business needs a direct line of communication about the product to potential customers.

There are many effective methods of getting the word out about your business. What works best often depends on location of the business and the amount of money available to spend on advertising and promotion.

In some cases, especially in smaller markets, word-of-mouth advertising is responsible for a great deal of business. But, if the owner wishes to expand the business an advertising and promotion budget is necessary. The amount budgeted for this purpose can vary. Many businesses budget advertising and promotion based on anticipated gross sales. In most cases, an advertising budget of 2 to 5 percent of projected gross sales has proven effective.

Most small businesses usually advertise in the following media:

(1) Newspapers

(2) Radio

(3) Direct Mail

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(4) Yellow Pages

(5) Magazines

In smaller markets, word-of-mouth advertising, combined with the local radio station and newspaper can be very effective at reaching new customers. Direct mailings are also a good way to advertise within your budget.

For a home-based business catering to a local market, newspaper advertising works very well. Most local newspaper ad rates are reasonable, and a display or classified ad should bring your product to the attention of a high percentage of potential customers.

Many new gift basket service operators take advantage of free publicity generated in local newspapers. Most local newspapers are happy to give write-ups to new local businesses.

You should also furnish the newspaper with any information you have about contest promotions or charitable endeavors. Anything about your business the local newspaper can use as "fill" in their paper, they usually will accept. This is a highly effective way of getting publicity for your business and catching the attention of potential customers.

Small market radio is also an affordable means of advertising. You can get spot announcements on most small, local radio stations for less than $10 per announcement. Special reduced rates are usually available if you buy a certain quantity or "package". Although most local radio stations cover only a limited area, the coverage is sufficient for your market.

Gift basket business owners frequently use direct mailing as a means of attracting new business. This form of advertising is highly effective in that it brings a straightforward sales message to a high percentage of potential customers. Since special postal rates are provided for direct mail it is one of the most affordable forms of advertising.

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There are different methods of obtaining mailing lists for use in direct mail advertising. Some businesses purchase them from list brokers while other advertisers consult the yellow pages under "Advertising." Normally, renting a mailing list for one-time use will cost up to $70 per thousand names.

If you are purchasing a mailing list from a broker, choose an established service. Find out how often the list has been rented over the past several months. Also inspect the list thoroughly. It may be wise to contact some of the previous renters to find out what success they had with the list.

Another highly effective form of advertising is the yellow pages. Regardless of budget, an ad in the yellow pages of your local phone directory is a smart investment. These advertisements can be creative listings complete with illustrations, or a simple one-line mention. If possible, get the largest display advertisement you can afford. Many local customers scan the yellow pages when looking for a special service, such as gift baskets. So an attractive yellow page ad is one of the best ways to advertise a business.

Many small business operators also use brochures to convey the services they offer to potential customers. These brochures describe the assortment of baskets you make and contain your mailing address and phone number as well as outline your method of delivery. Your brochures can be as elaborate or as basic as your budget will allow. But they will lend an air of professionalism to your business as well as describe in detail what service you have to offer.

The purpose of advertising is to entice potential customers to try your product. As a gift basket service owner you want to convince customers that your baskets are the best and most affordable on the market. Effective advertising and promotion is the surest way to reach potential customers and clients.

Potential Profits

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Since the gift basket business offers a product that is always in demand, the profit potential is impressive. Some home-based gift basket services have reported gross profits of over $100,000 a year. And many of these people started their gift basket services with less than a $2,000 investment.

Even small baskets produce substantial profits. An average gift basket may cost the business owner from $5 to $10 and retail for as much as $50. Spare-time operators have reported selling an average of 10 baskets per day, priced from $35 to $50 per basket.

In a year's time, that could mean a profit of nearly $100,000 with very little overhead involved.

Although the potential profits from a gift basket service, even with a minimal initial investment of $2,000, are substantial, you should have an estimate of your potential sales and profit before you start your business. There are several factors involved in estimating monthly sales and profit:

(1) Make an estimate of how many people in your market are viable prospects as customers for your product. In making this estimate, be reasonable and conservative.

(2) Estimate the average sales you can reasonably expect from each customer.

(3) Figure out the total yearly sales volume by multiplying the projected number of customers by the projected amount of money each will spend.

(4) Project seasonal sales patterns. Each month of the year should have varying percentages of the total volume, especially holiday months.

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(5) To estimate monthly sales, take the total annual sales figure from step three and multiply it by the estimated monthly percentages.

(6) Adjust these monthly sales estimates by taking into consideration the start up period. This will be strictly an estimate if you haven't yet started the business.

(7) Subtract all your labor, materials, and overhead expenses from the monthly sales estimates. The remaining figure is your net profit before taxes.

These steps may seem somewhat complicated, especially before you've started the business. But this projected operating statement makes good business sense and will give you a head start on handling your finances once your business is off the ground. Once the business is in full operation and actual operating information is available, you can update your projected operating statement on a regular basis.

The potential for profit from operating a gift basket service depends on several factors. Most important is the market of potential customers. The amount and type of inventory you have to offer along with the creative quality of your gift baskets, also plays a major role in your financial success. If you are a disciplined and enterprising person, your potential earnings from a gift basket service could very well climb into six figures.

Legal Requirements

One of the first things a new business owner has to consider is the proper legal form under which the business will operate. The business can either operate as a sole proprietorship, partnership, limited partnership, or as a corporation.

Whatever the legal form of your gift basket service, you'll need to be aware of all the legalities involved. If your business is a sole proprietorship operation, you won't have many legal forms to worry

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about. The only legal papers required for a sole proprietorship are a business license and a fictitious-name filing with the county clerk's office.

If you choose to operate your business using a distinctive name, other than your personal name, you'll most likely be required by the city, county or state to register the name. The method of doing this will vary from state to state, but in many states you simply pay a small registration fee at the county clerk's office. Some states may require placing a fictitious-name advertisement in a local newspaper.

To find out the proper procedure for your area, contact your bank and find out if it requires a fictitious name registry or certificate in order to start a business account. If it does, the bank personnel can tell you where to obtain one. Filing a fictitious-name notice will cost anywhere from $10 to $100.

Unlike other forms of business, a sole proprietorship requires no separate income tax returns. As a sole proprietor, all of your income and expenses will be reported on Schedule C of IRS form 1040. If your aren't familiar with tax laws and regulations for business operations, you should consult with a professional accountant.

Keeping records of your business operation is also required by law. These records are used to determine your tax liability. No specific type of bookkeeping system is mandated by law; however your records must be accurate. They must also show your income, deductions, credits, and other information required by federal, state and local regulations.

If your bookkeeping skills are less than adequate, you'll need the help of a competent professional. This will mean an extra expense, but it's an expense you cannot afford to overlook.

Having accurate and complete records is not only a legal requirement; it is also an efficient and professional way to operate a business.

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Conclusion

Operating a home-based gift basket service can be a highly rewarding venture. By following several key steps, an enterprising individual can turn creativity into profit.

(1) Investment -- Unless you have unlimited capital, keep your initial cash outlay for equipment and inventory to a minimum. You should be able to start up with an investment of between $2,000 and $3,000. In some cases, even less.

(2) Product -- Learn to design and arrange gift baskets that will keep you far ahead of any competition. If you have no practical craft experience, there are courses that teach the fundamentals of gift basket making. If you have limited artistic ability, enlist the services of a more creative friend or relative. The irresistibility of your product is the key to your success.

(3) Marketing -- Investigate, then utilize the most effective means of advertising and promoting your business. Develop a realistic advertising budget that will allow you to reach every potential customer in your market.

(4) Regulations -- Be well versed in, and adhere to, all rules and regulations pertaining to a small home-based business. The regulations vary from state to state and will most like require some research or instruction from a professional consultant.

(5) Bookkeeping -- Maintain permanent and accurate business operating records.

Since the market for gift baskets is virtually unlimited, the business of making and selling this product is rapidly growing. Operating your own home-based gift basket service is an ideal way to be creative, have fun, and realize substantial earnings. If you're interested in starting a small business that allows you to be creative and to make

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money, a home-operated gift basket service is the perfect opportunity.

How To Make Money With Gourmet Gift Baskets

Here's a pleasant home-based business that will challenge your creative as well as your managerial skills. It's a fun business for those who have the flare for creating appetizing gift packages.

A Fun Product

Gourmet gift baskets have become popular in recent years. They are a collection of desirable items and in such a variety that they appeal to all. By determining the markets you want to target and the type of baskets you want to produce, you can set your income goals for as little or as much as you like.

Corporate Accounts

From the very large and the very small, businesses have needs for gift giving on a pretty constant basis.

By targeting corporate accounts, you protect yourself from potential sales fluctuations common to what are generally considered seasonal items. Businesses love gift baskets because they are "safe" compared to other gifts like chocolate (many people now carefully watch their fat intake) or wine & spirits (many people don't drink). Of course, other possible clients for your gift baskets include associations, retail outlets, fundraisers, and individual customers who purchase for themselves or as a gift.

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Creative Designs

Gourmet gift baskets are fundamentally a few nice items placed in a unique arrangement and presented to look extravagant. Use your imagination and keep an eye for unusual and appealing products. To keep unit price low, inventory most commonly used items by purchasing direct from the manufacturer or main distributor. Look for large pretty items; they will give your product "size".

Theme Marketing

Focus on a theme and build around it. From a corporate perspective, create presentations that communicate the corporate logo or marketing slogan. Do not limit yourself by just using baskets as your main vehicle. For example, a basket with an Italian theme can use (as its basket) a large pasta bowl to hold small vinegar, olive oil, sun-dried tomatoes and kitchen utensils.

Raffia or "grass" can be used to cushion the items, sealed together with shrink-wrap. Finish your basket with a bow or creative ribbon, and you've got a product that can be retailed for around $39. Your cost: as low as $12.

A New Type Of Gift Basket Guaranteed To Bring Impressive Profits!

The gift basket industry has exploded over the past few years and continues to be a consistent money maker for those involved in it. In many ways, it's the ideal business. You can run it from the home. It's an extremely inexpensive business to start (you only need supplies and a marketing budget). The product is in demand (who doesn't like getting an artistic basket with fresh fruit, candies, or cheeses?).

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Competition isn't much of a problem (you can easily set yourself off from the rest by producing specialized types of baskets). It's a dynamic business that is changing and developing with the times. One of the newest developments is the Candy Flower Basket. This is a new type of gift basket that will definitely set you apart from your competition. It's very artistic and creative, and pretty, too! The Candy Flower Basket is easy to make, and will turn heads wherever it is given.

Here's what you need for a Candy Flower Basket: You'll need a basket, of course, preferably around the size of a medium to large flower pot (remember, we'll have "flowers" here).

Next, a large piece of flower arranging or art Styrofoam, large enough to fit in the bottom of the basket, filling it well and reaching up to around 3 inches below the lip of the basket. Also, plenty of stiff, green wire used in flower arranging; green flower tape; 2 1/2" green wood sticks, pointed on one end, blunt on the other; thin wire; a good supply of different wrapped hard candies, preferably with colorful wrappers (yellow, orange, red, pink, and other "flower" colors are best); and, finally, a LOT of bright, colorful cellophane sheets (green and red, especially). Many of these supplies can be found at craft stores or flower arranging supply stores.

First, we'll make our candy flowers. Cut the stiff green wire into 1 foot lengths. Make around 15 for a decent size basket. Now, sort your candies by wrapper color. You'll need 5 or 6 candies per wire. Take one of the candies and hold one twisted end of the wrapper against the end of the wire.

Now, wrap the green floral tape tightly around the wrapper and wire a few times. Don't tear the tape; once the candy is firmly attached to the wire, continue the tape down the wire and wrap another candy around 1 to 1 1/2 inches below the first, depending on how many candies you'll put on the wire. Continue this down the wire. When you've wrapped 5 or 6 of the same candies on the top half of the

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wire, trail your tape off another inch or two on the wire. You've just made your first candy flower! Set that one aside and start on the next one. Try to have at least 4 different types of candies, so all the flowers won't be the same color.

Next, wrap the Styrofoam in green cellophane and put it into the bottom of the basket. Take your colored cellophane sheets and cut around fifty 6" x 10" rectangles.

Don't worry about making them perfectly sized. Take one of the rectangles and loosely fold it in half the short way (to make a 6" x 5" rectangle) and then in half the long way (to make a 3" x 5" rectangle). Don't crease the folds, and again, don't worry about being perfect. It'll look better if it's not.

Insert this rectangle into one of the open spaces closed point down (the point that would be the center of the rectangle, if it was unfolded. Do this with 20 to 25 of the rectangles, until the open spaces are filled, though not tightly. Fluff the open corners of the rectangles out.

Now, insert your flowers into the Styrofoam. Space them out evenly, and put around four inches of the wire down into the foam, so it's secure. Here's a tip slightly curve the wire and insert it at a slight angle, so the flowers sit realistically. Real flower bouquets don't stand straight up.

Finally, take one of the remaining cellophane rectangles, and fold it in the same way as you did with the "fill-in" rectangles. Now, take one of the short green sticks and a six-inch length of the thin copper wire. Wrap the wire three or four times around the blunt end of the stick, around 1/8" from the end. Put around 1/2" of the closed corner of the rectangle against the blunt end of the stick, and wrap the remaining wire tightly around it. Insert this in the Styrofoam, in between the flowers. Do this with the remaining rectangles, cutting more if necessary to completely hide the Styrofoam and fill out the basket.

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When done, fluff the open corners out. You now have a Candy Flower Basket!

The best thing about this is the fact that it looks better after the candy is removed! Put a note in with your basket suggesting that people unwrap only the unattached end of the wrapper to remove a candy. The candies look like buds while they're wrapped; they look like blooming flowers with the candy removed! Try it with one of your flowers and you'll see!

Take into account the cost of your supplies and your time when pricing your Candy Flower Basket. These can be a bit time-consuming, but you can always make a large stock of flowers and fill-in "greenery" ahead of time while watching TV. Or, get some friends involved. Baskets like this can easily be sold for $25 to $40, depending on the size of the basket, with only a few dollars worth of supplies. Their uniqueness will definitely be an important selling point. Make a few baskets of different sizes up, for sales examples.

Candy Flower Baskets can be a great addition to your line, if you already produce gift baskets, or they can be a fantastic way to start out in this profitable business. And don't think it's just for women; there are many men who are producing great gift baskets out there.

Anyone, young or old, can produce these baskets and make massive profits...and have a lot of fun in the process!

How To Make $5,000 A Month Or More With Garage Sales

In this day and age, everyone seemingly knows how to put together and hold a garage sale. Yet if this is so, why is it that some people are lucky to gross $150 while others consistently make $1,500 or more from their garage sales.

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Pick almost any city or town in the country; drive through any middle class neighborhood or residential area on any weekend. You're sure to spot at least half dozen garage sales. And what's being sold at these garage sales? The accumulated "junk" that a lot of people no longer use or want taking up space in or around their homes.

Is it hard to hold a profitable garage sale? Not in the least! All it really takes is some of your time, and an awareness of a few merchandising tactics. But to be really profitable, you must know how, and exercise careful planning.

First, let's look at some of the background. Everyone accumulates items that other people are searching for, and are willing to buy. These items range from discarded or outgrown items of clothing to furniture, tools, knick-knacks, books, pictures and toys.

Starts by taking an inventory of all the things you have "just taking up space" around your home. Decide which items you'd be better off getting rid of, and make a list of these things. These are the things you are going to put up for sale. And if you are honest about what you really want and need, the pile will grow if you look over your household a second and third time!

Remember that many garage sale offerings are items of merchandise purchased on impulse, and later found to be not what the buyer wanted. It is the human condition: We discover too late that we don't like or have use for things purchased; we "outgrow" in size or taste articles that once fit, or pleased us. You'll find that many items offered at garage sales are gifts that have been given to the seller, but not really suited to the recipient. In other words, it will be to your benefit, before you stage your first garage sale, to take a week or so to browse through all the garage sales you can find.

The problem is, most people just don't have the time or energy to gather up all the items taking up space around their homes and staging a garage sale to get rid of them. Believe it or not, many

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people really don't know how to stage a garage sale; and a lot of people feel that putting on a garage sale is just too much bother and work.

This is where you enter the picture. Your enterprise will be an ongoing garage sale of items donated and collected from those people who lack the initiative to put on garage sales of their own. In other words, you can become a "liquidator of people's junk," via super garage sales that you promote.

We've already suggested that you spend a few weeks visiting the garage sales, swap meets and flea markets in your area. Your purpose will be to see what is being offered for sale; what the people in your area are buying, and how the merchandise is being sold. One of the things to notice is how the merchandise is displayed. You'll also want to notice how the sellers handle customer browsing, and the prices they charge for the merchandise offered. You'll find most items tagged with a price sticker, but generally the seller is open to either price negotiation or a reasonable offer made by the customer.

Begin your enterprise by cleaning out your own attic, closets and basement or garage. Talk with your relatives and friends; tell them what you're doing, and ask for donations (or at least consignments) of unwanted items. It's here that you'll get your first experience in negotiating, and you'll usually get enthusiastic cooperation. You'll find people explaining that they really don't have a use for a specific item, don't want to keep on storing it, but for sentimental or other reasons, they have just hung on to it.

Once you have a little bit of experience, you'll be able to advertise in the newspaper that you purchase garage sale items, or take them on consignment for a percentage of the final sale price.

Its best that the wife or woman of the house handles the garage sale itself - that is, let a woman be the one who greets the potential customers, shows them around, and generally engages them in conversation. If it's a woman staging the garage sale, then

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arrangements should be made for a second one to "mind the store" while she's out digging up more items for display and sale. And if you are running a really big sale, a second or third person can be very useful in selling, and just generally keeping an eye on things. The advertising angle is really quite simple, and shouldn't cost you very much, either. Check area newspapers, and select the one that carries the most ads for garage sales. You shouldn't concern yourself too much with competition from other ads. People who go to garage sales either go to all of them they can locate, or else only to those within a 3-to-5 mile radius of their homes.

You should run a small classified ad in the newspaper of your choice for about three days in advance, and up through the day of your sale. Once you're operating on a full-time, every-day-of- the-week schedule, you'll want to change your ad schedule and the style of your advertising. But in getting started, stay with small classified ads simply announcing the fact that you're holding a garage sale, emphasizing that you've got everything from A to Z - something of interest to everyone. Such an ad might read:

BIG GARAGE SALE! Hundreds of interesting items. Through Saturday, July 16th. (address)

To get ideas on how to write your ad, check your newspapers for a week or two. Cut out all the garage sale ads you can find. Paste them up onto a piece of paper - then with a bit of critical analysis, you will be able to determine how to write a good ad of your own from identifying the good and bad features of the ads you've collected. Keep in mind that the bigger and better your sale, the bigger and better your "getting started" ads should be.

Always remember that in order to increase your profits in any business, you must increase rather than decrease your advertising. At the bottom line, you'll find that the greatest single reason for a garage sale failing to turn a profit is the lack of promotion and advertising used to publicize it.

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You should also have an old-fashioned "sandwich board" type sign to display in front of your house when your garage sale is open for business. The purpose of course, is to call attention to the fact that you're holding a garage sale and are open for business. This will pull in your neighbors, if you haven't already informed them, and attract people driving by. Sandwich boards are also sometimes set out at key traffic intersections not far from the site of the garage sale.

These will attract attention, and point the way. However, check your local ordinances to be sure that this sort of advertising is permitted. Another "sign idea" practiced by a few really sharp operators is the old "Burma Shave" type roadside pointers. Here, you simply make up a few cute sayings (verse or one-liners), write them on pieces of cardboard, tack them onto the power poles at about 200 yard intervals on the thoroughfare leading to your garage sale, and you're sure to create a lot of traffic for yourself. People are amused by, and drawn to people who do something a little different, unusual and creative in promoting a sale of any kind.

To come up with some cute verses, simply visit your public library and check out a book on limericks. Adapt the ones that you feel are most humorous, and start making signs. Again, a word of caution before you get too deeply involved: Be sure to check your local ordinance before you start nailing signs to power poles.
By all means, search out and use all the free bulletin boards in your area. It's better, and usually much more profitable to take the time to make up an attention grabbing circular you can post on these bulletin boards, than just to use a scribbled 3 by 5 card announcement.

Pick up some "transfer lettering", go through your newspapers and old magazines for interesting illustrations, graphics and pictures; then with a little bit of imagination and flamboyancy, make up an 8 1/2 by 11 poster announcement of your sale. When you have it pasted up take it to any quick print shop and have them print up 50 or 100 for you. Your cost for this small print order should be well under ten dollars.

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If you make this circular/poster up with versatility and long- time usage in mind, you can use it over and over again simply by pasting on a new date. In case you feel "left-out" when we talk of "pasting-up" things, this simply means pasting a piece of paper onto the overall page you're putting together.

Say you have made up your circular with a date of Wednesday, May 1st, and want to change it to read Thursday, July 16th. Rather than do the entire thing over, simply write out a new date with your transfer letters on a separate sheet of paper, cut this out to fit in the space occupied by the old date, and paste the new date over the old date. The artwork master is now up to date; the printer does the rest. Incidentally, this is precisely what is meant in mail order and other dealership offers where they furnish you with the basic advertising/promotional material and advise you to "paste over" their name/address with your own.

For paste or glue, drop by just about any stationery store and pick up a tube of "glue stick." This is a small tube of paste, about the size of a tube of lipstick, generally sold for less than one dollar per tube. The tube glue stick works much better than regular glue or paste, and is not as messy as rubber cement.

Your signs have to be effective, but you have to remember to keep them simple. Don't try to cut corners on your signs. Signs announcing and pointing the way to your garage sale should be placed at each intersection within a one mile radius of your sale location. If it takes 50 signs, then make 50 signs. The important thing is to let people know that you're holding a garage sale.

Signs can be made simply by cutting and using the sides of cardboard boxes, and writing on them with a heavy felt tip marking pen. Make it easy for your signs to be seen, and for people to read what's on them. About all you really need is great big block letters reading "GARAGE SALE," with the street address, and an arrow pointing in that direction. Don't think for a minute that people are going to stop and read a lot of "stuff" you've written on your sign

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when they are driving by; you just want them to see your sign and proceed in the direction necessary to reach the location of the sale. They'll be moving by your sign too fast to see or read anything else you may have written.

The ads you place, the bulletin board announcements you post, and the signs you put up will bring many people to your garage sale location. A lot of people will drive by slowly and just look, but most will stop to browse around.

But you still have to contend with the huge number of people who just drive by without stopping. So, let's talk about the "inside secrets" of drawing people into your sale, and the merchandising gimmicks that will result in the maximum number of sales for you.

You must call attention to your sale. Don't be shy, bashful or self-conscious about letting everybody for miles around know that you're having a garage sale. If you could afford to get the Goodyear Blimp to "hover" over your garage sale, then by all means, you should do it!

Some sharp operators do the next best thing. They rent miniature blimps, send them up above the housetops, and tether them there on their sale days. Of course, this giant balloon or miniature blimp has some sort of sign on the side of it, inviting people to your garage sale.
This is one of the strongest available advertising ideas for pulling traffic to a sale of any kind. For more details, write Pie-In-The-Sky Company, PO Box 5267, San Mateo, CA 94402, or explore to see if there is a local outlet for this kind of advertising merchandise for rent.

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

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

Cover your display tables with colorful cloths. Don't hesitate to use bright colors and busy patterns. Regardless of what you sell, effective display (packaging the event) is still absolutely essential to your success.

The secret to outstanding garage sale profits is in having the widest or largest selection of merchandise. And part of the process is taking great care in displaying and labeling your merchandise.

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

Have as wide a selection of colors as possible in your clothing racks, and mix them for "rainbow" effect. Make sure that your jewelry items shine and sparkle. Arrange them in and on jewelry boxes, jewelry ladders and other items sold for the purpose of showing off jewelry while keeping it neatly organized.

Some people have even gone so far as hooking up battery operated “lazy susans” and arranging their jewelry on these. Having the jewelry slowly turn on the lazy susan will not only catch the eye, it will catch the light, making an attractive display even more attractive because it sparkles and gleams.

Think about it, and then study the methods of display used by the "rack jobbers" in the stores in your area. These are wire racks that usually hold card-packaged items. Such a rack or kind of display would lend itself beautifully for anchoring a cluster of balloons. Keep these things in mind, and build your individual displays as part of the

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whole. Make it pleasing to the eye as well as convenient for your customers to browse through and select the items that appeal to them or catch their fancy.

At many garage sales, some of the merchandise (particularly the clothing) is dirty. Notice this when you visit other people's garage sales, and then take it upon yourself to make sure that every item - positively everything you show - is clean and sparkling bright. A bar of soap, a bucket of water, and a few old rags will do wonders for shop tools, garden equipment and bicycles. The same goes for furniture polish on old furniture, and a run through the washing machine for all washable clothing.

It is advisable to determine a price for each item before you set it out for display. Then mark that price on a price tag, and attach a price tag to each item. Your prices should also always be rounded off to more or less even numbers such as: $.25, $.50, $1, $1.50, $2 and so on. In other words, don't ask for $.35, $.95, or $1.98, or any of that sort of pricing. Almost needless to say, you should always mark everything up by 100% or more. In other words, if you have acquired a particular item for $l, set a price of $2 or more on it. It's also a good idea to mark up your asking price from the bottom-line price you're willing to accept. Basically, the price marked on the price tag at most garage sales is taken as the starting price from which the buyer and seller negotiate. Most garage sale promoters price their cheaper items at the bottom line price they will accept, and don't deviate from those prices as shown on the price tag. Then on the more expensive items - $2 and over - they mark up their asking prices by 20 to 40 percent and use that margin for negotiating with the customer.

If you're a little bit shy relative to personal selling, here are a few "inside" secrets that will give you an edge: Always radiate an attitude of friendliness, regardless of the circumstances or your first impression of the potential buyer. Always smile and say hello in a voice loud enough to be heard. Speak to everyone stopping or dropping by your sale location. Be helpful, but allow the people to

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browse on their own until they specifically ask you for help. When you're "keeping an eye on your merchandise," be as unobtrusive as possible; no one likes to feel he is being watched too closely. Whenever a customer appears to have made a selection and asks you what you'll take for it, or what kind of a deal you'll make for it, be ready to enter into "friendly negotiations."

Before you open, of course, you will have done your homework and know the value of each item of merchandise you have for sale. Don't ever take a customer's "claimed" value of an item. By the same token, don't listen to a seller, when you're buying items for your sale, when he claims that he's offering you an antique or priceless treasure. Sometimes (rarely enough) you'll be able to pick up fantastic treasures for virtually nothing; so by knowing your merchandise, you'll not let "the flag that Betsy Ross made" slip through your fingers for a song. Be sure to have all possibly really valuable items appraised by authentic dealers. These people are listed in the yellow pages of your telephone directory.

Some of the "extras" that contribute to the success of a garage sale include: Plenty of change, because without proper change, you'll lose a great many sales. A tape measure, because you'll find people often want to know the exact dimensions of some thing (especially furniture) in order to fit it into a certain space they have in mind. Long extension cord and electrical outlet, because your customers will want to "plug in" and try out the mixers, vacuum cleaners, hand tools, or other electrical appliances.
Back for a moment to drawing in those "cruisers" who aren't quite sure they want to park their cars and come browse: Look for some kind of interesting or unusual item to call attention to your sale - something you can set up or park in front of your home during your sale. Some of the displays we've seen along these lines include a horse-drawn surrey; a restored Model T; an old farm plow. Anything of an unusual or interesting nature will do the trick for you. One couple we know put up a display using a manikin dressed in an old-time farm bonnet, long dress and apron. This display depicted a farm woman of old, washing clothes with a scrub board and two steel

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wash tubs. It's not hard to believe, this display really drew the crowds, and crowds always mean sales!

Go wherever your imagination takes you; you have to be different and distinctive. You'll get lost in the hundreds of garage sales going on all around you if your sales look like the next half dozen.

If you'll take the time to employ a bit of imagination, and set your sales up with the kind of flair we've been talking about, you will not only draw the crowds; you'll be the one reaping the most profits.

As you think of beginning this garage sale business, remember this:

It's almost a compulsion with some people to go shopping - to search for interesting, and sometimes rare and valuable items. This fact alone will keep you as busy as you ever want to be, staging and promoting garage sales. The market is so vast, and the appetite so varied, that anything from a brass bedstead to a used diary of someone's long-forgotten grandmother will sell, and sell fast, at garage sales. Put it all together, use a little imagination and you'll succeed in a very interesting, challenging endeavor!

How / Where To Buy / Sell Antiques And Collectibles

Are you aware of all the money being made on eBay and other sites selling antiques and collectibles? You can't help but notice. And maybe you were a little envious or frustrated because they knew something you didn't. Well I'm here to tell you that these people were not born with any special intrinsically knowledge of the antique and collectible trade. It's learned behavior as they say. The people

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making money in the trade in most cases have acquired the knowledge from years of buying and selling. And most of the good buys were built on the shoulders of a lot of bad buys. It is part and parcel of the trade. Anyone who says otherwise is lying and the truth ain't in 'em.

I've been in the business myself for several years now and I have many trusted friends who have been in longer. There is no disagreement from any of them. There is no substitute for experience. I must say that up front so as to not give the wrong impression about the intent of this information. That being said, there is no reason you cannot benefit and profit beyond your wildest imagination by knowing some of the tricks of the trade that are known by most antique and collectible dealers, but are just beyond the reach of the average person.

It's Fool's Gold!

Go ask any person in the antique and collectible business if they have ever been burned buying a reproduction (repro) and the first thing you'll notice is a sheepish little grin start to emerge. Then ask them if they have ever sold a reproduction and that grin will turn to an uncomfortable swallow.

Reproductions are the bane of the industry. Some are obvious fakes, others are so good they can and do fool the experts. I thought it best to start with this subject for a couple of reasons, to keep you from getting burned and to keep you from inadvertently burning someone else.

Question: If these reproductions can fool even the experts how can a novice have a chance? Ah, I'm glad you asked that question, grasshopper. The simple answer is they are not all good reproductions. Only the most expensive items in the trade are worthy of the time and effort it takes to make a good reproduction. The rest of them are for the most part made in China and you can tell it with a few exceptions.

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If a person trades in the bread and butter items of the industry, he can, using common sense and a basic understanding of a few things, avoid most problems. I say "most" because everyone will inadvertently buy a repro at some time or another. As long as you paid reproduction price though you can always turn around and resell it as an advertised reproduction and get your money back.

There is a wonderful once-a-year Gypsy Caravan Flea Market. These larger than life festivals are held all over the country and are great places to wander around aimlessly for days. As we moseyed through the endless array of venders hawking their wares, we stumbled onto one guy who had nothing but old cast iron items. Toys, mechanical banks, wall hangings and door stops. It was the doorstops that caught my wife's eye and stirred her blood with the uncontrollable desire to possess. I on the hand, was not so enamored with the flowering toe stumpers and was only too quick to point out that no one dealer could have amassed such an extensive inventory of hard-to-find items and then turn around and sell them for $20 a piece.

Logic told you they obviously were reproductions. An authentic turn of the century cast iron door stop could easily fetch over a hundred dollars. I may have won the battle but I definitely lost the war -- my wife brings up that lousy doorstop every time we argue over a purchase.

So mass produced reproductions are easy to spot but giving ammunition to your spouse to later use on you is not. Both have to be identified and dealt with in the most insightful manner. That one reproduction doorstop I wouldn't spend twenty dollars on has cost me thousands in the long run. The lesson is, buy a reproduction only if it is something your spouse wants.

Here is some other advise on reproductions. Look closely for obvious giveaways such as:

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Screws -- Phillips head screws until this century. -- They didn't make tem until the beginning of the 20th century.

Paint -- New reproduction paint is of such inferior quality it can easily be scratched off, sometimes with a fingernail. The old flaked paint of a 100-year-old item can't be removed with a blowtorch. It takes ages to wear it off.

Quantity -- Remember, the truly hard-to-find items are truly hard to find. If some guy has 50 for sale at an unbelievable price, a red flag should go up.

I have listed several companies down below that may be helpful for identifying reproductions.

The best way to spot a reproduction is to know the real thing. Become familiar with whatever item or items you choose to trade in and study everything there is to know about them. There is no substitute for real knowledge and no matter what area of trade you choose, rest assured, there is a wealth of information about it on the internet.

How Do You Sell An 80-Year-Old Bed Pan?

A dealer friend of mine had all these old broken, wooden parts chairs he was going to burn when a lady driving by spotted one, stopped and said she just had to have it. His curiosity caused him to ask what she was going to do with it. "Well, plant flowers in it silly, isn't it obvious?" was her response. Well Dutch didn't fall off the potato wagon yesterday and he began digging all those chairs out of the trash pile, knocking the seats out and planting flowers in them. He tells me it's the hottest selling item he has. And at every auction, it's always Old Dutch who buys all the broken chairs no one else wants.

The old adage "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" was never more applicable than it is to the antique and collectible trade. It never ceases to amaze me what others find appealing and I've noticed that others are not so enamored with my special treasures as I am. I

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usually don't hold this against them because I've learned that there is no accounting for personal taste.

Fortunately this is the saving grace of the industry -- there are also thousands of others just as intrigued with old inkwells and pens as I am. In fact, some are intrigued to the point that I've sold quite a few for some very heft profits.

After you have been doing this a while you will come to the point where every old item that inadvertently passes your way gets an inquisitive, some would say strange, scrutiny. Those stricken with this disease are all around you right now. You just didn't know what the problem was that they have. They're the ones who you'll see staring at an object for minutes and sometimes hours oblivious to their surrounding, and who sometimes loose all sense of time and space.

Occasionally you'll see them led around by the hand of a caring friend or maybe yelled at by an exasperated spouse. You'll know them though because you'll become one of them. It's like that. You don't get into the business it gets into you. But you'll get used to the finger pointing and the children laughing at you in the market place when you deposit all those checks from those in the more advanced stages of the disease

I said all that to say this: don't throw anything away and don't let anyone around you throw anything away. You see how beneficial the business already is? You've just done your part for recycling. Al Gore would be so proud.

How To Miss A Target At 10 ft. With A Shotgun

When I was a child my dad used to take me hunting for quail. I'll never forget the excitement of having the ground suddenly come alive under my feet with the sound and flurry of a large cubby of quail rising higher and higher in their frenzied escape from sudden death. I say "escape" because I usually shot a whole box of shells by days end and had not one bird to show for it. My dad on the other

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hand, a game bird hunter of extraordinary ability, would always bag his limit. The difference he was fond of telling me was shooting at one bird at a time instead of just shooing into the fracas of flying targets.

The same is true of the antique and collectible trade. Pick one category out at a time and don't try to learn everything about everything. The industry is too large to learn it all even in two lifetimes. Find something you really enjoy and then learn as much as you can about it. I can't emphasize the importance of this principle enough. Once you feel that you have a grasp of an area you like, then move on and expand your knowledge to another of interest to you.

This was some of the best advice I received form the old timers and has proved itself time and time again. Try not to yield to the temptation of buying something you haven't researched first. Don't put yourself in the position of buying something from someone who knows more about the item than you do. It may seem like common sense to say this but when you think about it the whole antique and collectible trade is built on this situation. But if you think that is pathetic, wait until you see how many dealers don't know what their doing. Hardly a week goes by where I don't walk into an antique mall and find items I know something about either under priced or overpriced. If the discrepancy between the price they're asking and what I know it is worth is great enough in my favor, I'll offer to buy it cheaper (haggling is a favorite pastime of dealers) and usually they'll drop it another 10-20% more. "Why would they do that?" you ask?

Because more often than not a dealer prices an item based on what they paid more than any other factor. And doubling the price for retail is also standard industry practice. They're almost always willing to drop it some. To put it another way, I've never bought a collectible without asking for a discount and I've never been told I couldn't have some price discount. In fact, the sticker price of 95% of all items for sale in antique malls takes into consideration some sort of discount.

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The industry standard is 10%. I've gotten and given myself as much as 30%. And everybody still made money. Amazing, huh?
In the antique and collectible business, knowledge truly is power. Those items I buy in antique malls, I usually bring straight home an put up for auction on eBay. I have yet to loose money on a single item sold through eBay. That's quite a statement I know, but it's absolutely true

So How Do You Get This Knowledge?

Well I've already stated there is no substitute for experience. That being said let me also say you don't need a lot of money. You can do this most easily by using other people's lifetime experience. People with a lot of knowledge tend to write a lot of books and publish papers and write articles. It's extraordinary how much you can learn from other people. I've provided a list of the best price guides, web sites and various other sources that are used by a lot of us dealers not too proud to admit there is more to learn in this ever-changing industry. Use these sources only as a guide and not as gospel. It's a fast track with new people coming to an interest of buying collectibles all the time. This can cause rapid price changes both up and down but mostly up.

Antique Week
www.antiqueweek.com

Harry Rinker's Official Price Guide To Collectibles
http://www.randomhouse.com/

Kovel's Home Page
www.kovel.com

Where Are The Best Places To Buy Antiques & Collectibles?
You'll get different answers from different dealers when you ask them where to buy them, but I have a suspicion it's more personal

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preference than anything else. I say that because almost all dealers do the same things:

Estate auctions
Yard sales
Estate tag sales
Buy from other dealers
Flea markets
Shows and fairs

You can get some great buys at any of these places and you can get tarred and feathered as well. The rule is be careful, buy with knowledge and don't believe anything you're told. Well maybe 3%, but no more!

We'll take these on one at a time.

Estate Auctions

I have to admit these are my favorite. They're fast paced, get-out-of-my-way action that people either love or hate. With the loud speakers blaring, the pushing and bumping, the bad food and the items coming at you fast and furious, you don't find many people there who haven't made their minds up whether they like it or not.

To the uninitiated the whole affair looks insane. And yet there are all those people oblivious to their weirdness shaking numbered cards in the air with one hand and looking at some strange item on a wagon with the other. I've taken friends to these affairs who try to avoid me now like an Amway salesman. I guess it scared them. Me, I'm in my element there.

Here are a few fundamentals to remember about auctions.

1. Get there early to give yourself time to check out the items. I can't tell you how many times I bid on something without previously looking it over closely and got burned.

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2. Always have your price books and other related material in the car. This will come in very handy on questionable items you hadn't expected to find.

3. If you want to bid on an item make sure you get the auctioneers attention. Don't lay back to see how high it will go for. He'll say, "sold" before you know what happened. If you are interested in an item at any price, get in early and the auctioneer will always look back at you before he sells it. You can always say no, but at least you're in control of your bidding and you won't lose an item because you weren't "in."

4. Don't get caught up in "auction fever." Make your mind up beforehand on what you want to pay for any item and then stick to it. There is nothing like paying too much for something you wanted to take the shine off of it.

5. Know your auctioneer. They are all as different as snowflakes. No two are alike. Some are better, more honest and reputable than others. I recommend attending an auction of any new ones without buying a thing or very little. See how he or she works a crowd. Are they quick to pull the trigger or do they find it painful to say "sold", knowing there might be one more dollar to be made.

Here is a tip: Start the bidding out if you see the sweat breaking out on his forehead because no one is opening the bid on an item. It doesn't have to be much, just a dollar to get it rolling for him. He will thank you by closing a few items you really want your way with a quick "sold". Call it professional courtesy or whatever; it works most of the time. There's no better friend at an auction than the auctioneer.
Other than these fundamentals of auctions, plan to spend a long time there. This I admit is the single biggest drawback to attending auctions. But if you learn to like them as I do, they can be entertaining as well as profitable.

Yard Sales

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Ever meet someone addicted to these? It's sad, isn't it? By all other accounts these are perfectly normal people and yet come Friday and Saturday they're up at dawn out the door and eagerly anticipating buying someone else's discarded junk. Strange behavior indeed.

I guess I have to fess up here. I've done a lot of these myself. Again the biggest drawback is that they are time killers. But if done right, they can provide some of the most profitable Saturdays you've ever had!

Some rules of engagement are:

1. Pick only neighborhoods in the oldest richest part of town. In St. Louis, which is close to where I live, my wife and I head for the old Italian south side or the old Jewish west county section of town. Places where strong traditions have kept family treasures in the family for generations. Then some ungrateful young married couple or some older couple cleans out their basement and unknowingly sell things of value. It happens literally every weekend.

2. Chart or plan your route for maximum efficiency. The best buys are had early in the morning before the other "pickers" have gotten to them. Pick up the paper Wednesday or Thursday and go through the yard sale adds with a city map and make your route up. Don't forget to include good restaurants on the way. Now you've got a reason to eat out. Finding bargains takes lots of energy.

3. Don't ever pay what they are asking. Remember, the reason they dragged it up from the basement was because they thought it was junk or they were just sick of looking at it. This is truly a motivated seller. I always offer half what they are asking and sometimes they take it!

Estate Tag Sales

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These usually happen when someone is going to move and they more often than not hire a professional appraiser to "tag" all their items for sale and then take on the responsibility of running the sale. These sales last for 2 to 3 days and sometimes longer. Personally I find them boring with few bargains to be had but some dealers do quite well at them.

Some things to know are:

1. The best buys are almost always the last day of the sale. Few tag sales will discount their first day.

2. Go the first day early and leave offers on items of interest. Chances are, they'll laugh you to scorn but if it doesn't sell by the last day, they'll be digging your business card out of the trash to see if your offer still stands.

3. This last technique is my favorite. If you find something you really want, go make your lowball offer directly to the home owner. They are the ones walking nervously around watching all the Cretans handle what was only hours earlier their personal things. The person running the tag sale won't like it but "tough titty" said the kitty. If the homeowner says yes, the professional tag appraiser can help you load it. Nothing like adding a little salt to the wound.

Buy From Other Dealers

As I mentioned earlier you can't know everything about this business. So take advantage of the weakness of other dealers who unknowingly have prices to low (and don't forget to ask for a discount). Almost every shop and mall has the same phenomenon. There will be an item price well over book value and right next to it is something under priced. Jump on it Leroy. Only remember the adage "if it's too good to be true, it probably is." Make sure it's not a repro, chipped or flawed in some way that greatly reduces its value. Here again, knowledge is king. Know what you are doing. There are just as many dealers who act dumb as there are who really are dumb.

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I personally like this method of buying collectibles because it's like the famous bank robber who when asked why he robbed banks replied, "that's where the money is." Well antique malls have antiques and there are bargains in most of them if you know what to look for. Take your price guide along for good measure.

Flea Markets

If I had to pick one place where the more shrewd people ply their trade it would be flea markets. Don't let the bib overalls and nice old granny fool you. They'll cut your heart out and feed it to you on a platter. Simply put, these people know what they are doing. I have the highest respect for these hardworking people. Don't let the "aw, shucks" demeanor throw you off. It's there by design.

That's not to say good bargains can't be had, but in the down and dirty arena of flea markets only the strong survive.

Some things to know:

Reproductions, reproductions and reproductions. More of them are bought and sold here than in China where most are made. I've seen brand-new cast iron toys soaked in salt water and lye for days and then baked in the sun until done. The rusted finished product looks a hundred years old except for the phillips head screw and the rough casting.

Always haggle. They expect it and have priced everything accordingly.

"Where they're from". I like to know that because I believe a local that sets up week after week is less likely to rip me off.
The best buys are early and when they are getting ready to pack up and leave. The reason is obvious: they would rather sell it than pack it back and forth again and when it's early they're usually anxious to make their first sale.

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Shows & Fairs

Antique shows and fairs bring the highest dollar for dealers, with the possible exception of eBay. I know dealers who do nothing else but buy from estate auctions and sell at antique shows. It's a tremendous amount of work, pulling a trailer of furniture and other miscellaneous items across the country, but the profit is worth it. At least to them anyway. I haven't had much luck buying at shows and fairs but they are a great place for an education. A lot of the dealers are passionate collectors as well and are only too happy to share their love of collecting. These people tend to be extremely knowledgeable about their area of interest. I recommend them on that basis alone. Also you'll find some of the finest quality, though pricey, antiques and collectibles anywhere. You're not going to drag junk across the country to sell. It's a good place to get a good look at some quality items.

Closing Thoughts

Well that's it folks. I hope you've learned enough from this information pack to at least get started making money in the antiques and collectibles trade.

It can be a rewarding experience in more ways than one. I have a home filled with wonderful furniture and treasures (and quite a few door stops). Many of the people we've met in the business have become good friends.

So may the collecting gods be with you, may you find that great buy right under your nose and may your seed be multiplied.

Souvenir Soil

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You've probably heard about the men who bought land that once belonged to Elvis Presley and sold "deeds" to the one square inch plots. Another guy did the same thing with a farm that Abraham Lincoln once owned.

Below are some other companies that are making money with dirt. Maybe you can come up with a way to do something similar to these ventures:

DooDad sells a line of state soil neckties and state soil maps.
You can visit there website at: http://doodadweb.com/docs/ssm.html

Another company, Footwhere, markets "Genuine Soil Specimens encased inside a foot cavity." "FOOTWHERE™" is a product line of authentic location souvenirs that acknowledges where you've actually set foot. Encased inside of a foot cavity within each embodiment, (e.g. key chain, magnet, etc.) is a specimen of genuine soil from a specific location adorned with colorful graphics that reflects a place's popularity, recognition and landmarks.

You can visit the Footwhere at http://www.footwhere.com/

Several companies sell souvenir caps and shirts with dye made from dirt. Here is a link with several of these companies listed:

http://www.wtamu.edu/~crobinson/DrDirt/dirtshirts.html

A New Twist On The Home Party Plan

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One of the biggest businesses to offer easy extra cash to the 'ordinary' person has been party plan. A great opportunity to have fun and make money too. Many party plan companies have grown into multi million dollar businesses! True!

But - that's just the problem. The companies have grown into huge, lucrative concerns. While those that hold the parties and do all the selling have only made a fairly meager income - nothing at all in some cases.

So, if you're tempted by the idea of party plan, but don't want to make money for someone else the answer is simple. Don't be just an agent - start your own party plan organizing company. Then, you can have hundreds of people all working for you - while you just sit back and do a little organization. A great way to make money!

Surprisingly enough, running a party plans company is no more difficult than being just an agent. And, there are thousands of people who'll gladly make money for you, while making a bit for themselves at the same time.

A Simple Principle For Profit

The idea for party plan is very simple. It has worked for many years, making many rich in the process - and it will work again and again. Best not to deviate too much from the proven and accepted course.

With party plan you take an interesting and attractive product. Something people enjoy buying. Something that sells well in a social atmosphere. Then, you get willing planners to hold parties in their homes, for neighbors, friends, etc. The products are displayed at the party and sales made. You pay the planner a commission - and make considerable profit for yourself!

Party plan works so well because sales are virtually guaranteed in such an environment. Your commission arrangements boost this

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further. Margins are often sky high. However, the most important factor is that you can magnify party success dozens of times over, for very little extra work. The result - a small business to start but a possible enormous one - and very quickly.

Just imagine you promote a product that sells readily for $20. Imagine the profit margin is 80%. And 20% goes to the planner. You keep 60% - that's $12 clear profit.

At one party it would not be unreasonable to sell 3 such items - $36 for you. That's not a great deal of money. But - when you consider 10 weekly parties would be easy, with virtually no work for you, it's even better. What if you could build a circuit of several hundred weekly parties nationwide?

The whole key to success in party plan is not large individual takings. It's a multiplication of small, almost insignificant sums that can be achieved quickly and easily. A way of magnifying money that you should always adhere to carefully.

A Successful Product

The first stage in successful party plan is choosing a successful product - it's essential. Most successful companies thrive on the right product - they don't sell a product because it happens to be to hand, or they think there is a demand for it.

If possible, try to keep within one product area. And, it's quite possible to succeed with just one item. Lots of other party planners have done just that!

Your product should be ideally suited to sell at a party. Usually it should be something non-essential, but something people like to 'treat' themselves to - perhaps a small curio or trinket. Bearing in mind most party planners are women it should be selected accordingly. Make it something bright and attractive, something that stimulates the senses.

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You can select a new line. But, to 'play safe' you can choose an existing party plan success. 'Tupperware' is one great success story, and could easily be duplicated with similar lines. Or, clothes are the ideal product. Gifts and crafts are a novel line - and paintings or prints are good for 'up market' parties. The choice is yours, and there are lots of imaginative ideas. You can even try to find several to find which is most profitable.

When you have selected a line you will need to track down sources - and find out as much about the product as possible. Buy as cheaply as possible direct from manufacturers, wholesalers or even consider direct import. Allow for a huge mark up!

The easiest way to trade is to take in stocks. However, there are still great chances if you do not have sufficient capital or storage space. Just buy samples to send to parties for which orders (and payment) are taken. This way you don't actually buy the goods until you have been paid for them.

No matter what product or source you choose, do ensure it is reliable. Nothing could be worse than having several hundred lucrative orders to fill and not being able to get continuity of supply. Finally, always be on the look out for cheaper or bulk supplies. With a thriving organization built you can be in a strong position to get cut prices from suppliers.

Building A Network

The next step is to build a network of party planners holding profitable parties for you. It is possible to start within a couple a weeks - and possibly end up with many hundreds!

Never hold the parties yourself because the profits are in volume. It is cheaper to employ others.

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Many, many people would be interested in holding your parties nationwide. Its extra cash, but also a pleasant social evening. Treat your planners fairly and they will do great things for you. The companies that pay planners poorly gain in the short term, but soon lose.

Press advertising is the most effective way of getting planners. Or, you could try shop window cars. Just put in a short, catchy line and a telephone number. Interested people then call you - and it's up to you to 'sell' them the idea and suggest how much money they might make!

When business develops, the secret is to employ organizers as well as planners. Their job is not only to hold parties, but appoint planners too. This way a chain develops and you have very little work to do at all!

When you receive an interested planner, agree with them the time and date of their party. Then, send them a supply of your product (could be demonstration stock only). A deposit could be charged for this. It is also usual to 'throw in' some attractive invitation forms they can use to invite their friends. And, some organizers send a free bottle of wine etc, to act as a buying incentive from their ample profits.

You should aim to appoint as many planners as possible. For just a little organization on your part, each will hold a party that will make you money!

A Profitable Party

One great business advantage is that you have very little to do with parties. Money while you do nothing! But, it is useful to give planners some guidance as to attaining best results.

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Ideally, parties should be held on weekdays, Tuesday to Thursday being best. It is best if friends are invited, though club and group parties can mean huge takings!

The host should do what they can to induce a pleasant party atmosphere, perhaps providing music, food and demonstrations. The parties can be enjoyable as well as profitable!

If the atmosphere is right, sales will almost certainly result. Impulse plays a great part in selling, and pressure is usually unnecessary and unwanted. Most people like to buy a little something - and those little something's add up to a lot!

The planner should take written orders for goods, as well as full payment - or at least a substantial deposit. The following day, the planner forwards the orders and payments on to you. This is less their commission - the level of which is up to you - but might vary between 20 and 50%.

You can take a reasonable time (say 14 days) to fill orders and then forward them to the planner (not to customers) for distribution. Indeed, if you get your supplier to complete the orders you will have even less work to do. Following completion just make sure all customers are satisfied – this bodes well for repeat parties!

Indeed, once you have completed a successful party, keep in touch with the planner and get them to repeat from time to time. Also approach their customers with a view to them holding parties. By this method you ever increase the chain of custom and literally multiply your profits. You've really got the chance to let profits run out of control!

Bigger And Better

Once you have held your first party, the sky is really the limit. It'll be obvious why owning the party plan company can be just as easy as

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being an agent for someone else – only thousands of times more rewarding!
Just keep going, adding extra parties here and extra parties there. Each takes only minutes of your time to plan – but together they add hundreds, if not thousands, of pounds to your income.

Really, party plan scope is unlimited. Just about every street in the country can bear several parties per year. And, even with 1% of that business, you'll be inundated. You're sure to find out that, although party plan is nothing new, there's as much scope to do well as ever!

Perhaps the secret behind party planning can be applied to success in many businesses. Never think that because other people seem to have cornered the market, you can't too. Never think something is too difficult or risky to try – when the outlay is so low.

And, above all, the sheer power of party plan takes little beating. How else could you genuinely have others working for you while you do nothing?

Fragrant Pine Cones

Pinecones will create a very attractive blue flame and fragrant scent when treated properly and burned in a fireplace.

Collect the pinecones and wash them in a solution of copper chloride -- purchased from a chemical supply house -- and water and allow them to dry completely. Package them in festive bags with about 18 cones to a bag.

You can wholesale them to retailers before the holiday season for $1.00 to $2.00 a bag. Or, retail them yourself at holiday craft shows. Your costs are practically nothing so profits are very high.

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Old Patents

Everyone has vision. Some people just realize that vision sooner than others. How many times have you seen a product and just smacked your head, wondering, “Why didn’t I think of that?”

There’s little doubt everyone has those exact same feelings—how could I not have thought of something so simple? Then there are those people who have really new, inventive ideas that probably have never even crossed our mind—like a boat that also flies, a mousetrap that doesn’t require a piece of cheese or a sponge that oozes bubble bath.

The United States was founded on innovation, even if some of those ideas never formulated. Thus, you’ve again walked into another excellent business opportunity.

If you’re looking to start a business that prides itself on being unique, then you’ll want to consider unearthing reprints of interesting old patents, framing them and selling them as a novelty.

You’ll likely find a diverse market for framed old patents, especially for customers who are shopping for the person who has everything.

You can find old patents by doing a search on Google, Yahoo or any other search engine. Here are a few great sites with which you might want to start:

http://www.uspto.gov/go/ptdl/
http://www.bl.uk/collections/patents/patentsnetork.html
http://www.targetfind.us/targets/all_about_inventions.htm

If you have trouble finding old patents, you may want to contact a patent attorney or call the United States Patent and Trademark Office for advice on where to look.

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Once you have found a diverse range of old patents, you'll want to print them. You might consider printing them on paper that looks as though it has been aged.

You'll then want to find frames in which to put the old patents: you can find a wide variety of frames at your local craft or gift stores. If you're handy and enjoy woodworking, you may want to consider making your own frames, thus making your product even more unique.

Market the framed old patents to local gift and card shops.

You may also want to start a website that includes full color photographs of the many old patents you are selling, an order form and an 800 number customers can call.

Rentals to College Students

College students are excellent prospects for rental items because they live in dorms or apartments and the living arrangements my change from year to year. They do not want to invest in expensive furnishings.

The kinds of things they will want to rent are TV's, compact refrigerators, bicycles, furniture, and microwave ovens.

To get started cheap, find used items at yard sales or flea markets and buy them for pennies on the dollar.

You may have to do some minor repairs but once in good condition these items can bring rental income of 3 - 5 times their cost in a single year. A small refrigerator you pay $10.00 for can rent for $35.00 - $40.00 a year.

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To promote your products, rent a uHaul truck at the beginning of each semester, put a big sign on both sides that say:

Dorm Furnishings 4 Rent -- Cheap!
Refrigerators, Microwaves, TV's,
Furniture. No Credit check!

Drive around the campus as students are moving in and hand out flyers promoting your rentals.

Children's Wall Charts

The door slams, and the kids run through the door, stopping to pick up their after school snack then plopping in front of the television to watch cartoons or play Nintendo. Or, as fast as they chug the milk and wolf down the cookies, they're outside playing until dark.

Trying to get kids to stay still and tell you about their day—whether they were hard at work in school or hard at play outside—isn't easy.

Children's wall charts provide a great opportunity for family time—and to get kids excited about learning and sharing. By using a daily wall chart, kids will get used to taking time to reflect and to write, even if it's only a few words.

Producing wall charts can bring you plenty of customers, especially if you emphasize the benefits it reaps: bringing the family together, getting children excited about family time and teaching both parents and children the importance of communication.

As with so many ideas, the daily wall chart you produce can be as diverse as your imagination.

What would kids like? What would their parents like to know?

Your chart could ask children to list one good deed they've done each day, helping to accentuate the positive in their lives. You might have

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a small section devoted to the day's weather—did it rain or snow? Was the sun shining or was it cloudy? Providing stickers of a raindrop, snowflake, a sun or a cloud might make it even more fun for kids.

Ask them to write down what they did during the day at school—what did they play in gym? Did they have a special program?

You could have a section where they write what they had for lunch, or ask them to write down one thing that made them happy that day. The possibilities are, quite literally, endless. Put your head into the minds of kids and parents, and you're sure to create a fun, popular daily wall chart.

Sell the daily wall charts with classified ads in your daily newspaper and magazines children might read including Highlights for Children.

You could also place ads in local church bulletins and local magazines for parents. Get a booth during community fairs or craft fairs, and sell the wall charts to parents searching for something unique.

You don't have to limit yourself to selling in your own city either; branching out will be as easy as placing ads in classified sections in other papers all over the country or national papers since ads in magazines tend to be quite pricey.

Be creative and assertive, and your wall charts are sure to be loved by parents and children.

Nostalgic Photos

Think back to the good old days.

Maybe your good old days are of hula-hoops, poodle skirts and drinking malts at the local diner, watching movies in your Mustang at the drive-in and listening to Elvis on the record player. Or, maybe your good old days aren't exactly so old, but are filled with memories

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of New Kids on the Block, jelly bracelets and leg warmers, roller skating on Friday nights and hanging out at the mall on Saturday afternoon.

No matter what you're good old days are, there is big business in the world of nostalgia, a business of which you may want to take advantage.

People like to reminisce, and there is no better way to remember than through photos that tell a good story.

So, what you want to do is cut out prints and illustrations from old books, frame them and sell them to people who are looking for a unique gift that will remind them of yesteryear.

You'll probably discover that finding old books is a fun process that will take you to used bookstores, flea markets and yard sales (or tag sales, depending on where in the United States you live.)

Find books that feature prints and illustrations from every era—the more diverse you are, the more framed memories you're likely to sell. Remember, even young adults like to think fondly back to their childhood days.

You can purchase frames at specialty shops or at most retail stores. Try to match frames with their prints.

For example, if you've found an illustration reminiscent of World War II, try to find a frame that is also reminiscent of that period. Be creative and have fun. You want to create an attractive package that will really catch your customer's eye.

Once you've made a batch of framed prints or illustrations, you'll want to decide how to price them. Make them affordable enough for kids who want to buy unique presents for their families. However, make sure you charge enough to make a profit for your efforts.

Sell your framed prints and illustrations by having a booth at craft shows, a kiosk at the mall or a table at a flea market.

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You can also sell them to a wide range of shops—from greeting card stores to novelty shops.

On Your Honor Vending

A man in Raleigh, NC has come up with a way to break into the vending business without having to invest thousands of dollars in vending machines. He places honor system snack candy boxes in small offices that don't create enough volume to justify a coin-operated vending machine.

The honor system boxes are simply cardboard boxes filled with about 70 snacks. Customers deposit their money in the box and make their own change.

David Kochak of United Snacks of America says the honor system works. He has over 2000 customers in the Raleigh, North Carolina area.

United Snacks of America buys wholesale snacks for 20 to 45 cents and resells them for 75 cents each. They keep the price of all their snacks the same in order to keep things simple.

Snacks they offer include Popcorn, Candy Bars, Lance Crackers, Potato Chips, Lifesavers and Gum.

One way to help keep your customers honest -- and help secure accounts -- is to give a portion of the proceeds to charity. If you display the charity prominently on the box, people will be unlikely to try to cheat the system.

I have located a company that specializes in Honor System Vending. Sheridan Systems of Buffalo, NY supplies snack boxes, coin boxes and many other accessories to the Honor Vending industry. You can find them online at:

http://www.sheridansystems.com/

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Category: Business Services

How To Start Your Own Bulletin Board Advertising Service

Believe it or not, bulletin boards actually work as traffic builders for just about any small business. They serve to enhance the community relation's image of a business, and the space required to locate a bulletin board can be written off as a tax deduction when listed as advertising or public relations expense.

People use these "business provided" bulletin boards to advertise things they want to sell, home-based businesses, and whatever they might want to trade for or buy. Then, they come back, sometimes morning, noon, and evening every day to check on them or to see whom else has an announcement posted.

Each time they come into the business owner's store or shop, they may not feel an obligation to buy something, but of course the business owner has another opportunity to sell them something. Just about anybody can organize a route of bulletin boards, charge the advertisers a small monthly fee, keep them up-to-date and neat, (which will make the business owner happy) and make some really easy money in the whole process.

The first step is to contact as many businesses in your area as possible. Grocery stores, drugstores, barber shops, beauty salons, service stations, quick print shops, rental shops, mobile home parks, shopping centers, apartment complexes that have foyers or recreation rooms - and the list goes on endlessly.

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Sell them the idea of allowing you to install and maintain a bulletin board service for them. Emphasize the community service, the tax write-off, and the fact that you'll keep it neat. When you get ten or more signed to allow you to install a bulletin board, you're ready to start making your bulletin boards.

The best plan (and of course the most economical) is to make your own. Cut a piece of corkboard 3 feet by 4 feet, mount a 3/4 by 1 inch frame around the edge, and cover this frame with a 3-foot by 4-foot piece of plastic. Mount the plastic with hinges at the top and a hasp at the bottom. On the back of the corkboard, install a couple of hocks for hanging it, and you're ready to go.

Make up a sign - you can even type it out and use it as another bulletin board announcement - something like this:

City-Wide Bulletin Board Services!
Your announcement or advertisement displayed
here for only $5 per month! For more information,
call 123-4567.

Put your sign or announcement on each of your bulletin boards, lock them up, and install them in all your locations. Ten such signs with only 50 announcements per bulletin board should bring you an easy $2500 per month.

When you put an announcement from the same person up on more than one board, charge them $5 per month/each announcement on each bulletin board. And one other thing: The date the "run of display" ends should be marked on each announcement you put up on each of your bulletin boards.

In all likelihood, you'll have people waiting for space on your bulletin boards. Keeping records should be very simple and easy. Start with a loose leaf notebook, blank paper and a couple of packages of 3 by 5 cards. In your notebook, write down the date, the amount of money received and the number of announcements on display, and the

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contract expiration date. On the 3 by 5 cards, write the name, address, phone number and expiration date of each contract, and the location(s) of the bulletin board(s) that particular announcement is on. Arrange the cards in chronological order according to expiration date, and file them in a storage box.

Once you get rolling, you shouldn't have to service your bulletin boards more than once a week, and as more people see them, more businesses will want you to put one in their business location, and more people will want to display an announcement.

That's the plan. It's simple, easy, and depending upon the population density of your area, it could very well be the very thing you've been looking for to supply you an extra income. It demands little investment, not much of your time, and no special training or education. But, as with any business venture, it takes ACTION on your part. You must get out there and set it up, and work at making it a success for you!

Real Estate Postcard Mailing Service

Here's a service you can offer to local real estate agents. When a house is put on the market, it is a common procedure for the agency to send postcards to people living in the same area. They also send postcards when the house is sold, to drum up more listings, and to announce open house events.

Real estate agents hate to prepare these postcards. It's boring and keeps them from doing what they like to do -- showing and selling houses.

That's where you come in. By using your computer, a word processing program and a compact disk directory of residential

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listings you can totally automate this process. And as a side benefit to the real estate agency, you can personalize each postcard. This has much more impact than simply addressing the postcard to RESIDENT as the agencies have done in the past.

Also, because you'll be mailing thousands of postcards, you can sometimes qualify for postal rates that are cheaper than the Real Estate agencies would pay if they did the work themselves. Check with your local post office for details on how to obtain a bulk mailing permit.

To target individual neighborhoods, you will need a list of zip plus 4 zip codes for your area. Your post office also has this information. When a real estate agency wants to target only houses in a certain area you can use the zip plus 4 lists to omit any apartment complexes or businesses from the mailing.

Any word processor with a mail merge feature can be used to prepare the postcards.

Fees for similar services are usually based on a per postcard rate. Five to seven cents per card above costs is typical.

Food Demonstrator Agency

Have you ever been in a supermarket and been offered a cracker or cheese sample? It is likely that the person offering the sample is an independent agent contracting through a specialized agency that places demonstrator in supermarkets.

Demonstrators are needed by the hundreds by food manufactures and suppliers. You can start a Food Demonstrator Agency and tap into this huge little known market.

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To Get Started:

1. Recruit people to demonstrate. Retired women are excellent prospects. The demonstrators are considered to be self-employed so you don't have to worry about withholding taxes and social security. Note: check with an accountant to see how to set this up correctly. The going rate for demonstrators is $10.00 an hour. You charge the manufacturer between $15.00 and $18.00 and pay the demonstrator as a contractor.

2. Visit local manufacturers and distributors. Tell them about your business and leave your business card. Write to manufacturers that are more distant. Follow up with a phone call a few days later.

3. When you get a product to demonstrate, the manufacturer will provide you with the dates for the demonstration, coupons, and forms for inventory tracking. You have to make sure the demonstrator gets these items in time for the demo. The demonstrator should take a before and after inventory of the product and the inventory tracking sheet returned to you. This will prove the value to the manufacturer of having in store demonstrators and help you get future business.

How To Run Your Own Courier Service

Courier services are one of those businesses that have been available in the capital city for years. Rushing urgent documents and packages around is a major service there. In fact, it's a multi-million dollar business in most large cities.

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However, out in the provincial areas of the country it's not that easy to find a courier service. They do exist, but they are quite rare and when they do exist, quite busy.
Hence, potential to start in most areas. Even some of our largest cities require more courier services, and there are certainly plenty of towns. Of course, in country areas there won't be a lot of demand, but it's still a service that could be added on to something else.
A courier service is effectively a taxi service for important documents and packages. But the interesting thing is that it's far less regulated than taxis. You don't need any sort of license or consent.

Setting Up As A Courier

You can operate as a one-man (or woman) courier service. That is, taking all the enquiries and doing all the jobs yourself. However, the best way is to just do the selling of the service and appoint agents to do the running about. This is the way to make it a really profitable service and it means it can be a full time income for part time work!

In most cases, the business can be operated from home. This is an advantage, not a disadvantage, because you can offer a more efficient service. If you can offer a 24-hour service then this will be a big selling point, but it's not necessary if you don't want to be on 24 hour call.

You will certainly need a home telephone. If you run the business yourself, a mobile telephone would be helpful. If possible, have a control centre, perhaps in a spare bedroom, where you can answer and make calls. Apart from this, your main requirement is a notepad. Perhaps have some special dispatch forms made up and photocopies giving details of each job.

Vehicles - As you might expect, the ideal sort of vehicle to operate a courier service is a motorcycle. These are cheaper to run and faster, especially in heavy traffic. If a motorcycle is not available, then you can use a car – the smaller and more economical the better. But

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watch the running costs, as these can be much higher than you might think - not just the cost of petrol.

Some courier services confined to towns or cities etc. could use a moped or even a pushbike. Ideal because it makes your service cheaper than anyone else's and gets through crowded streets!
All in all, it's not worth buying a special vehicle when you first start the service. Unless, of course, you don't currently have anything!
If using your own vehicle, check that your insurance policy covers your new use of the vehicle - it may well not and may need changing.

If you are going to use agents then this is simplicity itself, because it will be up to the agents to provide and pay for the transport, so you don't have to cover this yourself. Many agents would be pleased to work on quite modest per mile fees as this helps towards the running costs of their private vehicles.

Advertise in local newspapers and perhaps Job Centers, for agents to operate your service. You'll probably need two or three to start with so that you can operate the service all day.

Try to find someone reliable. It's ideal for pensioners or even housewives. Plus students at certain times of the year or after school. If you live near a college of some kind this could be ideal.

Pay your couriers by mileage. You can find out the going rate from a London courier service (ring some to find out). Provincial prices will be a little less. The usual charges are so much per mile with a minimum for each call out. Wages are not high, but worthwhile.
You will also need a controller. This is ideally you, or ideal for a housewife. If not however, you can appoint someone who lives nearby to receive bookings and dispatch riders. Pay a small hourly rate. It is best however if you can do it yourself as this cuts into your profits.

Getting Business

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To have a profitably courier service, you shouldn't just sit at home waiting for people to call you out like a taxi, getting a few odd jobs. This almost certainly won't make any money at all.
What you need is regular contracts for courier work. That is, customers who regularly have things to send to other places in the same region. Perhaps several a day, or at least several a week. We're thinking here of estate agents sending printing, or solicitors with important documents, or academic users. Even urgent machines or car parts. The post is too slow and you can't fax everything, well though it is.

You might want to advertise the service in newspapers etc, but this is slow and will take a long time to get established.

The best thing is to think up all the types of users in your area and give them a ring (or you could write them a letter). Explain the service and ask if they are interested. Many won't be, but some are sure to be. You only need a handful of regular customers to have a good small business.

When you get an interested customer, sign a user contract with them. For this they'll pay a user license fee of about $100 per year. This is to have you on call during your working hours. On top of this, charge them a mileage charge for every mile your operator travels from your base, to customers, to drop off point and back again.

Obviously this price will be higher than the rate you pay your drivers, hence your profit. It is best to charge a high rate, even one that seems ridiculously high, because you must give a good quality service. Firms will pay for a good service.

Keep on signing up customers until you have as many as necessary for a suitable income. This could bring several dozen or several hundred jobs per week depending on what you want.

Operating The Service

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Setting up and selling the service is really the difficult part. Operating it is easier.

All you do is get calls from the customer. Be sure to write down what is to be moved, from where and to where. Get an authorization number from the customer (a number which you can quote on your bill to show that the trip was properly authorized).

Then get on to your driver by phone or mobile phone, and send him/her out to do the job. When the job is completed, the driver should report back to you with a mileage and confirmation that the job has been done.

It's a good idea to telephone your customer and tell them that the job has been completed - a personal touch.

Each week, calculate the mileage due to each company and send them an invoice. You could make it a condition that payment is made within seven days, though some might expect thirty days credit. Pay your drivers on a weekly basis, or a monthly basis if they will accept it. One problem is that you might have to pay your drivers before you get paid.

Sometimes you might get customers who aren't registered with you just wanting a 'one off' job. If this is the case, charge them about double your normal rate to make up for the fact that they are not regular users.

Efficiency is the thing at all times. It has to be quicker than using the post and more convenient than the customer doing the job themselves. This done, you can get very high fees - $2.00 per mile is possible for a good service.

Expansion

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The obvious way to expand the service is just to keep on getting more and more customers! Or getting more work from the same customers. You can also expand into other areas with small area offices.

However, you can make much higher profits by increasing prices and cutting costs. If you can offer a 24-hour service you can charge more for out of normal hours working. Long distance couriers are also required and this can be done in connection with other firms. If you have plenty of work, you could pay a courier a weekly wage, no matter how much or how little he does. This will work out cheaper in the long run and so boost your profits.

That said, although there are big profits in couriering, it is ideal as a business that you can start at a very low level. This is ideal in provincial areas as business is not that busy right now, but is something that will grow.

How To Make Money With A Newspaper Clipping Service

This is a very lucrative business, and it's growing in demand and popularity. There are thousands of people in all parts of the world who are making hundreds of pounds each week, just reading and clipping news items in the privacy of their own homes!

The press clipping business is very misunderstood by most people, and therefore there are a lot of people who are very skeptical about it as a way for ordinary people to make money at home.

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If you explain to friends or neighbors that you operate a press clippings business, most of them will think you pore through the obituaries, funeral notices, and wedding announcements, clipping these out and sending them to the people or relatives of the people being written about. In reality, this is but a very small part of the home-based newspaper clipping service.

The really successful press clipping services have contracts with companies and organizations that want to keep current on any number of matters reported in the papers. Some companies' hire clipping services in order to keep track of what their competitors are doing.

Other companies, including businesses of all kinds, use clipping services as a means of locating sales leads and new customers. National magazines and newspapers are always in need of different or interesting material, and frequently employ home based clipping services.

To set yourself up in this kind of business, you'll need only a pair of scissors and as many different newspapers and magazines as you can subscribe to. A visit to your local public library should be most informative relative to newspapers and magazines available to subscribers.

You should also visit your local wholesale paper house, or make a deal with your local stationery store to buy labels at a discount price. You'll want to attach these labels to the top of each clipping you send to your clients. On these labels, you'll want to print the name of the publication the clipping came from, and the date it appears, as well as your own name and address.

The next step is simply to start clipping articles that mention or talk about specific companies or people.

File your clippings in envelopes or boxes according to industries or types of businesses, by company name, and according to the names

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of the people mentioned. Once you have ten or more clippings that talk about a particular company or person, put them in an envelope and send them to that company's owner or public relations director.

You should try to get your clients to agree to pay you a monthly 'reader's fee', for which you agree to look for anything in the newspaper about him or his company or industry. Every time you spot such an article, you of course clip it, and send it to him.
A minimum monthly 'reader's fee' is usually about $20, but it can vary according to the number of publications you read, and the number of clippings found.

Generally, a clipping service that scans countrywide publications will charge about $50 per client, or $100 per client for those wanting clippings from national publications.

These fees, of course, are monthly fees, and you can easily see how you could make some very good money with just 20 to 25 clients.

To promote and build your business, you can scan your local business services directory an send out a solicitation letter to each of those listed. A couple of days after you've posted your sales letter; you should follow up with a phone call.

A short, to the point, ad under "Business Personals" in your daily newspaper will also bring in new clients for you.

And as soon as you can afford it, go with at least a small display ad in the Yellow Pages.

You should definitely contact the public relations firms, advertising agencies, and civic organizations in your area. Explain your services and ask them if they have any special clients or needs you can help them with.

You'll find many of your local political and "cause" groups very interested in receiving clippings about their opponents.

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Clipping services in one form or another have been around since the advent of printing press, and as stated earlier, they're becoming more in demand.

It's definitely the kind of business anyone who knows how to read can set up and operate with an absolute minimum investment.

Case File

One man started his clipping business by collecting newspaper advertising on big-ticket items such as furniture, video and audio components, swimming pools, hot tubs and appliances. He then printed these up into binders and sold them by category to advertising agencies.

Advertising Maps

Maps serve a purpose. People use them for directions. They trust them and depend on them to get them where they want to go. It tells them where the local attractions are, and other places if interest, particularly among tourists - the people who use maps the most.

Considering the credibility and the power of maps as a printed medium, it takes an entrepreneur 2 seconds to realize that there's money in maps...as an advertising vehicle.

You can design your city map to be as large as 28" x 40" which can be printed by commercial print houses with large format presses. Or you can use the 11"x 17" format and bring it to your neighborhood quick printer.

The Map

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What you're going to make a map of is as critical as deciding about how you're going to do it. These are the two questions that will make the foundation of your business.

Big cities are very seldom a great market for City Maps. However, if you break them apart and make maps for selected business districts, even down to selected neighborhoods, the taking is plenty.

Focus on dense retail districts. Target those with neighboring restaurant rows, historical spots or other tourist attractions.

Purchase reprint rights of already existing maps as this would prove significantly easier and more cost efficient than producing one yourself.

"Cartoon" maps may be visually entertaining, but they are seldom useful.

You will probably attract more advertisers if you can equate your advertising rates with potential use.

Advertisers position advertising blocks on the outer edge of the map area. Depending of the size of your map and the paper you plan to print it on, you can have as many or as few "blocks" to offer for advertising. Encourage your advertisers to buy more than 1 block of advertising. This will not only make your map look more exclusive, but it will also make your selling task much easier.

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Coupons: How To Run An Easy And Profitable Business Selling Special Coupons

Look in your mailbox. What do you see almost every day? Coupons. Look in your newspaper. What do you see EVERY day? Coupons. It seems like coupons multiply like rabbits. Why? Prices are rising, unlike a majority of people's incomes.

Coupons only make good financial sense. But what if you discovered that someone's making money from coupons? They are, and so can you, by selling a special type of coupon.

Manufacturers use coupons primarily to attract new customers. The money savings entice people to try products they might otherwise not have. The same can be true of local businesses in your area.

Sure, they put coupons in their newspaper ads. But you can give them the opportunity to get their coupons into the hands of the exact customers they need, and at a far better price than the local newspaper. You can produce a Local Business Coupon Book easily, inexpensively, and profitably, if you follow the steps outlined here.

The first step in running a successful coupon publishing business is to find the businesses that will advertise with you. Any business that relies on local advertising is a good prospect. Here is a short list of businesses you should consider: Theaters; Hair Salons; Fast Food Restaurants; Record and CD Stores; Dry Cleaners; Supermarkets; Car Washes; Muffler Shops; Ice Cream and Frozen Yogurt Shops.

Basically, any store that could reasonably use a coupon to draw in new customers is a prospect. You may want to specialize in one area, such as fast food restaurants. Or, cover the whole gamut. Look

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through your phone book for businesses you might not have thought of.

When you approach these businesses, target a group within a five-mile radius. It will be more time-efficient for you, and you can use the area grouping in your sales pitch. Stress the fact that around 80 percent of their business will come from that five-mile radius. Tell them that you plan to distribute the coupon book within that radius, so it will draw the best results.

To be really profitable, you should get at least 15 - 25 businesses in the book. The more, the better. How much to charge? That depends on how many books you will be distributing, and what your costs are.

One coupon book producer charged $100 for a coupon going to 1,000 people in an eight-mile radius. His total cost was $300, and he sold 11 businesses coupons. This gave him an $800 profit in one week!

The second step is to create the coupons. If you have a computer, the job of designing the coupons can be quite easy with some of the word processor/ graphics packages available. If not, talk to your printer. He or she will more than likely have some ready-made templates for coupons. You can just fill in the blanks.

Put the advertising business' name, address, phone, logo (if any, many businesses will have them ready made for you to use), the amount of the discount, any conditions they may have, and an expiration date. Your printer can help you with the layout, if you are inexperienced, or you can find easy to use layout boards at an office supply or art store.

Assembling the coupon books can be done in a number of ways. The easiest, and recommended, way to start is by simply stapling them together. Only one staple will be necessary, on the left side of the stack of coupons.

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Make a cover coupon with your business name and the name you've chosen for the coupon book. Put that on top of the stack before you staple. Other methods are perforating/padding and perforating/perfect binding. Your printer should be able to provide pricing information on these and other binding methods.

The third step is distributing. You have already identified the radius within which you will distribute your coupon books. There are two methods of delivery you can use. You can either deliver them by car or foot, or you can bulk mail them.

Bulk mailing is infinitely easier and more efficient, but requires a bit of paperwork and registration fees. If you are delivering in one zip code area, you can use either five digits presort mailing, or carrier route presort mailing.

You should check with your postmaster regarding rules and fees. As soon as you have mailed the coupons, deliver a copy of the coupon book to each business that has advertised in it, so they know that customers will now be bringing them in.

The fourth and final step is follow up. You need to know how your coupon books are doing. Ask the businesses that advertise in your book to write the amount purchased by the coupon-bearing customer on the back of the coupon, and to hold them for you.

Stop by at least once a week and pick up the redeemed coupons. Besides giving you purchase totals that you can refer to in future sales to new customers, this also gives you a chance to talk to the businesses about purchasing coupons in new books. You can show them right then and there the results they have gotten, and they should be enthusiastic about signing back on.

It is important to maintain a good relationship with the businesses that advertise with you. Show them that you are committed to helping them increase their business. If you care, so will they. This is a fun business that can be started part-time, and can easily move to

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full-time. Remember the man who cleared $800 his first week in this business. He was just starting out, and you can do that, too!

Fresh Flower Delivery

Going to the dentist and the doctor usually isn't fun; and sometimes it's downright stressful. Sitting at your desk in the office, staring at the computer all day, the scenery never changing can become monotonous and utterly boring at times. By the same token, restaurateurs are always looking for ways to keep their customers comfortable, so they'll return again and again.

The common denominator shared by all those? Fresh flowers! Think about it. Imagine going to the dentist, sitting in the waiting room and flipping through magazines, the sweet scent of fresh roses wafting through the air. Imagine a vase of fresh flowers—daisies, roses, carnations, and lilies—sitting on your desk when you arrive in the morning or appearing in your office in the middle of the day. Or, you sit down at a table in a restaurant, a single rose in a tall glass vase, lit by the flame of a candle.

Fresh flowers brighten up the atmosphere—whether it's stressful like a doctor's office or romantic like a restaurant. A fresh flower delivery service has no shortage of potential clients—from doctors and dentists to hair salons and retail stores. Your service can provide weekly—or however often you prefer to offer—delivery of fresh table flowers to customers.

How you present the flowers are up to your creativity: will you allow customers to choose what flowers are delivered? Or, will you offer a set schedule: for example, roses in February, orchids in April and lilies in June? Will you offer discounts for restaurants, or others, who may want to order a volume of flowers?

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Establish a website presence where customers—and potential customers—can go to view the type of flowers you deliver. Include plenty of photographs to give people an idea of what to expect. At the same time, ensure the photos don't take too long too load, frustrating customers. Make sure to have pages for contact information, an order form and other pertinent information.

If the cost isn't too great, consider choosing several businesses, potential customers, and send them a bouquet of table flowers. You might also create color brochures to send or hand deliver to potential clients.

Produce a catalog of the different flowers and arrangements you offer, again with plenty of photographs and easy ways to order: via your website or by phone. Place ads in publications business owners read, highlighting the benefits of having fresh flowers delivered on a regular basis.

Partner with a florist, or find a florist who will offer you discounts, which you can either pass on to your customers or pocket as even more revenue.

How To Make Money With Your Own Referral Service Business

There are many different referral services you can run, either as a stand-alone service or together with other types.

Here are some businesses you can specialize in:

- plumbers
- hair salons
- auto maintenance
- child care

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- real estate agents
- travel agents
- lawyers
- dentists
- musicians and DJ's
- printers
- restaurants
- house sitters
- baby sitters

Basically, any high-competition business will appreciate a referral service.

How can you make money? If you provide the service free to consumers, you can either charge a monthly or annual fee to business listed with your service, or you can collect a commission on each successful referral. Or, depending on the type of service you run, you can charge the consumer.
For instance, if you are running a roommate referral service, both parties (the searcher and the potential roommate) can be charged a fee.

Identify the types of businesses you'll keep information on, then develop a survey geared toward the type of the business they're in.

Ask what types of work they specialize in, what their average charge is, how long they've been in business, if they have customers who can give a testimonial for them (call these people and get their permission before you use their testimonial - also, try to make sure they're not just the businessperson's brother-in-law, that they're actual customers who can give a real opinion), and other pertinent information.

Get these surveys out to each of the businesses in the categories you've selected, and keep their responses in your file.

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Put together a flyer advertising your referral services. Then, distribute the flyers by: contacting your local "welcome wagon" service, offering them flyers to insert into their packages, posting them on grocery store and church bulletin boards, leaving them on car windshields in mall parking lots, posting them in laundry rooms at apartment buildings, and leaving them anywhere large groups of people will see them.

When a customer calls for a referral, give them the information you've collected from the businesses. They will appreciate not having to make three dozen calls in order to make an informed decision. The customer testimonials will help people make a good decision.
Keep in touch with the people you've given referrals to, so you can get their opinion on how the business did. If you get complaints from customers, drop the business from your files. If you get good recommendations, move them to the front of the list.

You will be offering a much-needed public service with this business. Stress to potential businesses that you can refer new customers to them, and they should be willing to pay commissions, or a subscription fee. Give it a try, and you can make a decent amount of money in the referral business!

How To Start a Profitable Discount Card Business -- While Helping Charitable Groups in Your Community

The objective of this report is to show you how to produce a simple discount card for merchants and consumers in your community. We will show you how to get the merchants to participate, how to get

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your cards produced, and how to market your discount cards to people in your community.

Getting a Sponsor

The best starting point when producing a discount card for your community is to get a sponsor who will be the beneficiary of the project. Local youth groups or any other charitable group will prove worthy and would mutually benefit from a project like this.

Getting the Merchants

Discount cards work. Whether a merchant will admit it or not, they love discount cards. It brings new customers to the business, and brings old customers in more often.

When producing your discount card, you have to decide on a format or theme for your card. You have to decide what types of merchants to feature. (restaurants? hotels? retail stores?) You have to decide how many merchants and the amount of discounts each has to offer in order to participate in your program.

For many merchants, participating in a discount card program is the cheapest, no-money-out-of-pocket way to advertise their business. All they have to do is offer discounts to customers who are already willing to purchase something -- the people who have your discount cards.

15 Restaurants 15% Discount

For the purpose of this report, we will produce a discount card that features 15 restaurants offering a 15% discount on meals. These restaurants can range from the low-end family diner to the most expensive restaurants in your area. In fact, it is the more expensive restaurants that like discount cards the best!

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Once you have decided on your theme or format, it is time to start writing the restaurants in your area. You can mention to the restaurant owners that only 15 restaurants will be featured in your discount card, and that the sale of the discount cards will benefit the local youth club or whichever your charity sponsor may be.
You must prepare a simple one-page agreement where the restaurant owner or manager can sign, agreeing to participate in your discount program and promise to extend a 15% discount to anyone who presents your discount card when paying their bill.

Printing Your Cards

Print your cards the size of a business card or a credit card. On one side, put the name of your card and the name of your sponsor. For example, you call this card the "dine-around-town" discount card featuring 15 restaurants offering 15%. Use a colorful design to make it attractive and difficult to duplicate.

On the reverse side of the card, list all the 15 restaurants that are participating in your program and have their phone numbers and a brief description of the type of cuisine they serve. (Continental., French, Italian, Greek, Chinese, etc.)

There are two details you must attend to when producing your discount card: (1) get your cards numbered. You can use a numbering machine, which you can buy for around $60 each, or you can have them numbered by your printer. (2) Get your cards laminated after they are numbered. Not only will this prevent pilferage, it will also make your cards last longer.

Altogether, with 2-sided printing, a second color ink, numbering and laminating, expect to pay around 25¢ for each card. This means that if you ordered 2,000 cards, your cost is $500.

15-15-15

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Get 15% discount at 15 restaurants for only $15. That's the slogan by which you can promote and sell your discount cards. But here's the clincher... You don't do any selling. This is where your charitable group/sponsor will come into play.

By selling the cards for $15 each, you can offer your charity sponsor to split the sales 50-50. You've done all the work, now it's their turn to market the cards to offices, other merchants and to consumers.

Making $15,000 In 4 Weeks

For every card they sell, you get $7.50. You and your charity sponsor must mutually decide and agree how often you will do your accounting and how often will they have to give you money.

In general, if you have an influential group as your charity sponsor, they should be able to sell all 2,000 cards in a matter of 4 weeks. If such were the case, you can make an arrangement where they remit money to you every Friday. With a share of $7.50 per card, 2000 cards would bring you $15,000 - possibly within a short four weeks.

Category: Audio and Video Businesses

Bedtime Stories on Tape

No kid wants to go to sleep when his parents tell him to. It's just the law of nature.

Kids want to stay up late to see what magical things happen when they're asleep. Some kids are terrified of the dark, waiting for monsters to crawl out of their hiding places under the bed and behind the closet door. Sleep doesn't always come easy.

Many parents tell their children bedtime stories. Often those kids beg for more, but Mom or Dad simply don't have the time. There are also

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those moms and dads who, so overloaded with work, they simply aren't able to share bedtime stories with their children every night.

Bedtime stories on tape are the ideal solution for moms and dads who don't have time to read to their kids. And, they're great for those kids who beg for more and more. Mom or Dad can just pop the tape in, turn off the light and say goodnight, knowing a good story, told by a soothing voice, will lull their child to sleep.

Go to your local library, and visit the children's section. Pick out a handful—or more, depending on how many stories you want to have on tape and how many tapes you want to produce—of some of the best bedtime stories.

Tip: Ask the librarian what stories are particularly popular with kids, if you're not sure.

Check out the books, and do a run through, or several, reading them to see how long they run on tape as well as to rehearse telling the story.

Remember, a storytelling requires emotion, to keep your audience spellbound while also soothing them, helping them to fall asleep.

You can present the tapes any way you want. You could do "Bedtime Stories for Every Day of The Week," "Bedtime Stories Especially for Christmas," or "Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales."

Use your imagination, and you'll likely brainstorm dozens of fun and unique ways to present the bedtime stories.

Since your market is a child, make sure you package the tapes in a fun, eye-catching manner. Use striking artwork, or maybe include a little picture book you've created with each tape. Have local children's bookstores and toy stores stock your cassettes, and sell them via classified ads.

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You could also host a storytelling hour at your local library, after which you could sell the tapes to happy parents.

Video Yearbooks

Video Yearbooks are growing in popularity. They usually consist of short scenes of important high school events, such as sports, clubs, candid "people scenes," still photo montages, and other memorable items for the students.

A well-edited hour-long video should be able to be sold for $15 to $30, depending upon the editing complexity of the video and the size of the school. The larger the school, the more you can expect to sell.

You should first contact the school administration with this idea. Put together a good presentation for them, explaining your services and how your video yearbook will work with the regular yearbook as an added remembrance.

A good idea is to offer to donate a portion, $2 for example, per tape sold to a school fund or student-supported charity. After the administration, you will probably need to speak to the school board, principals, and school yearbook sponsors. This work will be worth it, though.

Try to include in your tape, from time to time, current events or subjects, which will remind the viewers about what was going on at the time they were in school.

One caution: Be careful about including copyrighted items, such as popular songs, in your tape. You will need to get permission from the copyright holders or risk legal action.

The best way to sell your tape is to obtain permission to distribute a flyer to the students in the school at the same time as the regular yearbook information is distributed. Then, follow up later in the year,

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giving those who haven't ordered yet another opportunity. Finally, give another chance at the end of the school year.

From time to time, go to the school and shoot material. Get sporting events, clubs, quiz bowl tournaments, science fairs special events, pep rallies, ordinary day-to-day video, and, of course, graduation.

If you're ambitious, do a video yearbook for each class! That way, students can end their high school years with a four-video set, documenting that time of their lives from start to finish!

Recorded Convention Speeches

Every year there are 23,000 professional conventions help all over the United States. And every one of these conventions has one or more speakers who give talks on various business and industry related topics. A very small percentage of these speeches are recorded.

That opens up a huge market for someone to record the speeches on audiotape, duplicate the tapes on site and sell them to convention goers.

All you would need to do is contact convention organizers and offer to give them a commission of every audio sold. They should be willing to agree, as this would be extra income for them.

Of course, you would also need the recording and duplication equipment but you should be able to rent this cheaply.

Case File

Gary Stavish of Pasadena, CA operates Insta-Tape, Inc. He records and then duplicates speeches on site for sale to conventioneers

Stavish's first event was a medical convention where he sold hundreds of tapes containing the lectures of all the speakers. He prices his tapes at $10.00 per hour.

His first year in business he grossed $200,000.

College Class Lectures

Here is a quick and easy moneymaker if you live near a college or university.

Employ college students to record class lectures. Have the tapes transcribed and sell them to students who may have not attended the class that day or who just want a legible set of notes.

You can sell the class notes individually or the entire semester for a set fee.

Market your business with ads in the student newspaper and by handing out flyers.

Walking Tours

If you live in an area that has good tourist traffic you can produce and market walking or driving tour tapes.

These tapes start at a specific location and then guide the tourist through an area. Along the way you provide colorful narrative about the area, famous residents, anecdotes and detailed directions about what to look at. Along with the tape include a map of the tour area.

You can sell your tapes through mail order or in retail stores that cater to tourists, hotels, restaurants, etc.

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Video Taping Office Space

Here is a business that has a huge profit potential. What you do is contact owners or managers of office buildings that are for lease. Offer to videotape the properties and show the video to potential renters.

This should be a very attractive proposition for both the owner of the property and the business looking to lease office space. You only charge the owner of the property a fee if and when the property is leased. This saves him the expense of advertising the property. And you save the leasing party time by having many different properties on the tape for their review.

The owner of the property would pay a fee of 3 to 5 percent of the lease payments once the property is rented. Or the fee could be based on a sliding scale for a 5-year contract. For example, you would receive 5% the first year, 4% the second, 3% the third, 2% the forth and 1% the fifth and final year of the contract.

You can find companies with office space for lease in the newspaper classified ads. You can find companies looking for office space by placing your own classified ad in the newspaper.

Hobby Audios

Hobbies are big business in the United States. It seems like everybody has a hobby, whether it's stamp collecting, model making, angling, treasure hunting or scrap booking. Kids often start off with hobbies like collecting baseball cards and stickers. Just one look at all the specialty stores, and there's little doubt that people will continue to shell out money to keep up with their favorite hobbies.

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There's also little doubt that people are extremely busy in today's world, sometimes even too busy to pick up a magazine to read about their favorite hobbies. It's just easier to plop a tape into the car stereo or bedroom boom box. Therefore, you can produce a library of hobby audiocassettes that speak to the passions of enthusiastic hobbyists. Each cassette may be about specialized areas of the chosen hobby.

Let's use someone who collects baseball cards as an example. There's a lot someone who is new to baseball card collecting will want to know. So, one audiocassette you may want to produce, pertaining to baseball card collecting, would be geared toward new collectors. In this audio, you might want to discuss the different types of baseball cards—Topps is the original card, but which brands are the most popular today? How does having an autograph on a baseball increase its value, and how is the value of a baseball card determined? Does it make sense to buy entire sets of baseball cards? Where is the best place to find much sought after baseball cards? When kids want to trade baseball cards, is there something they should know before they give up their prize Ken Griffey Jr. for an Alex Rodriguez?

Sit down and make a list of all the hobbies you'd like to cover. For each hobby topic, create a variety of aspects you'd like to discuss in your library of audios.

Once you determine what hobbies you are going to focus on, start doing research. If you're going to start with the audio for new baseball card collectors, for example, do an Internet search on baseball cards. Talk to local baseball card dealers, perhaps including interviews on your audiocassettes. Approach baseball card collecting through the eyes of a new collector then write a script that will inform, entertain and hold your listeners' attention.

Sell your cassettes by placing ads in hobby magazines and local publications. You can also have local hobby shops stock the

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cassettes.

Home or Office Inventory

Ask any homeowner or small business owner what their greatest fear is, and you're likely to hear a variety of answers. You're probably going to repeatedly hear they fear losing everything in a fire or being burglarized.

The most important thing any homeowner or small business owner can do is to have an up-to-date, meticulous inventory of all of their possessions. It will make the process of recovering losses, in case of fire or burglary, much smoother, especially when it comes to dealing with insurance companies. In fact, most insurance companies require those insured with them to have a photographic or videotaped inventory of their possessions.

The problem is we live in a hectic world, and people don't always have time to conduct a thorough inventory. If you have a digital camera or a video camera, you can offer to take inventory for homeowners and small business owners. You'll likely find the response to your service very positive; after all, you're offering to provide an invaluable service to people who are often taxed for time.

First, you'll want to decide whether to offer to take inventory with a digital camera or a video camera. If you have both pieces of equipment, you might consider allowing your clients to decide which they'd rather have: photos or videotape of their possessions. Along with the visual part of the inventory, you might also offer a written inventory.

If you produce inventory with a digital camera, offer your customers copies on CD or even on disk, if they prefer. Advise they keep one copy in a safe place, like a safe deposit box at the bank.

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If you're going to be taking inventory when someone is not at home or in the office, you should consider taking out insurance or becoming bonded, which will protect you in case something goes wrong or any damage takes place.

To market to small business owners who need their business possessions documented, you might want to put an ad in your local Chamber of Congress' yearbook. You can also place classified ads in local business papers as well as your local newspapers. Write a snappy press release announcing your new business; this is a great way to garner free publicity.

Astrology Audios

"Today is a day of reflection. Consider staying at home and working today; you need the break from gossipy co-workers, traffic jams and rude cashiers. You're an outgoing person, but sometimes you need to be alone to reenergize. Remember, you're a leader, not a follower, and people look up to you. Take some time today for yourself."

If you're one of those people who checks their horoscope before doing anything else then you understand the appeal of daily readings. If not, you might be surprised to learn that astrology is big business. Some people literally live by their horoscopes and check their reading before they even have their first cup of coffee. With a little work and a lot of creativity, you're poised to make a big splash in the world of personal astrology with astrology audiocassettes featuring personal predictions and sound advice.

Here are the signs you'll work with: Aries (March 21-April 19), Taurus (April 20-May 20), Gemini (May 21-June 20), Cancer (June 21-July 22), Leo (July 23-August 22), Virgo (August 23-September 22), Libra (September 23-October 22), Scorpio (October 23-November 21), Sagittarius (November 22-December 21), Capricorn (December 22-

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January 19), Aquarius (January 20-February 18) and Pisces (February 19-March 20).

Start with Aries, or whatever sign you want. Write a script for Aries. Will you include a reading for each day of the year? Or will you offer a reading for each month? Write out unique, fun, positive readings. Remember, people look to their horoscopes for good news and exciting prospects. Feed their desires with happiness and good fortune.

Once you've written the readings and recorded an audiocassette for each sign then you'll want to create fun, eye-catching packaging. Mount the cassettes in a display box. You might want to include a booklet with a few sample readings.

Market the cassettes as a unique gift, one that will remind the receiver they are thought of every day of the year. Emphasize that the audiocassettes are better than horoscopes in newspapers because you can listen to them anytime without the hassle of searching through the paper or online.

Finally, arrange to have a variety of stores—including gift, record and novelty shops—to stock the cassettes. You might also want to hold a "meet and greet" at shops where you can sign the display box and meet customers and generate excitement.

Health and Wellness Audio

Health and wellness is big business in the United States. A glance at all the popular diets—from Atkins to the South Beach—is concrete proof of how concerned people are about their health. People are always looking for ways to live healthier—whether it's by exercising, adhering to new diets or taking vitamins—so they can live longer, happier lives. The problem is there is a lot of temptation out there with fast food joints on every corner, commercials for the latest junk

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food or desserts on during every break and lives that are so busy that exercising is the last thing some people want to do.

Psychological wellbeing is another major concern of most people, considering depression is an all-too-common illness in the United States.

The health and wellness field is fertile, allowing for perfect placement of a library of Health and Wellness audios. You can produce a separate library of audios—focusing on health and psychological concerns—for women and men.

The first thing you want to do is sit down and make two lists: one for women and one for men. For the women, you may have topics including PMS, menopause, depression, and reproductive health while men's topics may include prostate cancer, how to care for your heart, how to avoid or combat high blood pressure and keeping hold of cholesterol.

Once you have your lists, you'll want to start compiling information. Research on the Internet or at your local library, but always make sure your facts are correct. If for example, you're talking about breast cancer for women, you may want to consult the National Breast Cancer Coalition (www.natlbcc.org.) Likewise, if you're discussing prostate cancer with men, consult National Prostate Cancer Coalition (www.4npcc.org.)

You might want to consider adding a disclaimer advising listeners, if they have health concerns, they should consult their doctors, and the audios are only meant to educate and inform, not diagnose. For each topic, write articles to record. If you have connections in the field, you may want to ask a few experts if you can interview them and include the interviews. This will help add to the credibility of your product.

You can package and sell your audio library in various ways: as an entire set that is ordered at once, send the tapes out each month

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with the option of subscriber cancellation or allow customers to purchase only the particular tapes they want.

Market and sell your library via mail order. Consider establishing a website to give customers an easy, quick way to order the audiocassettes.

Local Crime Audio

Every town has its juicy little secrets. Rumors swept under the rug, and names whispered out of earshot of the kids. And...every town has a history that people may not know about. Sensational crimes and fascinating trials don't just happen in big cities like Los Angeles. They happen in your own backyard.

Start some digging in your own hometown. Look through archives of local newspapers. Talk to longtime citizens of the town. Visit senior citizens' homes. Many seniors would love the company and also the chance to reminisce. You never know what you'll discover.

You may just find that your town is filled with juicy crime stories. Turn those stories into a profit by producing audiocassettes telling the tales. You can name your cassettes something like "The Top 30 Crimes Of Your Town." The cassettes would appeal to both the people in your own town as well as tourists. Tourists are always looking for something unique to take away with them: what could be more unique than a riveting account of the town's most sensational crimes?

Once you compile enough research, start writing your scripts. Consider getting some of the town locals involved. Perhaps you can ask some of those who remember the crimes, and subsequent trials, to give you "exclusive" interviews you can include on the cassettes. Ask them for their memories of the trial, the atmosphere. Perhaps they even knew the accused.

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After the audio is recorded, you'll want to focus on the packaging. Create a cover that will grab people's attention. Then, have local shops stock your cassettes where the townspeople and tourists will find them. Consider having an "audio" signing where you sign copies of the covers. This will likely help you sell more cassettes, and you'll help to generate excitement.

Send press releases to your local newspapers, perhaps including college and university papers. Journalists love a local story, and the more publicity you get the better. Write an opinion piece for your local paper, discussing some of what you've uncovered in your research to help peak readers' interest.

Most communities have a local television station—find out if you can do a special on the "Crimes of Your Town." Give viewers a taste of what to expect then offer them a special price if they order by a certain date.

True Crime Audios

People love a juicy story, especially those that are played out step-by-step in the media. Just look at the massive attention showered on the O.J. Simpson trial, which people are still talking, writing and obsessing about today.

Lurking behind people's interest in the nitty-gritty details of crimes is an excellent business opportunity. For a relatively small cost, you can produce a series of true crime audios of the "crimes of the century." Then, you can create a catalog and sell the cassettes via mail order.

To get started, you'll want to make a list of all the crimes you'd like to feature: they may include serial killers, sensational crimes (such as Simpson and the Lindbergh baby case), robberies, fraud or arson. You don't have to confine yourself to crimes of the century in the United States either; there are plenty of amazing stories from abroad. You might even consider producing several series of true crime

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audios such as True Crime USA, True Crime Canada or True Crime Europe. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

A simple search on Google, Yahoo or CourtTV's (www.CourtTV.com) website will give you ample material to move to the next stage. Next, you'll want to take the research material you've gathered and write scripts. You'll want to decide how long you want each cassette to run in order to determine the length of your script. You'll also want to decide who will read your script on tape. You? A friend? An actor? Once your script is written and rehearsed, you'll record.

Now that you have a product to pitch, you'll need a catalog. Creating a catalog is easy if you have a program like Microsoft Publisher, PageMaker or Quark, among other programs. Most of the work for this business can be done in house, by you, if you prefer, thus saving a lot of money.

Promote your "True Crime Series" with ads in local newspapers. You might also consider visiting online forums where you'll find people who love to talk about crime. Jump into the conversation then in your signature tag, tell people how they can purchase your new, exciting crime series.

Folklore Audios

Every city and town—no matter where in the United States or, indeed, the world—owns some type of folklore that is passed down from generation to generation. Take Tarrytown, New York, for example. Most people know Tarrytown as the fictional Sleepy Hollow, where the headless horseman sweeps through the sleepy village, terrifying and beheading the village people.

Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is one of the most famous examples of folklore, a tale that continues to haunt readers to this day. No matter where you live, whether you know it or not, you've got gripping folklore and hair-raising ghost stories just waiting to be uncovered.

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These folklore tales and ghost stories will make gripping audiocassettes you can produce and sell to locals as well as tourists. Your first task is to unearth folklore tales and ghost stories by visiting the local library, doing an online search or stopping by the local historical society. You might also want to visit senior citizens, or longtime citizens, to ask them to tell you any stories they may have learned growing up.

Once you find stories that grip you, you'll want to write scripts. Remember, you want to relay the stories in a way that is chillingly clear. You want listeners to feel as though they are right smack in the middle of the story. Make the stories suspenseful, and try to put yourself in the position of the listener as your write. Include as many stories as you'd like.

Next, you'll be ready to record your stories. You might want to consider using sound effects by either creating your own (i.e. the tap water might be the sound of a rushing river) or using a CD of audio sound effects. When you actually tell the story, make sure your voice rises and falls in appropriate places. Your voice alone can hold the listener spellbound, so wrapped up in the story she forgets the world around her.

Consider packaging your audiocassettes in a display box that will really grab customers' attention. Stock your audiocassettes at local book, gift, novelty and tourist shops.

Farming and Horticulture

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How to Make Money at Home Growing Small Landscape Plants on 1/20 Acre or Less

Small town, big town, it doesn't matter, if you have a small area in your backyard that you can use for planting, then you can make money growing small plants at home. Actually you can make pretty good money on 1/40 of one acre. That's an area about 30 feet by 40 feet. You will be amazed at how many plants you can fit in an area that small, and at how much money you can make.

Even apartment dwellers can do this! If you live in an apartment, just to get a feel for how fun and rewarding a tiny nursery can be, find somebody with a little piece of ground that they will either let you use, let you rent it, or do a joint venture with you.

Is there really a market for small plants?

The market is huge, something like 4 billion dollars last year alone, and the demand is tremendous. As a small grower, you have a tremendous advantage over the larger nurseries; their overhead is very high. As a backyard grower yours will be almost nothing.

But I live in a small town in a rural area, how many plants can I really sell?

Tens of thousands if you want to. Most people don't realize it, but large wholesale growers are the largest buyers of small plants in the country. They sell so many plants that they just cannot produce them fast enough themselves, so they buy them from where ever they can find them. Just pack them up in a cardboard box and ship them anywhere want. I routinely buy large quantities of small plants and have them shipped thousands of miles to my house.

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Why do I buy plants if I know how to grow them myself?

There are a lot of reasons, but one is because I am impatient and don't like to grow Japanese Maples from seed. I can buy Japanese Maple seedlings for as little as 54¢ and all I have to do is pot them up and watch them grow. I also buy large quantities of flowering shrubs that I would like to start propagating myself. I buy them for 50¢, pot them up, and often sell them the next year for $4.00. But in the mean time I take cuttings from them to propagate for next year's crop. Then I never have to buy that variety again.

Those are the same reasons that many wholesale nurseries are always looking for great deals on small plants. When they find someone like you, growing in their backyard they are delighted, because they know they can buy what they need for less money from a small backyard grower than they can if they buy from a large nursery. It only stands to reason, your overhead is almost nothing, you don't have to raise the price of your plants to pay for buildings, hundreds of acres of land, trucks, tractors, and dozens of employees.

How much money do I need to get started?

Almost none. All you have to do is root some cuttings, and you're on your way! There are dozens of easy plant propagation techniques that are so easy to learn that young children can do them, and with great success I might add. This propagation information is available to you free of charge at http://www.freeplants.com

There is also a message board at freeplants.com in case you have questions. On that board you will meet dozens of people who share your same interest.

I really don't know that much about plants, how could I ever learn all there is to know about this business?

All you need to do is learn a little bit about one plant at a time. After you've grown that plant yourself from a cutting, and raised it in your

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little tiny nursery, you will be an expert on that plant, and then you can learn a few more. It's much less complicated than some people would like you to believe.

How big of an area should I start out with?

That's up to you, but an area about the size of a picnic table is a start. I'm serious. I root my cuttings in flats that are about 12" by 15", and can get between 100 and 150 cuttings per flat. In an area about the size of a picnic table you should be able to root several thousand cuttings at a time.

And guess what? As soon as they are well rooted, they have a value and can be sold immediately! Isn't that cool? Typically a rooted cutting is worth about 50¢. Let's see now, 1500 cuttings at 50¢ each, that's $750.!!! Wow!!! The wheels should be turning now.

Yeah, but how do I find these wholesale buyers?

Now you are going to have to visit Free Plants I can't tell you everything in this article. Make sure you sign up for my Free newsletter, and stop by the message board and say hi.

What if I don't want to sell 50¢ plants, can't I grow them until they're bigger and get more money for them?

You sure can! That's what I do, I pot them up in small pots and they sell like crazy right from my driveway at $4.00 each. Of course I have some plants that I sell for much more than that. As I sit typing this article I am looking out the living room window and some beautiful Japanese Red Maples that I grew. They are sitting on the edge of my driveway for sale. I get $45. each, and they sell like hot cakes!

This is one of the most fun and rewarding home businesses you could ever get involved in. My kids have learned work ethics, the value of a dollar, and skills that will last them a lifetime. If they want to buy something and don't have the money, they come to me and

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say “Dad, I want to buy such and such, and it costs $50. and I only have $31.” I tell them what I need done, they step out the back door and earn the money they need.

It costs very little to get started, and the rewards can be quite high. It’s certainly not a get rich quick plan (because there is no such thing!), but plenty of people have done very well in the nursery business, all it takes is determination and hard work. You can learn it as you go along. It’s much easier than you think

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If you have questions for Mike McGroarty visit his website, www.freeplants.com post them on the message board where you can learn lots of gardening tips and communicate with other gardeners. While at his website you can learn how to start your own profitable backyard nursery. If you would like a copy of Mike’s booklet, “The Secret of Growing Landscape Plants from Scratch”, send $4.00 to: Garden Secrets, P.O. Box 338, Perry, Ohio 44081

How to Make Money Growing Rooted Cuttings and Selling them Wholesale

Once you know how to effectively propagate landscape plants, and you if don’t you’ll learn because there is plenty of information available to you in my book, reports, newsletters, videos and website, you will soon have more rooted cuttings than you can use. At that time you can decide whether or not you should quit growing cuttings, since you have all you need, or maybe you can still grow them for another purpose.

Maybe you can grow them and give them away to friends and family. They sure would like that wouldn’t they? Or maybe you can grow

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them and sell them at a profit. Or maybe you can grow and sell them to raise money for your favorite charity.

At any rate, you are not likely to quit growing them. After all, it probably took you years to learn the propagation techniques that are now working so successful for you, and it would be a shame not to use these skills. Not only that, it gets in your blood, and you truly enjoy growing things.

So I'll proceed as if you are going to sell your excess rooted cuttings at a profit, and you can follow along and then do as you please with the cuttings once you have them rooted.

I won't go into propagation techniques in this article since I have already produced so much information about that already. What I will discuss here is how easy it is to start a business selling lining out stock. That's what nurseryman call the little plants that they buy to plant out in the field or in containers. Lining out stock, or liners for short.

"Nurseryman buy plants?" You might be asking. Yes they do.

Nurserymen probably buy more plants than any other group of people in the country. Why would they buy them if they know how to grow them? Because sometimes they can't grow them fast enough to keep up with the demand. Or maybe they would like to grow a certain variety of plant, but can't grow it themselves because they don't have any place to get several thousand cuttings.

So what they do is buy in rooted cuttings, plant them in the field or in containers, and then they either grow them on to sell, or they grow them on and just keep them around a year or two longer so they can take cuttings from them. Then once they have a supply of their own plants they can sell the ones they bought in, that are now landscape size.

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Does this make sense? Let's say that Mary the nursery owner buys 1,000 Variegated Weigela rooted cuttings @ 50¢ each. She plants them in the field in the early spring and they take off growing like crazy. That summer she goes out and takes 3 cuttings from each plant (They need pruning away, right?). She sticks those 3,000 cuttings under intermittent mist and in about 5 weeks she has 3,000 rooted cuttings that she can plant out that fall, and she does just that.

The following summer she can get about 6,000 cuttings from the original 1000 plants that she bought, plus another 9,000 cuttings from the 3,000 she planted out last fall. That's a total of 12,000 cuttings. She continues to plant her rooted cuttings out in the field and keeps taking cuttings from them until she has all she wants to grow. From then on she can take as many cuttings as she needs from the plants that she has in the field.

By now the original 1,000 plants that she bought @ 50¢ each are large enough to dig and sell, and they are worth about $8.00 each wholesale. That's $8,000 from a $500. investment, plus she can produce as many variegated weigela as she wants without buying any more cuttings.

Does it really happen this way? Yes it does. I was recently talking to a friend who grows and sells all kinds of plants and he told me that he has been buying Dwarf Alberta Spruce cuttings and growing them on and selling them. He doesn't even root any himself; he just buys 5,000 every year, pots them up and sells them wholesale. How many other nurserymen across the country do you suppose do that?

To get started you can either buy a stock plant or two, or buy several hundred cuttings of the variety that you would like to sell. Instead of planting them out in the field, I would plant them in beds. Make each bed 4' wide so you can reach the center to weed and take cuttings, and place the plants in the bed 10" apart. As long as you keep taking cuttings the plants will remain fairly small, and compact. Then after two or three years dig them up, put them in pots and sell them. By

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then you will have thousands more coming on that you can take cuttings from.
Start out slow until you know what there is a market for. Of course if you are subscriber to my Backyard Nursery Newsletter then as you know I let you know what is in short supply.

You'll have to use some weed control measures if you are growing in beds, but that's all covered in my report "How to Start Your Own Backyard Nursery on 1/20 Acre or Less". In the report I also cover how to sell the rooted cuttings.

If you have questions for Mike McGroarty visit his website, www.freeplants.com and post them on the message board where you can learn lots of gardening tips and communicate with other gardeners. While at his website you can learn how to start your own profitable backyard nursery. If you would like a copy of Mike's booklet, "The Secret of Growing Landscape Plants from Scratch", send $4.00 to: Garden Secrets, P.O. Box 338, Perry, Ohio 44081

Alligator Farming

Alligator farming has become a big business in the Gulf Coast states, but it has been found they can endure temperatures of up to minus 30°F if they have a warm pond to stay in (see the October/November 1998 issue of AgVentures). Alligators are raised for both their hides (which have far fewer imperfections than those taken from the wild) and the meat from their tails, which is considered a delicacy in southern cooking. Preserved heads, feet and teeth are also sold as novelty items.

The initial expense is large, for a small operation an estimated $115 per alligator capacity, since concrete pits and sunning areas have to be provided and the area must be enclosed in a secure, strong fence.

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The largest recurring expense is maintaining their pit water at the optimum growing temperature of 96°F. (The cost to those who use solar energy to heat the water is about ten percent of convention water heating.) The expense of water heating is followed by the feed required for the four to five years needed to raise them to market size.

A suggestion on finding feed is to look for large producers of hogs, poultry broilers, eggs or rabbits in your area. Due to increasingly strict environmental laws, disposal of dead sows, baby pigs, broilers, dead or spent hens and rabbits is becoming a major problem for these operators. In fact, they may even pay you to haul the carcasses off. An average of two baby pigs per litter can be lost and the loss rate at a broiler operation averages five percent of each batch. Spent hens are normally sold for processed chicken products, such as chicken potpies. However, occasionally a drop in the price of broilers dried up this market to where eggs producers are fortunate to receive a few cents per pound for their spent hens, and alligators love chicken!

Dips in the market may also justify buying and feeding market stock. From December 1997 to December 1998 the price of market hogs dropped from $.48 to eight to ten cents per pound. Thus, you could buy a prime 220-pound hog for less than $30. A 220-pound hog would feed a group of alligators for some time. I have seen cows with a health problem (e.g., cancer eye) sell for only a few cents per pound.

Alligator farming would seem to be a natural complimentary enterprise to southern states broiler, egg or hog operation. However, check with your state's Department of Agriculture as a waiver may have to be obtained to use carcasses as feed in this manner Other potential sources of feed would be offal from a custom livestock processing plant; fish wastes from processing plants, boat docks or pay fishing lakes and meat and fat scraps from a local butcher shop. Chances are they are paying to have this offal hauled away now, so they might jump at the chance to have it hauled away free. In

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addition, if only the tails are sold for meat, the remaining carcasses might be fed back to the alligators.

Alligator hatchlings can be purchased from suppliers. One source is Steve Kackley (941-385-5144). If a reliable source of low-cost feed can be found, raising them on a small scale could be a steady source of income.

There are good articles on this opportunity in the June/July 1997 and October/November 1998 issues of AgVentures (888-474-6397). National groups are the American Alligator Farmers Association, 5145 Harvey Tew Road, Plant City, FL 33566 and the American Alligator Industry Association (941-465-3161 or 941-675-062.)

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Growing Baby Corn

Gurney's Seed and Nursery Company (110 Capital Street, Yankton, SD 57079) sells a hybrid miniature sweet corn, which is picked at 2½ to 3 inches, but produces up to 40 of these ears per plant. These apparently are the miniature ears you see in oriental restaurants.

Can they be profitable? Some varieties can produce up to 8,500 pounds of unhusked ears per acre at a current price of $1.50 per pound.

For further information contact Dr. Carol Miles, Washington State University Cooperative Extension, 1919 NE 78th St., Vancouver, WA 98665 (360-576-6030 or milesc@wsu.edu.)

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Bamboo and Natural Furniture Materials

Bamboo can be grown in most temperate climates, where winter temperatures seldom get below freezing. While providing fresh bamboo shoots to Oriental restaurants is one possibility, its uses seem limited only by the imagination, including providing cane poles to local bait and tackle shops or producing porch furniture. For ideas on potential uses in furniture visit a Pier One Imports store.

For a comprehensive look at bamboo, including uses worldwide, see:

The Book of Bamboo by David Farrelly
Available from Ecology Action
5798 Ridgewood Road
Willits, CA 95490.

Another source of books on bamboo is:
Endangered Species
P.O. Box 1830
Tustin, CA 92681-1830

Two they don't carry are:
Bamboo on the Farm: Increase Farm Income by Growing Bamboo
Available from Bamboo Press
322 North 82nd Street
Seattle, WA 98103

and...
Bamboo as a Cash Crop
Available from New World Publishing
3085 Sheridan Street
Placerville, CA 95667

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A newsletter is Temperate Bamboo Quarterly
30 Myers Road
Summertown, TN 38483-9768

Volume 21, Number 2 of Farm Show (800-834-9665) includes an item on a farmer who says he may be the only commercial bamboo farmer in North America. He sells all of the production from his current three-acre plot for $2 per pound and expects to still sell everything he produces when he expands to six acres. For additional information on 'bamboo farming' contact the Oregon Bamboo Company, 278 Taylor Street, Myrtle Creek, OR 97457 (541-863-6834).

Attractive deck or outdoor furniture can also be made out of locally available material, such as flexible saplings and vines or hardwoods such as white oak. A Olive Hill, TN man custom builds oak rocking chairs based on the height and weight of the owner. He is always booked several chairs in advance. Locally one person makes chairs and other lawn furniture out of willow and other branches and driftwood. He sells all he makes quickly.

Another consideration would be furniture made out of PVC piping. PVC Patio Professionals (407-438-0603) offers a building and start-up manual plus a two-day school.

Woodworking, such as chair building, is often taught at crafts schools.

How to Build Rustic Furniture
Smith Brook Press
Diamond Point Road
Diamond Point, NY 12824.

Making Country Rustic Wood Projects by Patrick Spielmann and Sherri Valitchka
Available from:

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The Winfield Collection
112 East Ellen Street
Fenton, MI 48430-2197 (800-946-3435.

Making Rustic Furniture: The Tradition, Spirit and Techniques with Dozens of Project Ideas by D. Mack
Sterling Publishing 387 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016-8810.

Porch, Lawn and Cottage Furniture by the Rustic History Furniture Company
Dover Publications
180 Varick Street
New York, NY 10014.

Rustic Furniture
Available from Windspire, Inc.
P.O. Box 145
Long Green, MD 21092-0145 (410-836-6824).

The Rustic Furniture Companion: Traditions, Techniques and Inspirations by Daniel Mack
Lark Books
2 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016

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Fruit Orchard

"It has been said a single acre of the best fruit trees, well-managed, will produce more profit than a three hundred-acre farm, with a tenth of the capital invested. It is no wonder then fruit production is so attractive for the small-scale, intensive producer." (From Dynamic Farmers' Marketing by J. Ishee – see item on Market Gardening.)

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There may be markets near you for fruits of interest to ethnic populations, for example, Asian persimmons. Unlike the American persimmon, the Asian variety is edible while still firm, making picking and shipping possible.

Asian pears, a relatively new introduction in the U.S., are expected to initially gross $20,000 per acre when sold as a specialty crop. They taste like a cross between an apple and a pear. Since some specialty fruits have a limited growing area, selling to a wholesale distributor may be your only option.

Volume 17, Number 1 of Farm Show (800-834-9665) includes an article on a family, which has a 4½-acre orchard of dwarf apple trees, including 60 different varieties, which ripen from August to November. Production of over 500 bushels per acre, with the apples selling from a roadside stand for $40 per bushel, produced a gross income of over $20,000 per acre.

Initial investment for planting is high, about $13,500 per acre.

Dwarf apple trees require as much work as full-size ones and it takes about five years before the orchard becomes fully productive. The dwarf trees would also lend themselves to a pick-your-own operation. A national association here is the International Dwarf Fruit Tree Association., 14 South Main Street, Middleburg, PA 17842 (717-837-1551).

Two periodicals that cover specialty crops are The New Farm (no longer in publication but check your library for back issues) and Small Farm Today (previously Missouri Farm) (573-687-3525), 3903 W. Ridge Trail Road, Clark, MO 65243.

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Growing Gourds

Gourds are one of the easiest garden vegetables to grow, and dried gourds have been used for a multitude of purposes for thousands of years. Originally hand-painted or decorated dried gourds can sell at from several dollars each at crafts shows to several hundred dollars each on the art market. Gourds can also be made into birdhouses or planters for sale at crafts shows or flea markets. In fact, the local farmers' cooperative sells bottle gourds produced by someone locally which have been painted white, with an entry hole cut into the base and holes in the top of the stem for hanging for $5.95 each.

A Clearville, PA farmer annually plants two acres of gourds, which he sells to local artists and craftspeople for $1 to $10 each, depending on size, shape and uniqueness. He harvests about a thousand gourds per acre and, assuming he averages $3 each, it would be a gross income of $3,000 per acre. (See Small Farmer's Journal, Winter, Volume 18, Number 1.)

An article in the March 1998 copy of The Tennessee Magazine, from the local electric co-op, covered an artist who settled on painting and decorating gourds. She has found a ready market for all she can produce.

(Gourds are fairly easy to grow. If possible use a trestle to keep them off the ground [so they don't develop a flat spot] and allow them to dry on the vine until the foliage has dried. Cut them off with about three inches on vine remaining, wash with a mild soap or bleach solution and hang or sit to complete drying in a basement or garage. They are ready for further processing when completely hard and the seeds inside rattle.)

The Southwest Missouri Center (Route 3, Box 88, Mount Vernon, MO 65712) is experimenting with growing Luffa (or sponge) gourds as a cash crop. The dried fruit of the gourd is a fibrous mass, which is used for sponges, cosmetic applicators, scrubbers, filters, mats, padding and crafts. If a steady supply of high-quality gourds can be

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matched with a U.S. market, estimates of gross income of up to $8,000 per acre have been made.

There is a good article on producing and selling gourds in the August/September 1997 and November/December 1999 issues of AgVentures (888-474-6397).

The national association is the American Gourd Society, P.O. Box 274, Mount Gilead, OH 43338-0274 (419-362-6446). For further information see:

Complete Book of Gourd Crafts by Ginger Summit, Lark Books. Also by Ms. Summit are Gourds in Your Garden, Hillway Press and upcoming books on gourd musical instruments to be published by Sterling Publishers.

Creativity with Gourds by M. Sparkman and Esther Hamel, Ponderosa Publishers, 2037 Airport Road, Saint Ignatius, MT 49865.
Gourd Craft: Growing, Designing and Decorating Ornamental & Hard-shell Gourds by Carolyn Prawat, American Gourd Society (address above).

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Herbs and Spices

Americans are cooking more and more with herbs and spices. The primary reason is the return to herbs and spices as low-salt, low-fat, low calorie, high-impact seasonings. In 1997 herb sales amounted to $3.2 billion, double the amount spent in 1995. Several opportunities for the sale of herbs and spices at a farmers' market, flea market or directly to restaurants are:

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Fresh cut: According to cooking experts, the flavors and scents of most herbs and spices deteriorate quickly once picked, even with the best shipping, preservation and drying methods available. This provides a natural selling aspect for fresh herbs and spices to the general public or directly to up-scale restaurants. The herbs could be cut the morning they are to be sold. Once a regular clientele was established, orders for the following week could be taken.

Potted plants: Individual plants could be sold in containers. Typical prices for plants large enough to use in cooking are $8 to $15 per container.

Window boxes or multi-plant containers: These would be oriented towards those people without a garden or apartment dwellers. A mix of six popular plants could be put into an attractive window box made of redwood. Another alternative would be to obtain clay or plastic urns or pots which are about l8” high with a number of side openings in which strawberry plants are ordinarily planted. Instead of strawberry plants put a different, low-growing herb or spice plant in each opening as a patio planting.

Bulk dried: Herbs and spices in supermarket glass or plastic small containers cost up to $3.50 per ounce, or $45 per pound. However, they are also sold in bulk by most food stores for a fraction of this cost. If you don't want to grow your own, buying wholesale could allow you to repackage the herbs and spices into plastic zip-lock bags of a few ounces each with a stick-on label containing the common name, scientific name and date of packaging.

(You might also point out to florist that herbs have long been used in bridal bouquets. Medieval brides carried herbs to ward off evil spirits.

In a modern-day bridal bouquet; however, rosemary signifies fidelity, basil for best wishes, parsley for festivity, pineapple sage for hospitality, lavender for devotion and lemon verbena for faithfulness.

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[See the May-June 1997 issue of Southern Accents.]) Several sources of high quality dried herbs or spices in bulk are Frontier Co-op (herds), Norway, IA (800-669-3275); Home-Health Resource (herbs), 2242 CR341, Piggott, AR 72454 (501-598-3384); Norseman Sausage Supplies (spices), 3492 Stafford Road, Wellsville, KS 66092 and My Store, 25203 Malchine Road, Waterford, WI 53185 (both).

A market opportunity for catnip would be to make up small stuffed toys containing dried catnip for sale at the same time as the above herbs.

If the volume of business justified it, one could also sell books on using herbs and spices in cooking along with the herbs. To locate sources of herb seeds see the Herbal Green Pages, available from The Herbal Growing and Marketing Network, P.O. Box 245, Silver Spring, PA 17575-0245. (Over 350 pages of herbal resources.)

For further information request a catalog from Storey's Books, Schoolhouse Road, Pownal, VT 05261 (800-441-5700 or www.storeybooks.com) and Northwind Farm Publications, Route 2, Box 246, Shevlin, MN 56676. Both carry a number of books on growing herbs. The latter also publishes the Herb Resource Directory containing 1,100 sources and resources for the garden, greenhouse, shop or nursery.

The annual Directory of Flowers & Herb Buyers includes over 50 companies willing to buy directly from growers. It is available for $7.50 from Prairie Oak Seeds, P.O. Box 382, Maryville, MO 64468-0382. The July/August 1997 issue of Backwoods Home (916-459-3500) included an article, Collect (almost) free money by gathering readily available wild plants & botanicals which also included about 16 buyers.

If you are interested in selling herb vinegars as a sideline, the better books on herb usage contain procedures for making them. Basically herb vinegars are made simply by bottling freshly picked herb sprigs in a mild vinegar, such as white or red wine vinegar, and then letting

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them steep in the sun. After several weeks of steeping the original herb sprigs are strained out and replaced with a single fresh sprig. Herbs such as tarragon, opal basil, thyme and the blossoms of garlic chives make particularly good vinegars. Old cork-capped wine bottles with replacement labels work particularly well for herb vinegars, but pint or quart canning jars could also be used. Herb vinegars sell for about $2.29 for a 12-ounce bottle in supermarkets. See item on Sell Bottled or Canned Home Goods for reference books on herbal vinegars.

If you are interested in harvesting herbs and other natural plants from which pharmaceuticals are produced, some buyers are: Appalachian Root & Herb Company, 37 Center Street, Rainelle, WV 25430; Watauga Herb Company, Route 2, Box 968, Boone, NC 28607; Wilcox Drug Company, 123 Howard Street, P.O. Box 291, Boone, NC 28607-0291 and Magee Herb Company, Eolia, MO 63344.

(What is the difference between herbs and spices? Herbs come from non-woody plants and spices come from trees.) National herb groups include the International Herb Growers and Marketing Association, 1202 Allanson Road, Mundelein, IL 60060; The American Herb Association, P.O. Box 1673, Nevada City, CA 95959-1673; The American Herbal Products Association, P.O. Box 2410, Austin, TX 78768; Herb Society of America, 9019 Kirtland Chardon Road, Mentor, OH 44060 and the Herb Research Foundation, 1007 Pearl Street, Suite 200, Boulder, CO 30302.

For further information see:

Backyard Cash Crops: The Source Book for Growing and Marketing Specialty Plants by Craig Wallin, available from Homestead Design, P.O. Box 1058, Bellingham, WA 98227.

The Business of Herbs: The International News and Resource Service For Herb Businesses newsletter, Northwind Farm Publications, Route 2, Box 246, Shevlin, MN 56676-0246.

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The Directory of Flower & Herb Buyers, Prairie Oak Seeds, P.O. Box 382, Maryville, MO 64468-0328.

Herb Farming Business Guide, available from Entrepreneur, Inc., P.O. Box 19787, Irvine, CA 92713-9798.

Herb Market News, USDA-AMS, Room 942, 536 South Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60605 (312-353-0111). A national weekly fresh herb market news report listing wholesale herb prices obtained from 19 wholesale markets.

Herb Resource Directory, available from Northwind Farm Publications (address above). This directory lists practically everyone in some aspect of the herb business and is updated and reprinted every other year.

Herb, Spice and Medicinal Plant Digest, Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, Stockbridge Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 (413-545-2347). This directory contains the names, addresses, telephone numbers and activities of individuals in colleges and industries across the U.S., which has an interest in herbs.

Herbs For Sale: Growing and Marketing Herbs, Herbal Products and Herbal Know-How by L. Sturdivant, available from The New Careers Center (303-447-1087).

PAY DIRT! How to Raise and Sell Herbs and Produce for Serious Cash by M. Luebbermann, available from Storey's Books, Schoolhouse Road, Pownal, VT 05261.

The Potential of Herbs as a Cash Crop by Richard Allan Miller, available from Eureka Resources, P.O. Box 53564, San Jose, CA 95153-3564.

Profits From Your Backyard Herb Garden by Lee Sturdivant, available from agAccess, San Juan Naturals, P.O. Box 642, Friday Harbor, WA 98250-0642.

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Mushrooms

The annual production and value of mushrooms continues to increase in the U.S. The 1996-97 mushroom crop in the U.S. was estimated to be $800 million. Mostly these are the button-type mushrooms available in supermarkets.

Specialty mushrooms, such as shiitake (which is Japanese for oak mushroom) and oyster, can be grown on a small scale for sale to upscale or Oriental restaurants in the regional area. The basic procedures is to seed the mushroom into bales of paper, straw and other organic material or into logs which are then stacked into a cool and shady area and moistened periodically.

In Wisconsin, which is actively developing a shiitake mushroom industry, a part-time operator producing forty pounds of fresh mushrooms per week can earn over $11,000 per year (or about $5 per pound). Over ninety percent of shiitake mushrooms used in the U.S. are imported from Japan, which indicates a viable homegrown market. (In Japan only the best shiitake mushrooms are dried and sell for the equivalent of $100 per pound.)

AgVentures (888-474-6397) has complied several of their articles on various aspects of growing and selling mushroom into a booklet form. Information on commercial growing of mushrooms can also be obtained from the American Mushroom Institute, 907 East Baltimore Pike, Kennett Square, PA 19348 and the Forest Resource Center, Route 2 Box 156A, Lanesboro, MN 55959.

The national association is the North American Mycological Association, 3556 Oakwood, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 (313-971-2532).

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They may be able to refer you to a similar association in your state. A secondary source of information is the American Mushroom Institute, One Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001 (202-842-4344).
There is a good article on harvesting and selling wild mushrooms in the July/August 1997 issue of Backwoods Home (916-459-3500). However, on harvesting wild mushrooms there is an old saying: There are old mushroom hunters and there are bold mushroom hunters, but there are no old, bold ones. A single poison mushroom picked by mistake can kill you or someone else.

For an informative article on growing black truffles, the 'black diamonds' of French cuisine and currently wholesaling at $280 per pound for premium ones, filberts and lavender in a tri-level production system see the December 1998/January 1999 issue of AgVentures (888-474-6397).

For further information see:

Growing Shiitake Commercially by Bob Harris, Handbook for Commercial Mushroom Growers by the Pennsylvania State University,

The Mushroom Cultivator by P. Stamets, Mushrooms Demystified by David Arora and Shiitake Growers Handbook: Art and Science of Mushroom Cultivation by Donoghue and Przybylowicz. All are available from agAccess, P.O. Box 2008, Davis, CA 95617-2008.

Mushroom Growing For Everyone by R. Genders, available from Farmer's Book Service, P.O. Box 1627, Sisters, OR 97759-0627.

Mushroom Growers' Newsletter, P.O. Box 5065, Klamath Falls, OR 97601 (541-883-3719).

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