

MAKE MONEY

at

Flea Markets



HOW TO GET SHOPPERS TO YOUR BOOTH

A Shishewana Trading Place publication
WWW.SHISHEWANATRADINGPLACE.COM



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CHAPTER 1

THE RIGHT PRODUCT



Before you can start selling at flea markets, you need a product to sell. And not just any product. It has to be something that attracts your ideal customer, that stands out in a crowd, and most importantly, something that is profitable.

If you don't already have an idea of what to sell, narrowing down all the possibilities might seem overwhelming. So, how do you decide?

How to choose what to sell

To start, if you already know the event where you'll be selling, let the nature of the venue give you the direction on what items to sell. The better your stuff fits in with the show's theme and its customers, the better you'll do as a vendor.

However, if you don't know where you'll be selling or if there is no particular theme to go off of, you can start choosing what to sell now by asking yourself this question:

"Do I want to make my own products, or be a retailer?"

Make Your Own Products

If you'd like to be a crafter and make your own products, then great! Now, it's time to consider the following six categories:

1. Current Trends

If you have a wide interest, following current trends might be a great option for you. It'll help you hone-in on select items to make as well as give you the option to make several different types of products. Don't know what's trending? Just get on Pinterest, Etsy or even visit a local craft sale.

2. Your Passion

There's no greater motivation than passion, and no better way to live your life than working with something you're passionate about.

3. Original & Unique

Two words, two different meanings, but somehow still connected. If you are insightful and creative, start developing your own product line of unique items (ever heard of pet rocks?). People love originality and quirky things, not to mention unusual and unique gifts!

4. Consumable

Not just edible, but usable! Yes, one way to get customers coming back time and time again is to sell consumable items. A great example of this for someone wanting to make their own goods would be bath and body products. Lotions, soaps, bath bombs etc. are all consumable items that customers "use up".

5. Personalized

It seems as if people these days like to have everything designed just for them. If there's a way to personalize it, folks will definitely shell out the cash to get it!

6. Needs

Maybe your ideas, creativity and originality can fill a need that's not currently being met by other products. Or perhaps a lack of a certain product at your local flea market could mean an opportunity for you!

Become a Retailer

Listed below are five categories to get you thinking about the different avenues of products you can sell as a retailer.

Your Interests

If there is something you are interested in... say, something like home decor, then you have a pretty good start already. Having an interest in what you sell is a great motivator. After all the hard work you put into your business, having an interest in what you sell will keep that hard work going.

Current Trends / High Demand

If you're a little more pop-culture oriented and are able to stay on top of what's hot... or maybe you have an intuition for the next big thing, perhaps selling on-trend items is the right fit for you.

Consumable

As stated in the “Make your own Product” section, consumable doesn’t just mean edible, and is a sure-fire way to get customers to come back time and time again. An example of something consumers “use up” in a retail sense might be items such as: paint ball ammo, craft supplies, pharmaceutical goods, etc.

Closeout

Purchasing closeout items at a discounted rate is another popular way to buy products and sell at different markets. Finding opportunities to purchase large quantities of product from companies that are closing their doors is a great way to increase your profit margin.

Needs

There’s always a need for something, so capitalize on it! Go to your local flea market and figure out what’s not being sold or offered there. If it’s not there, there’s probably a need for a particular item that’s not being met.

Find your “Thing”

One of the most important aspects of being successful at a flea market (especially a large one), is standing out from the crowd. As flea markets, craft fairs, and vintage shows get more popular, the competition grows, and the ability to get remembered by customers gets more difficult.

Just think, at the last pop-up market you went to, how many vendors were there selling soaps? What about jewelry or signs? Do you remember their business names or a unique differentiator about their products?

As employees who work in the office at the Midwest’s Largest Flea Market, we get a lot of questions from customers who are looking for “that one vendor.” Our worst nightmare is when the shopper asks for *“that one vendor who sells the clothes.”* If the description of the products is unrecognizable, the display isn’t anything unusual, or they don’t have a memorable business name, it’s pretty difficult to help the customer find what they are looking for.

On the other hand, if someone were to ask us where to find *“The lady that sells the giant underwear”* or *“the licorice guy”* we’d know right where to send them!

Finding a niche in your products can help you make more sales, become ‘THE’ vendor who customers come back to, and it will give you a competitive edge. So, go out, start brainstorming, and get creative!

Pricing

Maximizing profit **and** maximizing customer satisfaction is a huge challenge for flea market vendors. Hashing out a solid selling pricing plan will increase your profit and help you achieve your business goals and create a flea market business with a firm foundation.

Expenses

Make sure you start by listing out any expenses you have that have gone into making your products or selling them. Here are some common expenses:

1. Cost of Material
2. Cost of Labor (Don't forget to pay yourself!)
3. Office / Work Space Rent
4. Gas or Transportation
5. Cost of Selling at the Flea Market or Show
6. Packaging

Your Time

It's important to assign a value to the amount of time you spend making your product, ordering supplies, contacting customers, driving to events, and selling your items. Decide how much you want to pay yourself per hour, then be sure to keep track of how many hours you spend working per month. At the end of the month, pay yourself for your time.

The Formula

Although there are many pricing options and formulas to try out and use, this one will give you 75 percent profit. The profit should be able to pay for your expenses, plus more.

$$\text{Materials} + \text{Time} = \text{Your Cost}$$

$$\text{Your Cost} \times 2 = \text{Wholesale Price}$$

$$\text{Wholesale Price} \times 2 = \text{Retail Price}$$

Other Pricing Considerations

1. Selling Location - Are you selling at a flea market where people like to haggle? Or at a Craft fair where customers are looking for handmade items at a good deal? Or are you selling from a store or possibly online? Where you sell can affect your price. If you're selling at a flea market, pad the price and only negotiate to an amount you are comfortable with. Think of customers who attend craft fairs, can they pay more? Will they pay more? Just like your target customer, adjust your pricing based on the audience of your location.

2. Your Ideal Customer

3. Your Competition's Prices

Your Ideal Customer

Determining your target audience is a step that must not be missed when picking the right product, determining pricing, and creating an advertising plan.

Customer Profile

To help you understand who your target audience is, try answering the following questions about who you think your ideal customer would be:

1. What is their age range?
2. Gender?
3. Level of Education?
4. Occupation?
5. Where do they live?
6. Hobbies / Interests?
7. Where do they spend their time online?
8. What problems do they face?
9. How much are they willing to spend on your type of product?

This profile can be used for you to make business decisions. That way, instead of trying to appeal to everyone, you can focus on your ideal customer. Besides, having a product that absolutely everyone loves and needs is pretty much impossible.

CHAPTER 2

THE RIGHT PLACE



Choosing a venue to sell your products at can make or break your experience as a vendor.

One of the best ways to decide if a fair or flea market is good for you is to actually go and check it out first. Visiting a market gives you a chance to see the type of products other vendors are selling as well as get a feel for the customer base that regularly attends. You'll also see how other vendors set-up their booths and get a feel for the atmosphere.

7 Questions Every Vendor Should Ask When Choosing Where to Sell

1. How many customers attend each day / week?

Not only will knowing the amount of traffic the show brings in help you decide the amount of stock you will need to bring, but it will also give you an idea of the size of the show. Some vendors only like to partake in larger shows, some prefer small shows. Asking the regular number of show attendees will help guide your decision if the show is right for you.

2. Is the market indoor or outdoor?

This is a big question. Preparing for an indoor show vs. an outdoor show is very different. Some vendors are fully prepared to participate in an outdoor market. For other vendors, it can be a little more of a challenge especially depending on your product type. If the show is outdoor, I suggest investing in a sturdy pop-up canopy, stakes to hold it down, and your own tables.

3. What type of items are usually sold?

Sometimes markets and fairs are geared towards one genre. Whether it be an Antique Fair where only antiques are allowed, or flea markets where almost anything is allowed, make sure the markets you are thinking about fit in with your products.

4. Is it well-advertised?

One question people don't commonly ask is how the organizers market their shows. The more marketing efforts put into a show, the better out turn there will be of not only customers, but quality vendors. You'll know that the organizers put a lot of effort into advertising when...

- You see posters or flyers around town advertising the show
- There are ads in the local newspaper or online
- The organizers have created a public Facebook event for the show and post regular updates
- You see banners or posters for the show outside the venue.

5. Is there an information page with rules & regulations?

Having an informational page that contains the markets rules and regulations is a great resource. It may tell you the size of your space, if it comes with a table or if you need to bring your own as well as set-up and tear-down times and procedures. An informational page will more than likely answer any other questions you might have as well.

6. Where is the show located?

It's always a good idea to do some research on the area where the show is located. Is it in a city or town that gets a lot of traffic? How accessible is the venue and how easy it is to find parking? Make sure you also see if other area events are happening at the same time that would affect the show (could be negative or positive, depending).

7. Would other vendors recommend this show?

One of the best ways to find the right market or show to sell in is by hearing about it via word of mouth. Vendors love to talk about other venues (good or bad) and won't hesitate to tell you if an event is poorly organized or if it was a total flop.

CHAPTER 3

PREPARATION



Ease your first-time vendor anxiety by being extra prepared for the show. The best way to be prepared is to attend the market or show ahead of time. You can get ideas on set up, get a feel for the layout of the market, and talk to some of the other vendors. Plus, you'll know about how long it takes to drive there, which will alleviate stress day-of.

Fill out the Paperwork

More than likely, they will have an application available for print along with rules and regulations for the show. This will tell you if you need to bring your own table and chairs, how big your space is, if there's electricity and how much everything will cost. Also note the set up and tear-down times. Will you need Wi-Fi access to accept credit cards? Double check with the venue to see if it's available. If you have any questions about any of it... call them! Sometimes it's much easier to just talk to a human than to decode and interpret what you're reading!

Tax Identification Number

The application will also probably state some noteworthy information... such as the need for a Retail Merchant Certificate. This certificate allows you to collect sales tax on your goods. Don't let this little technicality get you hung up. Either call the states' Department of Revenue or visit their website. More than likely, you will need to sign up for an account and register your business. Each state will be different, you'll just need to explore the website a little and get familiar with it. There will be a charge for the certificate, usually around \$25. You'll then need to turn in your sales tax for the states you have collected for; the website will also walk you through this as well.

Make a Packing List

Make a list. Make a list. Make a list. Begin jotting down things you will need for day-of. Stuff like:

- Scissors
- Notepad, Pen/Pencil - Jot down the items that you sell... this will help you decide what to take to other shows in the future.
- Change
- Bank Bag - For all of the money you'll be making!
- Table Cloths - To display items on.
- Business Cards - Help your customers easily find you and buy from you again!
- Bags - For customers' purchases
- Newspapers - If you have breakable items, be sure to bring newspaper or anything else that will help protect product for your customers.

Now...time to start thinking BOOTH DISPLAY!

CHAPTER 4

BOOTH DISPLAYS



What's going to draw customers into your booth, your selling space, or your small-but-full-of-potential 10'x10'? Think product alone? Think again!

You may have the most amazing, new and never-before-seen product and people still may pass you by without a second glance. But why?

It all comes down to booth display.

The way you set your items up, the way you arrange product, and the aesthetic appeal and allure of your booth will actually draw customers in. However, it turns out, that there is a lot that goes into reasons why people make a purchase. This is why you should always try to look at your display from a shopper's perspective.

8 Booth Display Tips Every Vendor Should Know

1. Determine Traffic Flow

It's easy to judge the quality of your display by just standing in the front or middle and viewing it from there. However, that isn't how most shoppers will approach your set up! Determine the angles in which shoppers will be walking by or into your booth and build your display strategy around that!

2. Use your Best Pieces

Make sure your best and most attractive pieces are out front where most people will see them first. There are always so many nice things to see at a market or craft fair, so make sure you can grab the shoppers' attention before they get burnt out by looking at the other booths!

3. Keep out the Clutter

It might seem like a no-brainer, but neatness is super important when attracting people into your booth! Make sure that extra stock and boxes or totes are hidden away under tables (preferably with table cloths that go down to the floor). No one likes going through a booth with a bunch of stuff in the way. When your space looks well put together and uniform, customers can tell you put time, effort and energy into what you do. Having a clean, organized and aesthetically pleasing space is appealing to customers.

4. Use Varying Heights

Flat is boring. Spice up your display with various heights, levels and dimensions. Use tables AND floor displays. Create height on your tables with different sized crates, shelving units or hanging fixtures. Free-standing crates or wall crates used in the back of your booth creates dimension and height—as well as maximizes space that would otherwise not be used.

5. Consider your Product

There is no "one-size-fits-all" when it comes to product displays. For example, if you sell signs, you'll need to hang them. Jewelry might need to be behind glass and be well-lit. Other items might need to be folded on racks. Or maybe spread out on a table. In any case, make sure the customer can physically see the item quickly without being overwhelmed.

6. Keep it Well-Stocked

It might seem backward, but make sure your shelves and display is full of product at all times. Believe it or not, shoppers are not impressed with you when you have a half-empty table. They want to know that they are getting the most selection, so be sure to restock immediately and always bring way more than you plan to sell.

7. Use Signage

Make sure prices are clear to customers. No one wants to have to ask and bother a vendor about pricing. However, do not overload your shoppers with too much information or text heavy signs. Get your point across about what's in it for the customer, and then stop.

8. Use Props & Lighting

Props are a great way to get customers to connect with your merchandise. Don't leave anything to the imagination, people need to be shown how to use your products! Let them see how great it would look on them or in their home. Sell plant holders? Put a plant in it! Make coffee mug cozies? Put a mug in it! Show customers how great your product is! Also, be sure to use lots of lighting whether that is string lights, lamps or spot lights. It creates a friendly glow and can set your booth apart.

CHAPTER 5

GETTING THE WORD OUT



As a vendor, you might be thinking, "Isn't it up to the show coordinator to do all of the marketing for my event?" Well, technically...yes...but as a vendor, you CAN do a lot to help with the success of the show. After all, the more people you have promoting an event, the more success it is for everyone!

There are so many different ways you can help to spread the word about your events. Try using a variety of methods and channels to advertise to your fans.

Just remember to choose wisely by considering your target demographic. You don't want to overwhelm your followers with things they are not interested in.

6 Ways to Promote Your Next Event

1. Flyers & Handouts

Get your own flyers or postcards printed. You could use one side to promote your business with your logo and product photos, and one side could be a list of where shoppers can find you. If you can't afford to print your own flyers, you could hand out the organizer's marketing material. Simply ask them if they have any postcards or flyers promoting the show. Some places you can distribute the flyers include other events you're participating in, friends and family, church, local businesses, restaurants or work.

2. Social Media

A. Facebook

Did you know 8/10 of all American adults have a Facebook account? Wow, that gives businesses huge potential for reaching people! Investing in a solid Facebook strategy (including having a business page, an individual profile, and a Facebook ads plan) can boost your business. If you already have a business page, here are some tips for promoting your next upcoming event:

- Post frequently! Once a day if you can...the posts don't all have to be about the event, but they can showcase behind-the-scenes of you getting your products ready, etc. Be sure to tag the organizer's profile or event.
- Offer a giveaway! Maybe you could give away tickets to the event or a gift basket of some sort. Ask your followers to like, comment and share the post in order to be entered. You can find lots of other pages doing contests and giveaways...use those as a template!
- Update your cover photo. Design a cover photo that lists all of your upcoming events.
- Does the organizer have a Facebook event for the show? Post photos of your products in it to get people excited about coming.
- Post while you're there. Take a picture of your booth set up while you're at the show! Who knows, someone might share it!
- Stop the scroll. Think about how you use Facebook. You probably mindlessly scroll through your news feed, and only stop when something catches your eye. Keep this in mind as you are posting. Is your image or video eye catching? Is it interesting enough to get someone to stop the scroll and actually pay attention to your content?

B. Instagram

Instagram is all about images. Try posting brightly lit images of your product and captioning them with where your audience can find you at the next show or market. You could also use an editing / designing program like Canva to put words over the top of a photo - which could really capture attention.

Ask the show's organizer if they have a specific hashtag they are using, and tag the event if they're on Instagram.

3. Website

Do you have a website for your business? Keep an up-to-date list of your events on your site, and be sure to direct your customers there.

4. Email Signatures

A very easy, yet effective way to get the word out is by adding a graphic to your email signature promoting your next show. This way, EVERY SINGLE person receiving your emails will hear about your event. Just be sure to update it as the date passes.

5. Word of Mouth

Yes, this still works. Talk up your next event with all of your friends, co-workers and acquaintances. Just be sure to have a flyer or postcard ready to supplement!

Also, when you are at your event and have customers purchasing from you, tell them about your next shows and where to find you. You already know they are interested in your product, so don't miss the opportunity to connect with them face to face!

6. Newsletter

Do you have an email list? Send reminders about upcoming shows by using intriguing subject lines. Be sure to include some helpful content as well in order to keep your subscribers engaged. Maybe you could offer crafting tips, or share your favorite recipe. Include links to save your events to their calendars.

CHAPTER 6

SELL, SELL, SELL



You've found the best flea market location, you have the perfect products to sell, and you have your booth all set up. All your work is finished now, right? Wrong. If you want to grow your flea market business and sell your goods to as many customers as possible, you must be on your selling "A-game" every time someone enters your booth.

To be good at selling at flea markets you have to be good at making connections with customers. After all, with today's online shopping availability, the one advantage you have is that your customers can actually connect with the seller...that's you! If you don't make connections, all the customers are seeing is your prices, and good luck competing based on price alone.

In order to make good connections, you may have to get out of your comfort zone, be personable, and start conversations. It may seem awkward at first, especially if you're an introvert, but with time and practice, you'll be able to make conversations with anyone.

Selling Essentials for Vendors

1. Smile and Greet

Too often at flea markets and craft shows, a customer will walk into a booth only to see the vendor head-down in their smart phone. What a turn off!

A simple smile and greeting can go a long way in making a good impression and closing sales at your flea market booth. Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between positive business results and smiling. Put the phone down and smile. This tells a shopper that you love what you do and you are happy to be there.

2. Know EVERYTHING About Your Products

You must be able to answer any anticipated question from customers about your product. But it's more than just knowing the features...be sure to know what exactly makes your product unique. Maybe it's handmade, maybe it's exclusive, maybe the materials are locally sourced, or maybe it's customizable. Knowing your unique selling proposition will set you apart from other vendors who might be selling similar items.

3. Start a Conversation

By casually starting a conversation with a potential customer, you'll be able to get a judgment about how interested they are. If they seem annoyed or quiet, give them space. If they are responsive and interactive, consider asking questions to keep the exchange going. Just remember not to jump right away into a sales pitch.

4. Ask Questions

Questions show the customer you're interested in them, plus they sneakily take the pressure off of you to do all the talking! Start by asking a general question, perhaps about the weather, what things they've bought today, or how they're doing.

You can also ask them a question that pertains to your products. For example, if you're selling knife sharpeners, ask them if their kitchen knives ever get dull. This will give you an easy way to jump into a selling pitch.

5. Keep Moving

Not checking someone out? Keep busy. This makes shoppers feel more comfortable than someone staring them down from behind a register. Here are some ways you can keep busy:

- Organize Inventory
- Clean your booth
- If you have a handmade item, is there a way you can practice your craft at your booth?
- Take photos of your products

TIPS FROM REAL VENDORS

"Find a market with consistent traffic & friendly ownership. Look for a market with lots of traffic and customers coming in when you are evaluating where to sell. Also, take note on how the staff and ownership deal with the vendors. Are they friendly and accommodating to your needs?"

It's up to you to select the right products to sell for the customers that are coming to the market. You may have to switch up your product offerings halfway through a season if something isn't selling well.

In order to grow your business and get sales, you have to just be friendly to people. Smile and talk to them.

When you first set up at a market, start small and work your way up to build your business. That way, you can get your feet wet the first year and see how it all works."

- **Rick Hundt**, *Hundt No More Antiques & Collectibles*, Shipshewana Flea Market Vendor since 2015

"Having the right product to draw people into your booth is essential. People especially like unique and handmade products. Plus, there are so many opportunities out there to connect to handmade communities.

Design and print your own business cards to hand out at markets. This will grow your customer base for the off-season and keep your business growing from repeat customers. Word of mouth is so important when it comes to being a flea market vendor. There are several easy websites that help you design and print business cards.

Make friends with other vendors near you so that you can have someone to look out for your stuff. You never know when you'll need to leave your booth for some reason, and it's nice to have a friend nearby who can cover for a moment. Also build connections with your customers and get to know them. That way, they'll come back time after time.

One way to reduce your overhead is to sleep on your flea market space if the market's management allows it. Then, you only have to pay for transportation and the booth rental cost. Bring a camper or a small bed you can fit inside your tent, and make it as home-like as possible."

- **Spring Hobbs**, *Treasure Me World*, Shipshewana Flea Market Vendor since 2015

"Life as a flea market vendor isn't a walk in the park. You have to be willing to work hard and to keep your booth open the whole time. If you have a little work ethic, you'll go far. Also make sure you show up to the market every day.

Nobody likes a sour-faced vendor. If you sit in the back with your hands folded and your head on your chest, you probably won't sell anything. Smile and talk to people as they come into your booth.

Once you're set up, go walk around and see what the other vendors are selling around you. Use your creativity to decide your selling strategy. It doesn't hurt to have a little variety in your booth.

People like buying items that are clean, organized and eye-catching. Also, test having some items outside your booth to draw people in."

- **Jon Mumford**, *Mumphy's Book Nook*, Shipshewana Flea Market Vendor since 1998

"1. Keep your display interesting and change it up.

2. What you are selling has to be unique and stand out.

3. Don't complain too much...just go with it."

- **Marlene Lehman**, *Art by Marlene*, Shipshewana Flea Market Vendor since 2012

"Don't get discouraged too soon, and stick with it! It's also good to try different things, and get out of your comfort zone. Personally, I've learned that just because you like something, doesn't mean that it's going to sell well here. So try lots of things and see if it works!"

- **Joel Gowdy**, *Victory Custom Metals*, Shipshewana Flea Market Vendor since 2014

"At a flea market, it's important to sell at a good price point. People love shopping here for the bargains. Service and smiles are important too!"

- **Dick Baldwin**, *Tags N Things*, Shipshewana Flea Market Vendor since 1993

You've got to connect with the customers. For us, it's very rare to have both of us working our booth at the same time because we get in the habit of talking to each other, which puts the customer in an awkward spot when they have a question about a product or if they want to buy something. No customer wants to feel like they are interrupting or being an inconvenience.

It's also important to sell your items at a good price point, especially at a flea market. For us, it's not about the margin, it's about volume. We price our items based on how much it took to create the t-shirts, not on how much we think we can get out of the customer.

- **Darci Denton**, *Taproot Tees*, Shipshewana Flea Market Vendor since 2013

CONCLUSION

Thanks for reading this ebook! You are well on your way to becoming a successful vendor at any market you choose to set up at. We hope you found this information valuable, and if you have any clarifying questions, we'd love to hear from you!

If you're looking for a place to set up a booth and to put some of these tips into practice, come try out the Shipshewana Flea Market for a day or a week! There's low risk and it's easy to try out.

Thank you for reading the ebook, and happy flea-marketing!

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