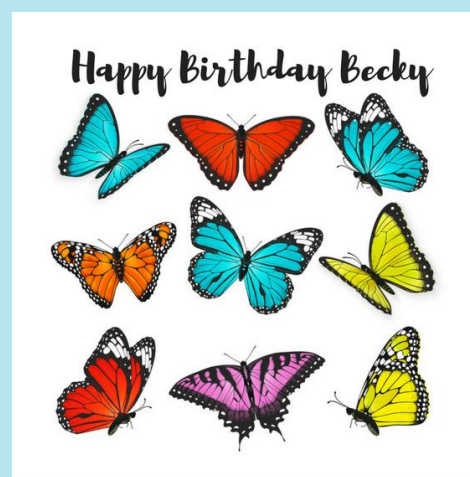


Making Cards That Sell

FREE WORKBOOK



Making Cards That Sell

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Making Cards That Sell

Chapter One

About the Industry

The Greeting Card Industry in the USA is worth over \$7.5 BILLION dollars, in the U.K. £1.7 BILLION pounds and in Australia it's \$500 million Australian dollars. The UK has the largest per capita spend on greeting cards than any other country in the world! And, the market is continually growing.

The greeting card industry supports huge companies to single operative stay at home Mums or Dads. It is an ideal business for :-

Creative People.

Anyone who wants a work at home business.

Anyone wanting a business that is not going to take over the house!

A flexible business.

An expandable business.

Making Cards That Sell

Another interesting fact is the industry supports the employment of a huge variety of people:

Designers	Poets
Photographers	Printers
Artists	Writers
Retailers	Wholesalers
Envelope Makers	Paper Makers
The Post Office!	Charity Shops
You !	

Making Cards That Sell

Chapter One

About the Industry ... contd

This is of course, great news for anyone who has been considering starting a business making cards to sell as you know there is a ready-made market already out there.

Whilst this might be an ideal business for creative people, it absolutely doesn't mean there is no hope for you if you are not! There are so many other opportunities out there for people to create products they love, you can outsource, you can hire a designer or artist and you can simply purchase the graphics ready made. But even if after all that you don't want anything to do with the design and just love the buzz of selling, you can still make a decent living in this industry.

So how do we find out what makes cards sell? What is that one thing that turns you from a one card pony to a runaway success.

Making Cards That Sell

BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION

One vital step is in planning the launch of your business, just because you are a sole entrepreneur doesn't mean you should cut corners at the planning stages. It is essential that you identify your niche and target market.

I see people constantly rushing headlong into starting a business without laying down the foundations. Of course you're excited, you just want to get producing and let's face it, paperwork is boring! However, just making a few notes about how you're going to run your business in the future will save you a lot of worry and heartache in the future.

On the resources page of the website you will find some easy cheatsheets to complete. If you fill these in as you go through this workbook it will help you with a basic Business and Marketing Plan. The resources page is password protected, but you will have received the password when you subscribed. If you can't find it, just get in touch.

Let's get you up and running!

Making Cards That Sell

So the first two questions to consider are:

What is your Niche and Who is your target audience?

In a competitive market it makes sense to try to find a niche for any products you produce or sell and card making is no different. When I first started my card making business I tried to cover all genres, to satisfy all tastes. But then I realised, I'm not Hallmark! It's really difficult for a small business to try to cover all the bases; unless of course your niche is making cards to order.

How do you identify your niche if you really haven't got an idea? A good tactic is to look at your competitors, what are they offering, what do they charge, what is their packaging and delivery like? Forget about trying to compete with MoonPig or Clinton Cards; look at other sole entrepreneurs like you and see whether you can identify a gap in the market. Or perhaps you see someone doing something similar to what you want to do but think you can do better. Brainstorm, just write down everything that comes to mind, identify three of your favourites and cross off the rest. Do some market research amongst your family and friends, what do they think of your three ideas? It may be that you end up with all three as your niche; with me I chose two – vintage and botanicals.

Making Cards That Sell

Identifying your Target Audience

Where do you think your customers will come from? What are the demographics in the area you plan to operate? Do you live in an area where the majority of people have plenty of disposable money. Or do you live in an area where day to day finances are stretched? Cards are not expensive to buy, but your demographics will influence your decision as to whether you produce high-end cards or cards at the cheaper end of the market. Do you want to target a particular age group? Making cards for children perhaps? Or perhaps you want to specialise in the wedding market in which case your target audience is likely to be early to late twenty-somethings.

If you're unsure of how to identify your demographics, it's pretty easy to establish the spending power of your local market just by looking at the shops currently operating there. The big supermarkets have huge budgets and experts doing just this analysis for you; so you can be pretty confident that if Waitrose decides it's a good bet to open in or near your town, then your demographics are likely to be predominately ABC1s; in other words a high proportion of people with good incomes.

Making Cards That Sell

Identifying your Target Audience

When you have the answers to these two questions you will have your Unique Selling Proposition (USP). This will form the backbone of your business, refer back constantly as you produce your product to help keep you on track. It's easy to get swept up in the excitement of a start-up and listen to everyone's advice, they mean well but before long you'll completely forget why you decided on your niche and target audience.

Use the cheatsheets at the end of this workbook to help you identify your USP, niche and target audience. Then file this in your 'Marketing Plan' Folder so you can refer back to it when you start to feel a little lost.

Making Cards That Sell

Financing Your Card Making Business

A card business run from home is relatively cheap to set-up. It is highly likely that you already have a laptop or computer to do your designs and most home printers now produce good quality pictures.

In addition to your computer and printer you will need some good quality card, a minimum of 260gsm, all good stationery shops will sell this; cellophane bags and envelopes. Unless you already have graphics from your work as an artist or photographer, you will need to buy graphics. There are many sources for this, but do look out for the licence limitations. A good source of high quality content is www.creativemarket.com. In addition try companies such as Fotolia.com and Shutterstock.com. Subscribers to Coast and Country Prints have access to ready-made graphics and business resources, you will have received a password when you signed up for this Workbook. Sign-in here: www.coastandcountryprints.co.uk/resources for continuous access.

Making Cards That Sell

Financing Your Card Making Business

Probably the biggest outlay for your start-up is going to be setting up a website. You'll need a domain name and if you plan to run your own online shop, an e-commerce facility such as www.shopify.com. Domains can be bought fairly cheaply for between £10 - £20. Website hosting can usually be paid for monthly, as can the e-commerce facility. In addition you will need a business email account, you can of course use your free personal account to start off but later you will want to upgrade as it looks more professional. In total website hosting, e-commerce and business email will cost approximately £35.00 per month depending upon the package you choose.

I use Wix for all my websites, it's not the fastest or cheapest but it does have great templates and app plug-ins that make setting up a website fast and easy for novice developers. Others include: GoDaddy, Squarespace, Bluehost, Wordpress. Many people swear by Wordpress; I think it's a steep learning curve to get to grips with and when I'm busy setting up a business, I want easy and fast.

Making Cards That Sell

Financing Your Card Making Business

In addition to the costs of setting up your website, you will need a marketing budget. Social Media marketing can be free and effective if done the right way but you also need to take into account the costs of attending fairs and fetes. They are never as cheap as the initial outlay! You will need to make sure you have plenty of stock for your event, people need choice or they move on. You will need bags, stickers, leaflets, business cards and as most people expect you to take card payments now, even at the smallest of shows, a card reader. PayPal is one company that offer this facility.

If you want to create your own graphics then you will need a decent graphics package. Adobe software is the benchmark, but it is expensive and if you've never used graphics software before difficult to learn. I tend to think I've enough to do setting up my new business without trying to learn new software! The easiest and cheapest solution is to use a company such as Canva.com. They provide the templates for just about every piece of stationery and social media template you will need and you can upload your own designs.

Making Cards That Sell

RECAP

So let's take a moment to recap what we've discussed in the previous chapters. By now you should have the basics of a Marketing Plan, you have:

- ~ Identified your niche or have a good idea what you want to do.
- ~ You've pinpointed your target audience.
- ~ You have your USP.
- ~ You have bought a domain name and started setting up your website and if offering cards to buy online, you may be considering an e-commerce facility.
- ~ You've looked at PayPal, maybe you already have an account but if not, you need to start the process as it can take a few weeks to get registered.
- ~ You've done some market research on where you will be buying your graphics, or which graphics software to use.

Making Cards That Sell

MAXIMISING YOUR PRODUCT RANGE

A lightbulb moment for me was the realisation that I need only produce a design once and then make multiple products from that one design.

It may be that you only want to produce cards in your business, however, adding different products will enhance what you can offer your customers. This picture below demonstrates how a simple card can be turned into a framed print. I sold the card at £2.50 and the framed print at £20.00. The card did not cost me any more to produce than usual and the frame I purchased ready-made for a few pounds. In all the production cost of this product was no more than £5.00. A 3 to 4 times mark-up is usual for giftware. Ready-made frames can be found here:

www.tradepictureframes.co.uk.



Making Cards That Sell

MAXIMISING YOUR PRODUCT RANGE

Here are some other examples where I created a design once, but then applied it to different products.



Making Cards That Sell

MAXIMISING YOUR PRODUCT RANGE

The products shown on the previous page: Tote Bag, Mug, Iphone Case and Cushion are what's known as 'drop-shipped' items. The items are not manufactured until you receive an order. This of course has its advantages and disadvantages. Advantages are obvious in that you can offer a large range of products without having to pay out for large amounts of stock in advance and then sit and wait for orders to come rolling in. Drop-shipping companies send your order direct to your customer, they 'white-label' them – in other words, your customer is unaware that the product has not come direct from you.

The disadvantage is that the individual products and shipping tend to be a little more expensive and you may have to wait at least a week before your customer receives their order, especially if that company is based overseas. Printful.com is one company that drop-ships. Simply upload your design to their templates and place your order, they do the rest.

Making Cards That Sell

MAXIMISING YOUR PRODUCT RANGE

The sheer scale of the card market, multiple occasions plus stationery options available to you, ensures you will always have a ready product range to offer your customers. Here's a few ideas, I'm sure you can add your own.

Birthdays	Anniversaries	Get Well
Invitations	Congratulations	Special Birthdays
Sympathy	New Baby	Wedding
New Home	Retirement	Leaving Job
New Job	Pet Cards	Passed Driving Test
Exam Success	Graduation	Valentines
Easter	Mother's Day	Father's Day
Halloween	Thanks-Giving	Christmas

Making Cards That Sell

SETTING UP YOUR HOME OFFICE

Making cards that sell easily qualifies as a business you can run from home using nothing more than a laptop and home printer. When I started my business, I produced my own cards and prints using just a Canon MG3150 and some 350gsm card. At this thickness the card had to be hand fed but it produced a nice quality card. However, folding was tricky so I eventually found that 260gsm worked better.

Unless you've decided your niche business is personalisation, you will eventually want to get your cards professional printed. A chat with your local printer would usually be the first option, they can provide lots of advice regarding the different paper types available. Most professional printers will want you to purchase at least 25 copies of each design minimum and, as is the norm in the print world, it is generally far cheaper to buy 100 copies of each design as the few pence extra reduces your price per item considerably allowing you to make more profit. This is well worth the expense especially if you are planning on attending fairs.

If you prefer dealing with online printers try www.instantprint.co.uk.

Making Cards That Sell

SETTING UP YOUR HOME OFFICE

I liked to add a better quality envelope than those provided by the printer which tend to be plain white. By far the cheapest I've found is www.simply-envelopes.co.uk. You can buy good quality envelopes and cellophane bags for pennies and they make your card look so much better and still leave room for your profit. Expect your total card cost to be in the region of 55p each (if you're getting them professional printed). Retail your card for between £2.50 and £3.00 to make a profit. Personalised cards can obviously fetch much more.



Making Cards That Sell

LEGISLATION

All countries have different rules regarding people working from home and it is important that you check with your local government office to find out what that might entail.

For example, in the UK, you can generally run a business from home if you're only using a small room within your house. Move that office out into a garden studio, however, and you may need to apply for planning and pay more in council tax! Signage is another minefield, a small discreet 'Amber's Cards' might slip through the net, a flashing neon sign high above your hedge another matter.

Where government is concerned, best to err on the side of caution and check!

Making Cards That Sell

SETTING UP YOUR HOME OFFICE - LEGISLATION

In addition to checking whether planning permission is needed for your small home business, you will need to inform the Inland Revenue that you are self employed and submit your accounts at the end of each year. If you've never been self employed before, I'd recommend employing the services of an Accountant or book-keeper to do this for you. You can register for self employment here:

<https://online.hmrc.gov.uk/registration/newbusiness/introduction>

In the UK a self employed person you will normally have to pay Class 2 National Insurance. There are certain circumstances where you might be exempt, for example, if your earnings are very low. Your Accountant will be able to advise you further, or go to:- <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/working/intro/selfemployed.htm#3>

SETTING UP YOUR HOME OFFICE - LEGISLATION

Public Liability insurance is also recommended, especially if you are intending to go to a few fairs, in any case many organisers insist on seeing a certificate before allowing you to attend, expect to pay around £55.00 for the year for £5million indemnity.

Currently you do not have to register for VAT unless you anticipate your turnover exceeding £79,000 per annum. However, there are sometimes cash flow advantages and it may benefit your business to voluntarily register for VAT. Again professional advice is recommended to choose the best option for you.

SETTING UP YOUR HOME OFFICE - LEGISLATION

On another level, if you plan to only deal with other businesses, showing yourself as VAT registered does tend to give the impression that your business is bigger than it may be and this in turn gives a more professional image, only you and your professional advisor can decide which is best for your individual circumstance. <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/working/intro/selfemployed.htm#3>

Legislation regarding setting up a business where the public visits i.e. such as a shop, or, if you intend to employ staff is covered in this free 'Quick Guide To Legislation for the Small Biz Owner'. This can be found on the resources page of Coast and Country Prints website and is free for all subscribers, if you're reading this, that's you!

Making Cards That Sell

BRANDING

Your brand identity is one of the most important things about your business:

- It defines your business
- Customers instantly recognise who you are
- Protects your Intellectual Property Rights
- Has value

Branding is not just about the name, it's the overall feel of the business, the look, the logo, even the colours. Deciding on your business look takes time and if you don't have a definite idea it may pay you to employ the services of a Graphic Designer to come up with some ideas for you. Your logo and colours will then be used on everything you put out in the public domain, your website, email, products and packaging. Whatever you decide make sure you love it because it will be expensive to change it in the future and may confuse your customers.

Making Cards That Sell

MARKETING ON A SHOESTRING

Marketing is a huge subject and you can spend a fortune on advertising with no guaranteed results, knowing how to market your business on a shoestring therefore is going to be essential for your start-up.

Before you begin any kind of marketing campaign you need to ask or remind yourself:

- Who are your target demographics?
- How will you monitor the success of your campaign?
- What is your budget?
- What is the best advertising medium for you at this particular time?
- What will make the customer come back to you?
- What are the benefits to the customer to use your company?

Making Cards That Sell

MARKETING ON A SHOESTRING

In a highly competitive market, what will make people buy our products? What will ensure brand loyalty? In general people buy solutions that will solve a problem; they are looking for you to provide the right outcome for their problem. So ask yourself whether:

You can provide a unique product;

You can provide a product your customer couldn't or wouldn't usually make at home;

You can provide value for money;

You can provide quality and uniqueness;

You can provide a gift solution;

You can provide a 'spoil me' treat;

You can provide ethically produced products

You can provide products from sustainable sources

You can provide a locally produced product with low carbon footprint

You can provide an experience they haven't had before;

Making Cards That Sell

BUILDING A WEB PRESENCE

The internet has provided companies with an amazing opportunity to reach a vast number of people; conversely it is also so highly populated it is difficult to make your tiny voice heard amongst the gabble. If you haven't already done so, now is the time to set up your website.

A website today is far more than just a shop window:

It tells your customer all about you, your ethos and business including opening hours, how to purchase from you, how to find you or where you might be exhibiting.

Enables you to post fabulous pictures of your work.

Enables immediate purchasing using PayPal.

Can host a blog page.

Can capture email addresses enabling you to send personalised newsletters and special offers to your 'opt-ins' i.e. those who sign-up to your newsletter.

Inform your customer using good quality content and create brand loyalty.

Making Cards That Sell

BUILDING A WEB PRESENCE

Even novice computer users can easily build websites with the latest crop of fabulous 'template based' web developer sites on the market today. All you need is knowledge of Microsoft Word, no coding needed. Some (Moonfruit) offer free sites but bear in mind these will offer limited facilities. Before deciding which company to use, look around as they all offer different styles, payment plans and add-ons. Here are a few:-

Wix.com

Squarespace.com

Moonfruit.com

Bakedsites.com

Weebly.com

Vistaprint.co.uk

Wordpress

Making Cards That Sell

BUILDING A WEB PRESENCE

A card business is highly visual and therefore suits platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram. You will probably also want to create a Facebook page and a Twitter page, all of these should be in your business name.

Social Media provides an opportunity for you to develop a relationship with your clients and for them to learn about you, your values and your business.

Social Media Marketing is a huge subject, too big to be covered here. These platforms can provide an inexpensive way to advertise and promote your business to your target audience, collect email addresses and drive new customers to your website and e-commerce shop if you have one. They can also be frustrating, hit and miss and expensive if you pay for advertising that doesn't work.

Making Cards That Sell

FAIRS AND MARKETS

Whilst most of your day to day marketing will most likely be done online, there are still many opportunities to promote your business through physical events aimed at retailing your product direct to your customer:-

Charity Events

Talks and Demonstrations

Craft Shows & Food Fairs

School Fetes

Wedding Fairs

Farmers' Markets

Street Markets

Seasonal Fairs

Pop-Up Events

Ladies Pamper Evenings

Making Cards That Sell

FAIRS AND MARKETS

Attending a fair is an opportunity to engage with your potential future customers. However, you'd be amazed at the amount of fairs I attend where the stall-holder doesn't have any promotional material whatsoever! Business cards, leaflets – banners – tell people who you are and more importantly how to get in touch with you after the fair.

You will want to make sure everything is priced, people hate to ask what something costs and will simply walk on rather than initiate a conversation.

One idea to attract people to your stand and to break the ice is to provide samples. I put together a greeting card in a cellophane bag with my business card attached and a small ribbon in the corner. These are placed in a basket with a sign that says: 'Free Samples'. Not everyone will buy from this of course, but you hope they will remember you and more will buy when you give away samples than not.

Making Cards That Sell

FAIRS AND MARKETS

Another way to attract and keep people for as long as possible at your stand is by running a small prize draw; it doesn't have to be huge, perhaps a small gift hamper. It does have to be big enough to make people want to stop and fill out their details. Keep your form simple, just name and email plus a tick box that confirms they are happy to receive emails from you. This ensures you don't get accused of 'spamming'.

A good promotional tactic when a customer does buy from you, is to give them a discount leaflet. For example 20% off their next purchase, put an expiry on the offer of no more than one month, you want people to remember you and come back quickly before they forget. Then when they do, include another offer, perhaps a buy one get one half price or/& use it as an opportunity to give them details of other products or services you offer, perhaps a Loyalty Card. It's better to drip feed rather than drench them in multiple offers which can be confusing.

Making Cards That Sell

ONLINE STORES

Online e-commerce stores provide a valuable outlet for your home-made goods and help to drive traffic to your website, social media pages and blog. They also have the advantage of giving customer confidence in you as a supplier, customers know if they have a problem with a product and it's not resolved by you, the producer, the online store will step in negotiate on their behalf.

The most popular and well known online shops to consider are:-

Notonthehighstreet.com (UK Company)

Etsy.com (US Company)

Folksy.com (UK Company)

Amazon.com (US Company)

Ebay.com (US Company)

Wowthankyou.co.uk (UK Company)

Making Cards That Sell

ONLINE STORES

Don't underestimate the amount of time it takes to get your products listed and your shop online! This has got to be the most laborious of jobs, so if you have a patient techie friend or teenager looking to earn some pocket money, outsource the task!

In addition to listing your products you need to make sure you have fabulous photographs. If you are not that savvy with a camera, consider hiring a professional photographer for the day, or outsourcing to a company such as www.shotbylucy.co.uk

Another advantage to opening an online store is they handle the payments securely so you don't have to worry. Money is transferred to your account immediately.

Making Cards That Sell

RECAP

Making cards that sell requires a well balanced marketing approach that encompasses a combination of actions :

- Build a web presence by posting regularly to your social media accounts, adding to your blog and getting people to sign-up to a newsletter.
- Open an online shop with a third party e-commerce store such as Etsy or Folksy.
- When you attend fairs, make sure you have handouts and giveaways.

Making Cards That Sell

RESOURCES

This is a list of companies I've personally used I've found helpful:-

www.wbc.co.uk – display stands

www.wirefittings.co.uk – display stands

www.tinyboxcompany.co.uk – boxes and display packaging

www.morplan.com – tissue, bags and carrier bags

www.simplyenvelopes.co.uk – envelopes, cellophane bags

www.instantprint.co.uk – printing services

www.dstudiouk.com – Giclee printing, art printing.

www.tradepictureframes – Wide range of frames, mounts, backing boards

www.printful.com – drop-shipping printers for mugs, tee shirts, iphones etc.

www.canva.com – graphic design software online

www.creativemarket.com – graphic designers, artists and photographers' marketplace

www.coastandcountryprints.co.uk – pre-made graphics plus courses and business resources

Making Cards That Sell

THANK YOU!

For taking the time to read this and for subscribing to my business. I'm keen to help new start-ups. I've a wealth of experience doing just that for the past 30 years. If you're keen on starting a design business whether that's making cards, stationery, prints or products I hope you've found something to take away from this Workbook.

I'll keep in touch with new resources from time to time, but only those I think will be of benefit to you.

Don't forget to download your cheatsheets from the resources page and start to turn your passion into a business. ***Your time is now.***