

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)



By Monica Woodhall

Proudly brought to you by

Lewis Philips signature books

[Email](#)

Recommended Resources

- [Web Site Hosting Service](#)
- [Internet Marketing](#)
- [Affiliate Program](#)

Please Read This First

Terms of Use

This Electronic book is Copyright © 2011 eBookwholesaler. All rights are reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means; electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the copyright holder(s).

You must not distribute any part of this ebook in any way at all. Members of eBookwholesaler are the sole distributors and must abide by all the terms at the eBookwholesaler page for Terms of Use

No-one may offer or distribute this book through eBay or any type of auction.

Disclaimer

The advice contained in this material might not be suitable for everyone. The author obtained the information from sources believed to be reliable and from his own personal experience, but he neither implies nor intends any guarantee of accuracy.

The author, publisher and distributors never give legal, accounting, medical or any other type of professional advice. The reader must always seek those services from competent professionals that can review their own particular circumstances.

The author, publisher and distributors particularly disclaim any liability, loss, or risk taken by individuals who directly or indirectly act on the information in here. All readers must accept full responsibility for their use of this material.

All pictures used in this book are for illustration only. The people in the pictures are not connected with the book, author or publisher. No link or endorsement between any of them and the content is implied, nor should any be assumed. All pictures are just licensed for this book and must not be used for anything else without the rights holder's prior written permission.

Images © 2011 Jupiterimages Corporation, a Getty Images company.

Contents

Please Read This First.....	2
Terms of Use	2
Disclaimer.....	2
Contents.....	3
About the Author	5
Introduction	6
Promoting Your Business	8
Selling at Events	10
Security	13
Getting Business Clients	14
Doing Business through the Internet.....	16
Your Own Website	16
Basket Suggestions	18
Celebrations	18
How to Sell More Baskets.....	19
<i>Pet Gift Baskets</i>	19
<i>Welcome to Your New Home Baskets.....</i>	19
<i>Hobby Baskets.....</i>	20
<i>Get Well Baskets.....</i>	20
<i>Gourmet Food Baskets</i>	20
<i>New Age Baskets.....</i>	20
<i>Drink Baskets.....</i>	21
<i>Aromatherapy and Toiletries Baskets.....</i>	21
<i>Risqué Baskets</i>	21
<i>Gardening Baskets.....</i>	21
<i>Baby Baskets.....</i>	21
Networking	23
Giving Back	24

Would You Hire Yourself?	25
It's a Business, Not a Hobby	27
Work Out a Business Plan	29
Choosing and Using Professional Help	31
<i>Why You Need Professional Help</i>	31
<i>Selecting the Right Advisors</i>	31
Do You Need Insurance?	33
Outsourcing and Hiring People	35
Setting Up Your Business	37
Suppliers	40
<i>United States of America</i>	40
<i>United Kingdom</i>	42
<i>Australia</i>	42
Grab Your Baskets full of Cash!	43

About the Author

Monica Woodhall had used different crafts as a form of relaxation and amusement for a few years.

Monica decided to use that experience to produce and sell gift baskets after being laid off from the office job which she had worked in for several years.

She said, "When I started to make my first baskets to sell, I wasn't looking at it as something I would do over a long period."

"I had a quantity of craft supplies and even some baskets at home which I thought I could put together to produce some money quickly and then I intended to get another job."

But, Monica says that she found it very hard to find a job in the current economic situation. So, she looked for suppliers and started preparing more gift baskets.

"I think that many people are in a similar situation to mine when I started putting the baskets together."

"I have tried to show that making and selling gift baskets is something that almost anyone can do. It can be done on a part-time or full-time basis, so it is something which is worth consideration by people who want a full-time business as well as those who want to top up their current income or do something which they can fit around looking after young children."

Monica has tried to show the benefits of this type of business without ignoring the risks and other potential downsides which her readers need to be aware of.

"I have never regretted choosing this option after I lost my job. I have found many benefits apart from the money I have made. My customers and even some of my competitors are among the nicest people I have ever met."

"I hope that my e-book will be a means for my readers to achieve some of their financial and personal goals more quickly and enjoyably than they might have thought possible."

Introduction

Making gift baskets and selling them is something which almost anybody can do.

I have met people who are unable to work at a full time job, either because of poor health, lack of qualifications or the need to be at home full-time to look after their young children or a sick relative. But, they are all achieving a degree of independence with their own gift basket business or in a joint-venture with somebody who has business skills but lacks the time or desire to make their own baskets.

This type of business is one which can be expanded or reduced as your own circumstances and needs change.

It does not need a lot of money to get started but you will need some cash to cover your setup expenses including buying some bits and pieces to put in the baskets and to get the baskets themselves.

I have based my e-book on my own experience and the knowledge I have gained from discussion with other people, including sellers, suppliers and customers so that I can give you a realistic and up-to-date picture of the possibilities and problems which we deal with.

I don't believe in sugarcoating the truth as I see it. I want my readers to be as well prepared as possible when you start your own gift basket venture so that you can have the greatest level of success which you are capable of with a minimum upset and problems.

Your particular circumstances and goals are likely to be quite different to my own. I started my gift basket business, intending it to be a temporary source of income until I was able to get a job like the one I lost.

Over time, I came to realize that there were very few jobs like that available in my part of the country.

I also knew that my new venture, while it wasn't at that point giving me as much in financial terms as my job had done, I was doing quite nicely and enjoying myself much more than I had in the last couple of years of high stress and competition which is common in modern office situations.

I also found that I enjoyed the interaction with the wide variety of

customers and suppliers that I was now dealing with on a regular basis. Unlike a regular job, I was able to take time off for family emergencies and also family celebrations or holidays.

Because I was promoting and selling my baskets at fairs and other events from time to time, I was getting to see other parts of my beautiful state and being paid for it at the same time.

I do hope that your experience with your gift basket business is as happy and productive as the last few years have been for me.

Monica Woodhall

Promoting Your Business

I have a few suggestions for simple, low-cost ways to promote your gift basket business.



Of course, it is likely that some suggestions will be more use to some readers than others. I suggest that you read through them all and choose those which most appeal to you.

You may find that you are able to adjust some of the ideas to be a better fit for your current situation as well.

I have done well by inviting my past customers and their partners to a simple buffet each year.

The first of these events only drew about half of the previous customers. I guess that some were thinking they would be obligated to buy another basket.

But, I did not push my products or myself. I wanted to thank them for their custom and the referrals which many of them gave without being asked.

I give anyone that buys more than one basket an invitation to the buffet and most of them come now.

I have donated a few baskets to various charities each year for prizes.

I know some people say that they will give, say, ten percent of their sales over a specific period to a nominated charity. That's fine and can result in a reasonable donation as well as an increased amount of business which may result in some customers that buy more baskets later on.

My personal preference is to just give the baskets publicly and make any cash donations privately.

I did a couple of classes in preparing baskets but the amount I got from them was fairly small and a couple of the students started their own gift basket businesses.

That reduced my sales for a short while.

But, the new entrepreneurs did not offer anything different, follow good business practises, looked after their customers or took any special care in the items they put in the baskets. They just thought it was a quick, short-term way to get some cash.

So, they soon dropped the gift basket idea and started some other money making venture.

After a while, I got my old customers back and some of the other students either bought baskets I had prepared or some supplies from me.

I decided that I would not do any more classes, but this might be something which you can do and make some money with as well as finding some new customers from among the students like I did.

Selling at Events

This can be a very tiring but enjoyable part of your gift basket business. You can learn a lot from the other exhibitors and often get more direct feedback from potential customers as well.



Check whether you can use your own stand or whether you have to rent one from the organizers or their contractor.

Even if you are allowed to use your own stand (subject to inspection that it fits their standards), you may not be allowed to assemble it and take it down. Always check the terms on your contract with the organizers.

Some venues require that all equipment and fittings be set up by the contractors. It is a very good idea to check any part of the arrangements which you are unsure about before you pack to go to the venue or even sign up for your display site.

Most events, including conferences, exhibitions, craft fairs and outdoor shows charge fairly high fees which they justify by pointing to the huge numbers of people which come to most of them.

Unfortunately, unless the event is targeted at the particular niche you sell to, only a small portion of that huge passing parade will stop at your site for more than a couple of seconds unless you are very well known or have something eye catching and unusual on your site.

It's important that you have enough stock to put up an above average display and, preferably, have more than one person on the site at all times to ensure that you don't keep anyone waiting more than a couple of minutes. Also, always keep a close eye on your stock and even your fittings.

If people have to wait, many will rush off and never return. Most people are honest but some will yield to any temptation if they think they can get away with it. So, theft at each type of event can be significant.

Another problem is people drawing or taking pictures of your designs for

later use. It can be very frustrating because a good design can take a lot of work to get right. So, I never have a problem getting between anyone with a camera and my stock if they haven't asked permission or been identified to me as official media.

It is a pleasure to meet and talk with the regular people as they stream through.



Because there are so many attractions competing for their attention, you have to have a first-class display and something a bit special to stop them long enough to at least get your brochure.

I also got along fine with the other exhibitors. I learned a lot from them and still occasionally meet one or two couples for a coffee when they are in our area.

Most of the organizers were also fair and helpful. But, some were a bit dictatorial which reduced my enjoyment of the time I spent at their event. Some exhibitors said, "Just ignore it and keep taking the money." I didn't like it but they had all the authority.

The best rule is to keep your head down and obey all the rules.

It can be difficult to keep your stock in good shape at some of the events because of the weather and the grasping hands.

So, just put one of each item within their reach and keep the others back so they remain in top condition and you can still sell them.

A rule I always followed about stock which I put out on the front counter was that I never let it spread wider than I could comfortably reach while I was standing straight up and still without bending. That reduced the likelihood that someone would be able to pick up and walk away with one of my baskets or a handful of items out of them.

Despite your best efforts, you can still expect to lose something and usually some of the items might be damaged too badly to be worth repairing.

You have to build something into your pricing to cover these unexpected

"accidental" costs.

Another reason to have at least two people on the site at all times is so that each of you can go behind a screen or away from your site when they want to have a drink or something to eat.

You may have very good table manners but I always have a rule that everyone is away or out of sight when eating or drinking. It's part of having a professional look.

I cannot suggest how much money you should carry when you are selling stuff from your site at an exhibition or show. You need to have enough to cover maybe two large notes.

But, there is no reason for you to accept and make change for a large note when somebody just wants to buy the least expensive thing on your display unless you want to.

Some people, even some exhibitors, don't bother to get change before they come to the show. They just go around the displays looking for the cheapest possible item and try to get a large note broken down that way.

The bottom line for making a success of any type of event is to maintain a positive attitude and do your job.

It's no use complaining about anything unless you are sure that the changes you want are likely to be agreed to.

Your most effective weapon about unsatisfactory organization is to avoid that place in future. That hurts their wallets which are probably the only sensitive parts of bad organizers.

If it is not against the rules, set up early without disturbing anyone else
Pack yourselves and your rubbish away after the official closing time.

Leave nothing but smiles and take nothing but the good memories;
few though they sometimes may be.

Security

I've written this from the point of view of attending an event but most of the points also apply to displaying stock in your premises and carrying money anywhere at all.

Always be careful of your personal security, especially if you are a woman. Although the exhibitions and shows are usually full of people, there are always some areas which are not well observed. Don't take chances.

Don't leave money or any valuables anywhere on your site even if you are within reach of it. Some thieves are slicker and less scrupulous than any magician.

Keep your money and valuables in a well-secured bag on your waist. Wear something over it or someone might be quick and strong enough to reach over, unclip it and run away.

Do you realize that losing your credit card could cost you the entire contents of your bank account as a minimum and maybe your identity as well?

Try to be completely self-sufficient when you are at an exhibition or show. But, if you really need help, ask the nearest organizer or stall holder and you will get it.

Don't let one item completely cover another one on your table. You will probably find that the bottom item has gone when you start to pack up.

Be aware that people will pretend to be ill or distressed so that they can distract you while their partner steals your stock or your wallet.

Showing off in any form; loud talk, gestures, displaying desirable gear (from ear rings to sports shoes or anything in-between) or throwing money around is an invitation to be robbed or worse.

Getting Business Clients

You can sell as many or even more baskets to businesses in your area as you do to individuals.

Soon after I started my gift basket business, I contacted as many as possible of those people I had previously dealt with in my previous job. Someone told me that his was one of many businesses that would frequently buy top of the range gift baskets for delivery to special customers or staff members who were having a birthday or expecting a new baby.

One company bought each of their employees a large basket one Christmas. That was a nice order though it took a lot of planning to get everything ready for delivery at the same time and on time.



As usually seems to happen, one supplier only let me know that they had run out of one of the most popular items I put in those baskets a few days before I had to get them ready. I was able to get something which was a suitable replacement and it was also a little cheaper.

So, when that same company ordered baskets the following year, I bought all the items from my new supplier and everyone was happy.

I was pleasantly surprised that I didn't even have to arrange delivery. The company decided that their salespeople could make a better impression on the customers by delivering the baskets personally.

I was always glad to learn from that sort of feedback. That's one advantage of running a face-to-face business.

I approached some other businesses which were not direct competitors of my present customer and, though I didn't get any more bulk orders, I did get several individual orders from their staff that saw the baskets which I took to show them.

I am always happy when someone asks me to deliver a basket to an office or a hospital. I know that many people beside the recipient will see the basket and the happy expression on their face.

That often means that I get requests for my business card or even one or two orders before I have even left the building!

Doing Business through the Internet

It is even easier than ever before to stay in touch with your business contacts through email and social networking sites like Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/> and LinkedIn

<http://www.linkedin.com/> which is one of the best for maintaining business contacts and making new ones.

Be very careful about what you put on any web site because it will spread widely more quickly than you could imagine.

Accept that there is no privacy and little security on the Internet. Don't put anything there which you want to retain control of.

That includes complete pictures of any designs which you develop and don't want copied.

Some people may even copy your picture and use it as their own on social web sites and chat rooms!

Your Own Website

I believe that everyone can make good use of their own web site and that is especially true for anyone that is in business.

I suggest that you get two websites; one for your gift basket business and another for everything else.

The first one should have your business name in the title if possible.

If you can get your own name as the address for your other web site, like joesmith.com, that would be very good too.

That makes it possible for you to sell the gift basket business and the related web site sometime in the future if you want to. But, you will still have the web site with your own name.

It is fairly easy to set up your own web site. You can ask the eBookwholesaler Member that supplied you with my ebook to suggest a book that would be helpful to you.

If you are on a Windows computer, you can get a free web editor program called Trellian Web Page, for making your site from

<http://www.trellian.com/>

If you use a Macintosh computer, you can get an older but still good free web editor called Kompozer.

<http://kompozer.net/download-07.php>

You can promote your business very widely and in full color through your own web site at very low cost.

Just keep things very simple.

Don't use too many colors or flashy effects.

Use Google Alerts (email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc. based on the query or topic which you specify).

<http://www.google.com/alerts> That service could be set up for free to notify you about any new material on the Internet which includes your name or the name of your business.

Basket Suggestions

I suggest that you start by ensuring that you can quickly produce an eye catching basket for one of the "bread and butter" niches which almost every gift basket supplier depends on as the basis of their business.

Some of those subjects are:

Celebrations

These are the staple which supports the whole industry. When I started, I think 95% of the baskets I produced were for birthdays, babies, weddings and such wonderful events.



Over time, I added various other offerings including Halloween, St Patrick's Day – in fact, I was always prepared for almost every holiday which was celebrated almost anywhere on this planet.

I tried to add a unique or at least an unusual touch to each basket I did. I believe this was appreciated by most of my customers.

One family ordered a basket for each of their birthdays and the mother mentioned that they were surprised that I always had several different things in each basket.

This repeat business was very welcome.

I also offered them a small discount because of their loyalty but they said they were happy with my prices and delighted by the variety of things I included each time.

I'm not saying any of this to boost my self, just to point out how a little bit of thought can get a much better reaction than just providing the same old stuff every time.

In the next Chapter, I will share some more simple ideas which might also pay off very well for you.

How to Sell More Baskets

If you want to expand your business or just want to boost your sales when there is an inevitable slow-down, you don't have to invest in more expensive advertising, just adapt your products to attract a wider range of people.

The simplest way to grow your gift basket business is to think about designing and producing some different ones that are focused on other activities or occasions.

Pet Gift Baskets

There are two types of pet gift baskets which I sold and both were warmly received by the new owners and their lucky pets.

The first kind was one of my regular gift baskets filled with pet related items, such as a brush, a packet of treats, a small blanket and a toy.

When you deliver the basket, always tell the owner that you will replace any item in the basket which is not suitable for their pet. Many pets these days have allergies or other conditions which mean that some treats and toys may cause problems.

Another, more expensive option, was a pet bed filled with a similar selection of pet related items. This was usually quite a bit more expensive and no more profitable, so I stopped offering it fairly quickly.

Someone suggested that I provide the pet as well but I did not agree. I could too easily imagine delivering a small, pretty animal to someone and them not wanting it. No thanks!

Welcome to Your New Home Baskets

You might find it profitable to contact real estate agents and offer them a special deal on gift baskets for buyers of the homes which they sell.

This has been a successful connection for several people I know in various parts of the country.

Real estate people are another group who know the value of the personal touch and they always deliver their baskets to their customers themselves.

Hobby Baskets

I have made an occasional basket for people that have different hobbies or sporting interests.

Most of these, like golf, chess and even magic, are easy to put together and quite profitable.

Get Well Baskets

Another common niche is the get well gift baskets.

Please always ask the buyer what sort of item would be most appropriate and likely to be useful or enjoyed most by the sick person. It's no use putting expensive fruit in the basket if all they will be able to do is watch their least favorite brother-in-law eat it!

Food baskets are also very popular and the range is surprisingly wide.

You will probably get orders for baskets containing treats which are approved for people with various allergies or other conditions.

Gourmet Food Baskets

I've also had requests for baskets filled with gourmet treats, or a selection of cheeses or fruit. These are much easier to fill now because of connections made through the Internet.

I've had several orders for chocolate baskets and I always try to put in at least one very nice chocolate which is a bit hard to find that the recipient may not have tasted or even seen before.

I actually got one order for a basket made of chocolate. But, I had to apologize and tell them that I was not able to supply that unless they waited until nearer the following Easter when almost everything is available in chocolate form.

New Age Baskets

This was something I thought up when I saw an advertisement for some psychic entertainer who was appearing at a local theatre.

I found out later that many gift basket sellers were making baskets with new age themes, so I was fairly late in taking up the themes.

Unless your customer specifically tells you that they want a mixture of

different new age themes (such as Astrology and Numerology) give them mostly items that are related to the discipline with they specify.

Some others which might be asked for are Angels, I Ching, Tarot, Feng Shui, Auras and Palmistry.

Drink Baskets

Drink Baskets are very popular. I get requests for baskets filled with wine, beer or even expensive liqueurs.

That is one occasion when the basket may be a different container if that's what the customer asks for. I've set them up using cooler bags and even once in a top hat!

Aromatherapy and Toiletries Baskets

The contents of these varied widely depending on what the buyer wanted in them.

Risqué Baskets

I don't mind preparing baskets of mildly smutty stuff for other adults to enjoy. I haven't prepared any really adult stuff because I don't want that sort of thing associated with my business. I believe that it would lose me more customers than I might gain.

That's just my personal opinion, not a judgment.

What other people like is absolutely none of my business.

Gardening Baskets

This was a particularly popular theme among my customers. As well as many useful items which I included from time to time, I also put in a hollow rubber thumb which I sprayed with green dye. This was very popular so you might want to try it if you can find the thumbs and want to take the time. The dye was safe for children and I made sure it was completely dry before I put the thumb in the basket.

Baby Baskets

These had instant appeal for gifts at baby showers. I always told my customers that I would replace anything in the basket which the recipient could not use with her baby because of allergies or any other reason. I think they appreciated the offer which I stood behind but no-one ever

asked for anything to be changed.

The regular baby basket usually contained useful items which the parents could use on the baby. I also offered and sold lots of baskets which contained things which the baby or a young child could play with.

The most popular were bunny baskets, teddy bear baskets and rubber duck baskets.

Baskets with small soft toys were also popular for giving to small children, especially girls. Be aware that there is legislation about toys with many being withdrawn from sale because of small or loose parts or other risks.

If you offer baskets on this type of theme, keep in touch with your consumer protection organizations. Some have regular bulletins available on their web site or by email.

Networking

Networking through both business and personal contacts is an essential part of promoting your new, part-time business.

It is probably more difficult for someone who is working from home, especially if you don't have any experience of promoting yourself and your business.

Even some experienced business people make fundamental mistakes when they are socializing and someone asked them about their business.



In this sort of situation, you need to realize that the question is probably only intended to help keep the conversation going and doesn't actually indicate that the person asking the question has any particular interest in your business activities period.

Many people will start to promote themselves and their business as if they were in their office and the other person was a customer.

A better way to respond to that sort of question is to tell them in very general terms what you do and then ask them about their own line of work.

You can, of course, think up an interesting reply which might stick in the other person's mind and encourage them to contact you at some time in the future if they have a need of the products or services which you offer. This sort of reply is usually referred to as an "elevator speech".

It should be short, interesting and have something in it which will appeal to the listener so that all remember you without feeling that you were trying to sell something.

It's okay to carry a couple of business cards with you but don't offer them - always wait until someone asks you for one.

Giving Back

It is important these days that you are seen as a supporter of the community which you do business with.

I suggest that you consider helping one or two worthy community organizations with donations of your time as well as your products where applicable.

Gift baskets are a product which you can promote by donating one or more to community and charitable groups for use as prizes in their fundraising raffles or as thank-you gifts for the official guests at fundraising functions.

The baskets which you supply to the organizations which you are supporting should be of the same size and standard as those which you sell.

In my experience, some organizations will repay your generosity by mentioning your donation in their newsletter, the program for the event or even from the stage during the function.

Other organizations will take whatever you offer and you will never hear from them again unless they want more baskets.

When you make any sort of donation, you can expect to be approached by several other organizations who also want you to support them in a similar way. That is one sort of publicity that you can rely on.

But, after all, donations should always be gifts intended to help and with no strings attached.

Would You Hire Yourself?

I have found that the gift basket business is one where personal qualities can be just as important as business experience and creativity. I believe that the latter two factors can be very useful but how you deal with the people and the impression which they gain about you will probably be the factor which most affects your potential success with this kind of venture.



Perhaps because I had been to a number of interviews between the time I left my job and when I decided to start the gift basket business, I decided to role play where I imagined I was being interviewed for the position of manager of a gift basket business.

This technique can also help you to become more focused about what you bring to the business.

The gift basket business is essentially focused on people. You must be a good business person but, just as importantly, you need to be a great people person!

This helped me to step outside of myself and look more critically at how well the experience and abilities that I had would fit with the needs of my new business.

I realized that I was still affected by the stress which developed after I left my job.

But I felt physically and emotionally ready to tackle this new challenge. I believe that my years of crafting would help me to produce professional quality gift baskets. At a minimum, that experience should reduce the time I might need to learn any new techniques and implement them.

My experience in various kinds of office work and sales would also be a plus.

I realized that I probably had some flaws which could affect my interaction with customers and suppliers or my ability to handle the various parts of the new business.

I resolved to review my progress every couple of weeks to try to find any

thing I was doing that could be improved.

The next step was to get a clear picture of the resources, personal and financial, which I would need to get the business started.

I thought it would be easier than it turned out to be in reality. I over-estimated my abilities in some areas and failed to consider some potential problems, both small and large.

The most important things that slowed my progress were my accumulated stress, lack of fitness and an inability to be patient with aggressive or impolite people.

These were things which had not had a major effect on the results I got in my office job, but they were factors which I had to fix before I could hope to become successful working for myself in a people-based business like gift baskets.

It's a Business, Not a Hobby

You may be shocked, as I was, at the contrast I found when I started my conversion from a hobbyist who decorated baskets to a business owner that sold them to put food on my table.

People will not usually get too upset if the person who gives them a lovely basket of goodies is someone that is late arriving or if the basket is a color which they do not like.

But, they will not accept a lack of punctuality or any sort of annoyance when they are paying that person for the basket.

In a gift basket business, your customer must be your full-time focus.

You must always present yourself as someone that has no worries except for ensuring that everything is completely satisfactory for their customer.

You should start to learn new techniques to improve the appeal of your gift baskets and actively ask for feedback from every customer you get.

If you get criticism, and that is almost inevitable despite your best efforts, understand that it is usually directed at the product and not at you personally.

Sometimes, you will probably get complaints which have no rational basis. Some people get more enjoyment from hassling salespeople than just about anything else they do. I think that they feel their targets are not in a position to challenge anything they say. Just say to yourself that this will pass and you can get on with your life.

Patience is a highly desirable quality because you can expect delays in the delivery of stock you need for urgent orders and payments from customers.

You also need to keep your stock and your equipment organized so that you do not find that you have run out of some critical items or, perhaps even worse, have bought in two or three years supply of something.

The area where you prepare your gift baskets should be uncluttered, but



with all the equipment close to hand.

Although you are not answerable to a manager for the time you put into your work, you have to maintain a good rate of production or your income will suffer and you'll probably have to rush to meet some deadlines. This will cause you significant stress and may also reduce the quality of the baskets which you prepare during that period.

If you have been used to working in a business which employed many other people as well, you will have to realize that you no longer have that backup and support.

When you are a one-person business, you either do it yourself or pay someone to do it for you. We'll look at that second option in a later chapter.

Work Out a Business Plan

You have probably heard that every business, whatever their size, needs a carefully thought-out business plan.

This is particularly important if you need to borrow money to start your business. Any responsible lender will want to check that you are not over-extending yourself in your quest to start your own business.



A few figures on the back of a torn envelope won't do you any good.

Even though most gift basket businesses are fairly simple organizations, business lenders still require the sort of information that any other start-up would have to provide.

This actually gives you some protection too. You get an independent and disinterested review of your strategy before you go into debt to try it. Don't be disappointed if you are knocked back. That does not always mean that your plan won't work. It can be that you need to adjust different parts of the plan you created to build in a greater chance of success.

The main parts of a traditional business plan include:

Detailed information about the people who will run the business, including their relevant experience, special qualifications and financial details.

A breakdown of the resources the company has in staff, equipment and business connections.

An overview of the industry sector which the company will operate in, whether it is growing or not and any recent or looming developments which could affect prospects and profitability. Be sure to mention any special or unique resources which the company controls such as trademarks, designs etc

A description of your ideal customer, the likely return from them and any special points of connection which the company can exploit that are not

generally available.

Detailed information of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the major competitors which the company will have. It is very important that you include specific information about how you will be able to compete successfully against these competitors.

Your marketing plan including products that you will produce or distribute, how you will connect with your customers and where you will offer your products (from your office only, through retail stores, from your Internet site, at craft markets and specialty exhibitions et cetera.)

How the operation of the company will be managed, what review processes are in place and any plans that you have for expanding operations or producing new products.

Details about the people that will manage the day-to-day operations of the business, their individual backgrounds and credentials and their specific responsibilities.

Clear and detailed financial projections including current assets and liabilities along with expected income and expenses for the next six months, one year, two years and five years

Details of fixed costs such as staff wages, overheads including license fees, utility charges, insurance etc

I also would include a timeline where I would mark the dates that I expect to achieve certain specific results period.

I would conclude my business plan with a short statement explaining why I believe that I am particularly well qualified to operate and make a success of this particular type of business.

Choosing and Using Professional Help

Why You Need Professional Help

If you are not well organized, your business and reputation will suffer much more than you might realize. The first step should be to hire an accountant or a professional bookkeeper to ensure that your financial records are kept accurate and up-to-date.

This is important in two particular ways.



If you don't have a clear idea of your current financial situation, you may find yourself with a serious cash flow problem that could even cause your business to fail.

You also need to have your records up to date in case the tax authorities want to see them.

The I.R.S. or equivalent taxation authority in your country can arrive to audit your business financial records at any time. If they are not satisfied that you are keeping proper records, you could be in serious trouble. Even if you were able to get your records in order at significant cost because of the urgency, you might find yourself being closely monitored for several years into the future.

Selecting the Right Advisors

Try to get the services of someone that is qualified and licensed by the authority in your state so that they are recognized as knowing about your local taxes as well as the national requirements. Some accountants will have an introductory rate for you to meet them and discuss your needs before you make your decision about using their services.

The Accountants' own professional groups can supply lists of their qualified members in your area and some have information leaflets which can help you to find the right questions to ask at the initial meeting.

It's also a very good idea to attend meeting of at least one small business group and get some candid opinions from more experienced members about any professional whose services you are considering using.

This can be very valuable and may save you much more than the cost of membership in a single evening.

But, you should try to cross-check the opinions which you hear with members or other business people that you know well in case there is a connection you are unaware of between the person that recommended someone to you and that accountant or other professional.

Keep in mind that the professionals you deal with have an extra advantage over ordinary business people. They are mixing with the officials and other people in those government organizations all the time. They build up relationships and networks which can be very handy when you are under scrutiny for whatever reason.

A good lawyer will help you with advice about the contracts you use and potential liabilities related to the operation of your business or some of the materials which you put in the baskets.

If you put any kind of edible item in any of your baskets, you could be subject to local or federal food handling laws. All of these areas need the attention of a lawyer. They can also help you navigate such matters as the best structure for your business and the registering of your business name and any product names which you may benefit from trade marking.

With a hands-on business like gift baskets, I think that retaining a lawyer and an accountant is good value.

When I did it, my doctor said that my stress level was significantly reduced almost overnight. My husband and the kids also noticed the improvement as well!

Do You Need Insurance?

You may never make a claim against any of your business insurance policies but they are essential.

This is what I think from my experience and some discussion with other business owners. But, I am not offering specific or professional advice.

I don't have the training, qualifications or knowledge of any reader's particular circumstances and needs.

Do your own due diligence and check with at least two insurance companies because policies and fees vary widely.

Always read the fine print and ask for a clear explanation in writing about any points which you do not fully understand before you agree to anything. Verbal assurances are, in the words of Hollywood producer, Sam Goldwyn, "Not worth the paper they are written on."

Check your household and any other business policies which you have. Sometimes, they will offer limited coverage for certain activities.

But, you should invest in a policy which gives you full coverage.

Some of the things you need to check about include:

- ? Do your domestic policies have any relevant coverage?
- ? Will your domestic insurance be comprised if you operate your business in your home?

You will need to insure for:

- Accident, injury or loss by anyone that visits your premises in connection with your business.
- Injury or damage caused by your baskets or any components.

Be careful about common things like balloons. Children and pets may be injured seriously or even fatally by swallowing a piece of a balloon. Manufacturers recommend that they are only given to children while under adult supervision and never to children under seven years of age. You cannot guarantee that but you might still be held liable if there is an accident. Even being accused of causing injury to a child or pet could seriously

damage your business and personal reputation.

Ensure that anyone that transports anything related to your business (supplies, baskets or anything else) is covered by your policies.

Some business associations arrange special rates for certain kinds of policies for their members. Check with any groups that you are a member of, but read all of the policy very carefully before signing up.

These policies will usually cost you hundreds of dollars each year. That may tempt you to go without or arrange a policy for only certain areas of coverage. I would not start my business until I had checked and arranged a suitable policy from a company which I had independent recommendations about.

Every insurance company claims (pun intended) to be the most generous and reliable. They can't all be right.

Outsourcing and Hiring People

There may be some parts of the production process which you don't have the time or skill to do yourself.

Your options are to hire somebody to do that work at your premises or on a piecework basis at their premises.

The legal requirements associated with hiring somebody in either situation will vary widely between various states and countries.

You need to get professional advice from your local or state government authorities and it might also be worthwhile to get your own independent advice from a suitably qualified person in your local area.

When you are dealing with government employees, always write down their name and full contact details so that you can follow up with them if necessary at a later time.

I always also write down what I remember was said or done at a meeting as is possible after it finishes. Then, I write a letter to the person I was talking with and include a summary of my recollection of the meeting.

I don't suggest that this would have any value if there was legal action over whatever was discussed. It just tells the other person what you believe was discussed and agreed between you.

Before you start interviewing people with a view to hire them, check about the legal and financial costs which you will be responsible for. You may need to pay such added costs as unemployment insurance and provide other benefits which can add substantially to your costs.

You need to know that you have sufficient ongoing demand for your baskets to ensure you will be employing the person for a reasonable period to justify the dislocation for you and them which is inevitable when you change your work processes.

You will probably still have some legal obligations for tax, insurance, freight or other expenses if you pay someone to do piece-work assembly in their own home.

You also should get them to check that there are no local regulations which would prohibit them from doing the work you need done on their

home. This might not be your responsibility but could affect your public image if they get into trouble because they do some work for you.

Some things you need to check before you start paying any one to work for you is whether they have the appropriate skills and a suitable work ethic so that you will not have problems with poor quality work, ruined supplies or non completion of the work.

Sometimes, you can get people with the right skills and attitude by asking at the local craft shop, friends or people at a craft group which you are a member of.

If you are unsure about the person who seems most appropriate, it is better to keep looking than to take on someone who is likely to not work out.

You might offer to pay them to produce a small number of the item at an agreed rate so that you can check the quality and rate of completion.

Then, they at least get some payment and a chance to show what they can do and you have only invested a small amount if they don't work out.

Setting Up Your Business

If you have just been making gift baskets as a hobby before you start your Gift Basket business, you may need to change your mindset.

We tend to spend money on our hobby without much thought of return.

Now, you will have to keep full records for tax purposes and also to be able to check whether you are producing a profit. If you do not make any profit, you will need other income to keep making and selling your baskets.

Unless you can show a profit or a clear path to making one, the authorities may not allow you any business deductions.

You have to be able to show that you have a good chance of producing a profit before you are likely to be able to claim expenses involved in your business (get professional guidance about this as recommended in other sections of this ebook).

You will have to buy supplies for your products and also for your business use> keep receipts for everything which is used for your business such as printer ink, stationery, phone and Internet expenses and all the things you need to pay for before any money is likely to start coming back to you.

This may seem unimportant when you are just beginning, because you may already have enough supplies for making some products and running your business for a while.

But, you should make an allowance for these costs when you are setting out the prices you charge for your baskets. If you don't, you will have to make a steep increase in your pricing when you start to buy in your supplies and this will probably lose you some customers who were attracted by your unrealistic early pricing.

Keeping a careful check on what you spend in these early stages is very important. Gift Baskets are a seasonal item and you have to ensure that you keep funds aside from what you sell for buying supplies for the next season (Holiday, Weddings or whatever). You also have to try to judge carefully the amount of materials which are specific to a particular season so that you don't have too much sitting on your shelf when demand for a

particular line goes quiet.

Always get receipts and file everything so that it will be easier to produce the required information for your accountant to work on. The days when it was enough to give your accountant a shoebox full of loose receipts to produce your tax and other forms from are long gone.

They will probably have some junior employee sort the material but most will charge you their full professional rates for the time that takes. They don't want or need the hassle.

You also need to organize space for your supplies where they will be safe and stay in "as new" condition. Expect that some stored supplies will not stay in pristine salable condition despite your best efforts. That's money you will have to throw away or perhaps donate to a school or charity for their craft classes.

You will have to order supplies and make plans for promoting your products so that everything is in place and you are ready to sell at beginning of the appropriate time of the year.

If you are selling baskets with a seasonal theme, you will have to buy your supplies well in advance of the time when your potential customers start thinking about buying them. You will have to be able to carry the cost of all your preparation through that period.

You also need to provide for the possibility that your sales may be less than expected so that you have enough money and supplies to keep producing and promoting your products and recover from your losses.

When you start, you may have some supplies already on hand. That can help to reduce the amount you have to pay out at first.

You may not have the funds to set up accounts at wholesaler suppliers, so you may have to buy at least some of your supplies from businesses which offer smaller quantities at a higher unit cost. You may even have to start making your baskets with supplies bought from retail stores.

These possibilities will increase your costs for each basket you produce in the first stage of your business and require that you watch all your costs very carefully.

When you have made enough progress to be able to set up a connection with one or more wholesale suppliers, you will still need to keep a close eye on your costs and regularly checking which items are your most popular. This will ensure that you are not buying stock which accumulates on your shelves – dead money.

I have included information about some suppliers for you to check out. Wholesalers usually require that orders have a specific minimum dollar value and that you order a certain quantity of each item.

You may also find it worthwhile to check out auctions in your area if you have the time and cash. Remember that most goods which are bought at auctions have no guarantees of any kind.

Another important point with your products is to ensure that you comply with any safety regulations about all items and accessories which you include in your products.

You have probably seen the notices on plastic bags around many products that they must be kept away from children. These potential risks need to be covered in your procedures and products. Please check with your local consumer authorities for information about current and pending safety requirements and restrictions to ensure that you are in compliance.

I know I said, "Always get receipts for everything." Before, but it is worth repeating.

Suppliers

Important: The author has collected this information just before publication to help readers.

Neither the author, publisher or distributors offer any guarantee of the quality or authenticity of any information in this section.

The inclusion or absence of any business or individual does not indicate anything regarding the quality or otherwise of their offerings.

Please do your own checking before ordering any items or services.

One type of supplier which you may not be aware of is a business which acts as a link between actual wholesalers and small gift basket businesses. They have accounts with major wholesalers and break down the larger orders which they have to buy from the wholesalers into smaller quantities for selling to their customers with a margin added for their expenses and profit.

This can help your budget when you are starting up. It can also be a way of getting a small quantity of a new line to test your market without having to buy a wholesaler's large minimum quantity straight away.

You pay a bit more for each item but you don't have to buy as much until your business is big enough to warrant that level of expense and you have the storage for it.

Actual wholesalers may give you a better deal when and if you meet their terms for the quantities you buy in each single order.

United States of America

Basketware.com

<http://www.basketware.com/>

Monday-Friday 9:00AM-5:00PM EST

Telephone: 330-874-1388

1-800-523-3235

FAX: 330-874-1387

Address: OIC International, 10959 Fisher Rd NW. PO Box 560, Bolivar, OH 44612-0560

Wholesale Baskets, Shrink Bags, & Gift Basket Supplies \$AUD 100 minimum order.

Creative Gift Packaging Inc.

<http://www.creativegiftpackaging.com/>

763 US Hwy 221a, Forest City, NC 28043 (North Carolina)

Phone:866-443-8706 or contact them by email if you have any questions about their products before ordering.

Chat Support available at certain times through their website.

JDW Gift Basket Supplies

<http://www.giftbasketsupplies.com/index.html> and
www.jdwdist.com

Wholesale Distributor of Gift Basket Supplies and Gourmet Foods

612 N. Eckhoff St., Orange (a suburb of Los Angeles), CA 92868

From their web site: a light-bulk distributor of wholesale and discount gift basket supplies. Our business is family-owned and operated in WisconsinUSA Toll Free 800-783-9870

Artistic Gift Baskets

<http://www.artisticgiftbaskets.com/>

Phone: 18663604438

From their web site: a light-bulk distributor of wholesale and discount gift basket supplies. Our business is family-owned and operated in Wisconsin and supplies small quantities if required.

Saksco Gourmet Basket Supplies (U.S.A. and Canada)

<http://www.saksco.com/sakscoMain.aspx>

4-6221 Kennedy Road, Mississauga, Ontario L5T 2S8

United Kingdom

Candi Gifts

<http://www.candigifts.co.uk/>

Phone: 01502501681

Candi Gifts, Units 3-5 Quayside Business Centre, School Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 9NW

Baskets and other supplies.

Australia

www.fearociousfeed.com.au

Koch and Co.

<http://www.koch.com.au/>

From their website:

"Australia's Largest Florist Sundries and Gift website. Wholesale Florist Supplies, Florist Sundries, Floral Accessories, Gift packaging, Home Decor and Decorator items.

We stock a broad range of products. Our customers are not only florists. We supply a variety of customers, such as hamper supplies, wedding and function centres, nursery, confectionery and more.

Koch and Co Florist Supplies Gift and Floral has been an importer and wholesaler for over 75 years and have supplied the Australian florist and gift market faithfully with a wide cross section of florist supplies from all around the world."

Qent Pty Ltd

<http://www.qent.com.au/>

From their website: Qent Pty Ltd is family owned business, operating since 1985. We import and wholesale Florist Supplies, Baskets and Giftware for the Florist and Gift Industry

Unit 4 / 6 Greenfield St, Banksmeadow NSW 2019

Phone: (02) 93166613 **Fax:** (02) 93166628

For other suppliers in Australia, check for Florist Suppliers.

Grab Your Baskets full of Cash!

I hope that you use the information in this ebook to make baskets full of cash and compliments.

Good luck and good health also to you and your family.

Monica Woodhall

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)