

“From Passion to Cash!”

How to Make Money with Your Love of Decorating and Crafts

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From Passion to Cash!

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In the *Awaken Your Interior Designer!* Collection, published by [Home Decorating Made Easy.com](http://HomeDecoratingMadeEasy.com), we've given you everything you need to know to create the home of your dreams and make unique craft projects to decorate it. But if you're interested in taking the next step and turning your passion into cash, this book will give you all the information you need to know to get started.

Part I, Turning Your Decorating Passion into Cash (below), introduces you to the many ways that you can earn money from decorating projects...without having to go to interior design school. Part II, [Turning Your Craft Passion into Cash](#), offers ideas that are specifically related to designing, making, and selling crafts. Part III, [Basic Processes to Start and Market a Business](#), offers tips and advice relevant to starting both decorating and crafts businesses.

Without further ado, let's get you started on your way to making some extra money - or even making a living - from your craft and decorating passions!

Part I: Turning Your Decorating Passion Into Cash!

A popular women's magazine did a survey to find out which careers women fantasize about the most, revealing that "interior designer" was one of the top three. It is, indeed, a wonderful fantasy career, as it has all the elements of glamour, excitement, and creativity.

You may have even thought about a career in interior design before, but perhaps you were intimidated by the amount of training involved or the financial investment required. To become a licensed interior designer, you must have extensive schooling (usually 4-5 years post secondary school), professional work experience, and pass an exam given by the [National Council for Interior Design Qualification \(NCIDQ\)](#).

In many American states, it is illegal to call yourself an "interior designer" unless you are certified by the NCIDQ. Interior designers are trained not only in elements of decorating, but also in basic architecture and home engineering. Interior designers have a grasp of all the technical aspects of designing a home (plumbing, electricity, climate control, foundational structure, etc.) in addition to decorating elements. As a result, they are qualified to work in all aspects of design for any interior - including homes, offices, hospitals, yachts, cruise ships, resorts, convention centers, stores, and more.

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What you may not know is that there are ways you can earn money performing decorating services as an interior decorator, consultant, or artist...without going to interior design school. Some of these options include the following:

- Providing decorating consultations and advice
- Offering a “same-day” service for rearranging rooms
- Acting as a personal shopper for furniture and other decor elements
- Offering a window treatment consulting service
- Working with real estate agents as a “reselling” decorator
- Offering professional painting services for faux finishes and more
- Specializing in a specific type of room, such as kitchens or children’s rooms
- Providing decorating services for corporate offices and other buildings

Let’s take a look at each one of the options in a bit more detail.

Provide decorating consultations and advice

Even if you are not a licensed interior designer, you can still create a full-time or part-time career decorating people’s homes. While some people may be wary of hiring a “decorator” as opposed to a “designer”, the most important aspects of this business are developing referrals and having an impressive portfolio, and both of those goals can be accomplished without a degree!

For more specialized services, marketing and advertising are effective ways of gaining customers and clients. But for a general decorating service, usually the best way to start building your career is to offer to work with friends or family members for free to help them solve their decorating challenges. Take plenty of “before” and “after” pictures for your portfolio and to use on your [Web site](#), if you have one. In return, simply tell these friends that you would appreciate referrals if they are pleased with the work you’ve done.

**Michael's
Comments**

If Marney hasn't made it very clear, let me also stress that obtaining referrals will be the lifeblood of your business.

Start with friends and coworkers, but also attend social and civic events and mingle with homeowners. Hand out your business card and get theirs. You'll find that most people are very interested in making their home beautiful. So, work at building your portfolio with lots of before and after pictures and watch your referral list quickly expand.

Since there is more competition in the field of general home decorating, including competition from licensed designers, this approach usually is the best way to “break in” to doing this kind of work.

As you begin to build a clientele, you can begin charging and increase your fees as your experience and customer base grows. Repeat business is a great aspect of working in this field, and you will be surprised at how many people will hire you to work for a single room, and then hire you to work for another.

There are two types of general decorating services to offer. One is to act as a consultant, where you would visit a person's home and use your own knowledge of elements such as furnishings, patterns, fabrics, artwork, and accents to give advice as to how the room could be changed to be more effective. It is important to listen to the homeowner's needs and desires, and not just go by your own tastes. Such a consultation usually includes a follow-up report that summarizes the suggestions you make, including some shopping sources for products.

The other service is to carry out the decorating tasks involved with redecorating the room. You may want to structure your business so that you can be hired for a consultation (or even offer it for free), and if the homeowner is pleased, she can hire you to continue and see the job through. Or you may market yourself as an “all in one” decorator, who performs a consultation and automatically assumes the role of spearheading the decorating process.

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Fees for a standalone consultation (that is, one that does not include carrying out actual decorating tasks, but only includes a home visit and written evaluation and recommendations) range from \$30 - \$125 per room. Fee structures for carry out decorating jobs can be billed hourly or by the entire project. While hourly fees generally are more profitable for you, when you are just starting out you will probably find that customers are more responsive to “full package” prices.

To set a “full package” price, you should set an hourly fee (\$25 - \$60 is a good range for a new interior decorator) and estimate the number of hours involved in the project. One way to protect yourself is to set a base fee that includes work up to predetermined cap of hours, and then charge an hourly rate after reaching that cap.

When you are working with paying customers, be sure to put your agreement in writing, with special note as to how expenses related to the room will be paid.

That is, if you are doing shopping for a particular room, it's essential that both parties know ahead of time how these items will be paid for, and if reimbursements to you are involved, when they will be paid. It's also important that you and the homeowner agree on a budget, so that you don't end up spending more than the homeowner had in mind.

Even if you are working for a friend or new customer for free, it is still important that both parties fully understand the terms of the agreement. While initiating a contract between friends may be slightly uncomfortable, I highly recommend that you do so, to make sure that all aspects of the job are clear.

Offering a “same-day” service for rearranging rooms

Similar to offering a consulting service, a rearranging service is just what it sounds like - you visit someone's home and offer suggestions on how you would rearrange the room with the existing items in the room to make it more effective and functional. In most cases, you also would do the actual rearranging yourself, with the help of either the homeowner or an assistant of your own.

This is a great way to get started in the field, because many people are drawn to this type of decorating service since it has less of a financial or time commitment involved. You can also take advantage of the opportunity to offer suggestions for new acquisitions that would enhance the room, and offer follow-up services to coordinate those purchases.

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Since you could visit multiple homes in a single day, marketing yourself as a rearranger is a great option for those who want to work part-time or balance their decorating careers with a family life. Typical rearranger fees range from \$50 - \$125 a room.

One specialization of rearranging rooms is to help homeowner's prepare for parties and events in their homes. For this reason, this kind of work is easily combined with an event planning business.

Acting as a personal shopper for furniture and other decor elements

As a personal shopper, you would be responsible for actually shopping for items for a home to carry out the vision of the homeowner or perhaps, even that of another interior decorator or designer.

This service is ideal if you love the decorating process and working with a variety of people and homes, but you are not comfortable giving tangible decorating advice.

In this kind of business, you would generally charge an hourly fee for your time when ordering, shopping, and perhaps implementing the new purchases into the home. Hourly fees for shoppers generally range from \$30-\$80 and up.

You can market yourself as a personal shopper to homeowners, or seek work for a professional designer or within an interior design firm. Working for a designer as a shopper may also lead to other opportunities to assist the designer in his or her work, and is an excellent starting point for getting your hands into all aspects of design and decorating.

Offering a window treatment consulting service

While you could select almost any aspect of decorating as a specialty, we mention window treatments in particular because there is a ripe market for this kind of consulting service.

Even if homeowners feel confident in making their own decorating choices, many still feel more comfortable consulting an expert when it comes to window treatments. If you are an adept sewer, you can actual build and construct window treatments yourself, and earn a substantial fee.

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Fees for designing and constructing window treatments are usually per project, rather than hourly, and can range from \$100 - \$500 per project, plus materials. This is a service in high demand, so the market will withstand a high fee.

Even if you are not comfortable building treatments yourself, you can still market yourself as an window treatment consultant. As such, you would visit a home and give advice as to the kind of window treatment that would fit the decorating style and function of a particular room. You would then carry through with the shopping and ordering of the window treatment, and perhaps even do the installation of the treatment yourself, if you have the skill to do so.

This specialty service in particular can be done “virtually” using computers, bypassing the home visit altogether. Customers can send you several photographs of a particular room, and you can make your recommendations for window treatments from there.

This allows you to build a business outside of your geographic area via a Web site. Regardless of whether you work with a client in person or online, it is very helpful to have sketches and photographs of a large variety of window treatments so that you can show your ideas and vision to the people with whom you are working.

Working with real estate agents as a “reselling” decorator

A new trend in the decorating industry is to provide decorating and/or rearranging services in order to more effectively sell a home. Homeowners and real estate agents alike know that the current decor of a home greatly affects the success of selling a home and the price it garners.

You can use this to your advantage and market a “same day service” to homeowners to improve the overall look and flow of a room in order to be more impressive to buyers. To work directly with sellers, you can advertise in classifieds in the newspaper, since many sellers look through home listings to see what homes with similar specs are going for. An even more effective option is to connect with real estate agents and ask if you can place flyers or business cards in their offices in order to advertise your resale decorating service to their customers.

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Also worth noting is the fact that real estate agents working with high-end homes may often be willing to pay for your services, themselves, in order to offer this bonus feature to their own customers. If you have any personal contacts in real estate, you can start by offering to do resale decorating and/or rearranging for free or a low price in order to develop a portfolio. Eventually you can start charging by room, usually \$50-\$125 per room, with a discount for multiple rooms.

Offering professional painting services for faux finishes and more

If you love painting rooms, this is an optimum business with high customer draw. You can offer services painting faux finishes or murals for \$50 - \$100 an hour. Be sure that you spend enough time with the homeowner before beginning the job to ensure that you both agree on the goal for the project. The homeowner should have a clear idea of how the end result will look.

Make sure that you follow all the steps for preparing and priming a surface, as well as properly finishing the design with any necessary topcoats, in order to achieve the most professional result.

Specializing in a specific type of room, such as kitchens or children's rooms

Specializing in a specific room is a way that you can develop a niche for your business and earn a reputation as an expert in a particular area. If you are overflowing with creative ideas for children's or teenager's rooms, that is a wonderful way to market yourself. If you have lots of ideas about how to create fun media and entertaining rooms, that's a wonderful way to go. If you have a knack for merging form and functionality in the kitchen, there are plenty of people in need of your talent.

Like the other consulting businesses we've mentioned here, you can charge hourly or by room, and your service can include consulting/advice only, or a full package that includes a consultation and implementation of your design concept.

Providing decorating services for corporate offices and other buildings

This kind of work is a bit tougher to get, since most corporations will be looking for a licensed interior designer to complete work. But if you have connections with certain businesses or industries, it's not impossible.

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You can acquire jobs designing conference rooms, waiting rooms, high-profile offices, and rooms for special events and functions.

Be upfront about the fact that you are not licensed, and emphasize your strengths and the unique services you provide. A job well done in a corporate setting can lead to referrals to home projects, as well.

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All of the options we've listed here require time and attention to the [basic processes to start and market a business](#), which we will address later in this book.

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**Michael's  
Comments**

As Marney has outlined, there are a variety of ways for you to express your passion for decorating.

In addition, a great way to enhance your reputation while earning a part-time or full-time income, is to create a web site just like ours at [Home Decorating Made Easy.com](#).

You can display photos and even accept projects online from people who live in any state or country! Also, you can earn income by simply recommending the products of other companies that you believe would benefit your visitors.

There are many online stores that will pay you a commission for sending people their way. Naturally, you'd only want to recommend companies with products and services that you can attest as being top notch.

The products you recommend don't have to be furnishings either. They can also include books. For example, Amazon.com will pay you a commission if you recommend that "must have" decorating book to your visitors and they purchase it. Soon, we'll be starting an affiliate program here at [Home Decorating Made Easy.com](#) for our eBooks, so that might represent another opportunity for you. There are lots of choices!

**Michael's  
Comments,**  
continued

Of course, you might be concerned with the level of effort and skill involved with creating and maintaining a web site. Don't worry!

We use a product called [SiteBuildit!](#) and it requires no programming knowledge or any of those other techie skills. Creating pages are a snap and SiteBuildit! gives you everything you need to run a web business. You can easily start your own newsletter and register a domain name, among many other things.

[SiteBuildit!](#) brings us over 60,000 visitors per month and we don't do any of that crazy search engine optimization stuff. In fact, we haven't done much of anything beyond creating the pages.

Since I love to hear stories of people reaching for their dreams, I'm going to do something that I may regret. But what the heck.

If, at some point, you decide to purchase SiteBuildit! using this link....[Get SBI!](#), then for the next 6 months after your purchase, I'll give you free email consultations for getting your online business going in the direction you want. Just e-mail me at [mjh@home-decorating-made-easy.com](mailto:mjh@home-decorating-made-easy.com).

But whatever you do, make sure that your offline business has an online presence. Your local customers will perceive a higher level of professionalism and your profits will increase.

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## **Part I: Turning Your Craft Passion Into Cash!**

Whether you're new to making crafts or if you've been a craft addict for years, there are lots of opportunities to earn money from the crafts you make. If you have a real passion and skill for designing and making crafts, it is a great way to make some extra money, or even launch a new full-time career!

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Some of these ways you can make money from your creations include:

- \* Selling your crafts at local craft fairs
- \* Selling your crafts at upper-end juried craft fairs
- \* Selling your crafts at home parties
- \* Selling your crafts at consignment stores
- \* Selling your crafts via your own Web site
- \* Selling your crafts via other Web sites
- \* Wholesaling your crafts to local retail stores
- \* Wholesaling your crafts to nationally-based retail chains
- \* Licensing your designs to gift manufacturers
- \* Publishing how-to articles about your crafts and designs

Next, we'll look at each of these opportunities in more detail, so you can see which ones might be a good fit for your own individual interests, talents, and personality. We'll also cover the challenging question of how you should price your crafts, regardless of the marketing venue you choose.

In Part III, [Basic Processes to Start and Market a Business](#), we'll go on to present some basic information that you will need to get started in your crafts business, the two most important elements being:

- \* How to set up your business
- \* How to market your business

It's important to note that both full-time and part-time crafters often combine several of the profit-gaining ventures above to create multiple opportunities to earn money.

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Each of the ventures listed has its “pros” and “cons”. Some require very little money to start up, while others require a considerable investment. Some require minimal administrative upkeep while full-fledged a business must be treated as such.

Keep reading for a basic understanding of how each of these opportunities could be the right way for YOU to earn money with your crafts!

### **Selling your crafts at local craft fairs**

If you want to get your crafts out in the world, local craft fairs are a great place to start. The investment is minimal and, depending on the fair, you may be able to reach a lot of people in a single day. Craft fairs are also a great way to “try out” new items to find out which items get attention and sales.

Fairs are also great networking opportunities. You can spend face-to-face time with your potential customers to develop a mailing list and tell them about custom ordering opportunities and the like. You also can connect with other crafters and get information about their experiences of other craft shows in the area.

Local craft fairs are sponsored by schools, community centers, religious institutions, and cities/towns. There is usually an entry fee, which can be anything from \$10 to \$200. \$35 is a typical entry fee for a school-sponsored craft fair.

Your fee basically gives you a space in which to set up your booth. Spaces can be as small as 6' x 6', or three times that size. Sometimes the sponsor provides tables and chairs, but more often, you are responsible to bring your own booth items.

At local craft fairs, you'll see vendors with full-blown booth structures including canopies and sophisticated display structures, as well as vendors who display their goods on simple card tables draped with tablecloths. This variety is a real “plus” for you as you're getting started, as most of the larger, juried fairs have elaborate display requirements.

Even with a simple display, it's still easy to get very effective results. We'll give you some tips for your “home made” booth in just a few moments.

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You can find out about these fairs in the following ways:

- In the classifieds in local papers
- In “pennysaver” -type advertising editions and news magazines
- By following up when you see local craft fairs advertised on bulletin boards on roadside posters
- By calling local schools, chambers of commerce, and religious institutions to ask if they sponsor a craft fair and request to be on their mailing list
- Word of mouth (longtime residents of almost any area will know about the area’s popular craft fairs)

Most sponsors repeat their fairs annually, so even if a fair has passed for the year, you can go ahead and get on a mailing list to receive information the next time the sponsor is hosting a fair.

Most local craft fairs are not juried. Juried fairs are fairs that judge submissions in order to approve their entry into the fair. Some local craft fairs do require that you submit a photograph of your work when you apply, but this is uncommon.

Be sure that you understand the guidelines and rules of the fair prior to attending. Some fairs have very strict rules that everything must be handmade by the specific vendor. These fairs may object to manufactured items that you have embellished (for example, jars of candy that you have decorated) or items that came from another source (for example, cute handcarved pens that you purchased at an auction to sell alongside your crafts).

If you have any products that may be in question, simply ask the organizer of the event for his or her feedback. It is rare to run into problems of this nature, but you should be sure that you are not including items that may be against the fair’s rules.

This brings us to an important point...not all local craft fairs are created equal! There are plenty of fairs that allow only handmade crafts, but there are others who allow a “free for all” including flea market and used items. Obviously, the profile of attendees are very different for these two. Many talented crafters have become very frustrated by attending fairs where the adjacent booths are selling garage-sale type items, Avon products, or hundreds of pairs of socks that they acquired in bulk.

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Obviously, you want to attend a fair where the quality of your handmade items will be appreciated and shine in its greatest light. To ensure that you won't be wasting your time at one of these hodge-podge fairs, be sure to ask the following information when you are requesting an entry form for a fair:

- Do you have restrictions as to the types of items that are sold?
- How many vendors participate in each fair?
- What was the attendance at previous fairs you've sponsored?
- What kind of advertising do you do for the fair?

The answers to these questions will give you the basic picture of the caliber of the fair you're dealing with.

As you approach the fair's date, be sure that you [priced](#) all your items, packed them well (being careful to pack fragile items carefully, and not to pack any boxes that will be too heavy to lift), and designed the layout for your booth.



As stated earlier, an attractive booth can be created with very basic materials, such as card tables, benches, and tablecloths. The key to making an inviting display is to place your products on different levels. For example, the display shown on the top right set several card tables in a "u" shape, with several lower benches placed in front, all covered with coordinated holiday tablecloths.



The example shown on the lower right uses simple, inexpensive wooden crates as "display shelves", add dimension to the tabletop.

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In addition to materials needed to set up your display, you should also bring:

- \* Calculator
- \* Receipt book
- \* Pen and pencil
- \* [Business cards](#)



If the fair will be outdoors, you will need some kind of canopy or tent for shelter from the sun or bad weather. Look into household shelters and covers such as [Cover-It Instant Garages](#) rather than those created specifically for the craft and trade show industries. They are much less expensive and can fully fit the needs of any outdoor fair.

Once you're at the fair, take advantage of all opportunities to generate repeat business and build a "following". If you offer any custom services, be sure to advertise them on your display (above) and have ready-made order forms with you.

It's also a great idea to gather names for a mailing list for people who visit your booth. The easiest way to do this is to select one item and offer it up for a "free raffle". Make a sign that says, "Join My Mailing List and Win This Picture Frame", and have raffle slips and pens available for people to fill out with their names and addresses. At the end of the day, you'll have a pile of names to whom you can send announcement postcards of future events. And all you have to do is just draw one winner out of the pile and send them a gift via the mail.

It's important to keep good records of your craft fairs, especially if you participate in several fairs a season. Keep a notebook with the following information for each fair:

Craft Fair Name:

Date:

Organizer:

Contact info:

Entry Fee:

Number of Mailing List additions:

Items Sold: (list items & profit)

Total Profit: (total of items sold minus entry fee)

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General impressions: (indicate fair traffic, types of vendors, location, etc.)

Product notes: (include a record of which products seemed to generate the most interest, which products were newly added for this fair, and any notes about change requests, i.e., a customer saying she would prefer it in a different color or style.)

Would you attend again?: (note if you would want to attend this fair next year)

### **Selling your crafts at upper-end juried craft fairs**

The process for selling your crafts at juried craft fairs is basically the same as selling at local craft fairs, just on a higher scale. The entrance fees are usually several hundred dollars (\$300-\$750 is typical, or even higher) but you are guaranteed an audience of thousands of people who are coming to a well-known fair with the sole purpose of shopping for fine handmade crafted items.

Besides the entrance fees, these fairs have other requirements that need to be considered before you take the plunge, such as:

- \* The need for professional photographs/slides to submit
- \* The ability to accept credit cards
- \* Elaborate displays and booth elements
- \* Possible travel and lodging considerations

Unless you have a large amount of capital with which to start out, I would not recommend starting with these fairs. Take at least a year to experiment with your business: study the market, perfect your technique, and get your work out to your local public via the other means we're introducing in this book.

When you are ready to make this step with your craft business, here are some resources to look into:

- \* [Art and Craft Shows Net](#) - A searchable database of over 2,000 national craft fairs and events
- \* [Crafters Database](#) - On- and offline subscriptions give you access to listings of several thousand events. Online subscription is \$25.
- \* [The Crafts Report](#) - A magazine you can find on regular newsstands that lists all the major shows as well as articles for the professional crafter

## **Selling your crafts at home parties**

There's no denying it - your friends and family are great resources for building up a following. Even more valuable to you than their dollars are *their* friends and contacts. Having a home party in your own or someone else's home is a great way to get a lot of people to see your work...and every person attending will have some kind of connection to you.

Before you disregard this idea as being too "opportunistic" or perhaps even tasteless, think about to all the success of tupperware parties and other similar ventures. People buy from people they know, and that applies to your crafts, as well.

Don't worry, there are a lot of ways to make these events feel more like parties and social gatherings than sales opportunities. The idea is to create a fun social opportunity, at which shopping for handmade crafts is just one of the activities. Consider the following ideas:

- Create a theme for a party and design activities around that theme.  
A fellow crafter friend and I once hosted a "Craft and Cannoli" party, at which we made homebaked cannolis and had several games around an Italian Carnevale theme. We gave away small craft items as prizes for each of the games and had several small door prizes as well. The party was packed and we each made close to \$1,000 from the crafts we sold out in a tent in the backyard.
- Teach a craft technique or project that party attendees can complete and bring home with them. I have hosted several parties where I have taught some of my favorite projects to my friends (and my friend's friends) and sold my work, as well.
- Create great "goody baskets" with a variety of freebies that attendees will get to take home with them.
- If you love to cook, create a wonderful luncheon or dinner and invite guests to shop in your impromptu "craft store" after dessert.

When creating your invitations, be sure to mention that crafts will be for sale. I've found the best way to do this is to make a list of all the fun things happening at

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the party, including the crafts. Your invitation could say something like this...

*Join us on February 10 for a Ladies' Valentine Luncheon!*

*Enjoy delicious food!*

*Walk in the garden!*

*Shop for handmade crafts and jewelry!*

*Take home a basket of free goodies!*

As you can see, there's absolutely nothing potentially offensive or opportunistic in such a fun agenda of activities!

As with a craft fair, you'll want to create an attractive display, seize opportunities for a mailing list, and keep organized records of your sales at the party. Most of all, have fun meeting new people and showing off your talents!

### **Selling your crafts at consignment stores**

Another way to start selling your crafts on a local level is to sell on consignment at craft stores, craft malls, gift shops, and even clothing boutiques. Most cities have "craft malls" or "gift consignment" stores where you can rent out a shelf or two to display your crafts. Sometimes these establishments take a percentage of the price in addition to the rental fee for the display areas, sometimes you keep the entire sales price.

You can find such stores by looking up "Crafts" in your local yellow pages. You can also look up under "gifts" and see if there are listings for "Gift Consignment Stores".

If you see a privately-owned gift shop or boutique that seems like a good "fit" with your products, ask to speak with the store owner about selling items on consignment. When you are just starting out, this is a more attractive option to a storeowner than buying your wares outright at wholesale prices.

After speaking with the storeowner, you'll have a good idea of what he or she needs to move forward. She may want you to bring by samples, or to write up an official proposal for consignment. Follow up with any requests in a timely manner, and remember that this requires persistence. You may have to follow

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up with several phone calls before you actually have made a deal with the storeowner.

Before proceeding to give your products to the storeowner, be sure a contract has been signed by both parties. The contract should include:

- \* Percentage to be kept by the store, and any stipulations by which the percentage changes for specific items, if it is taken before or after tax, etc.
- \* An agreement as to where the item(s) will be placed in the store
- \* A policy for damages to the items
- \* Confirmation that there are no “hidden” costs to you in the arrangement, such as electricity, advertising, etc.
- \* How often you are required to contact the store and replenish items
- \* How and when you will be paid

### **Selling your crafts via your own Web site**

As we said earlier, most crafters earn their money pursuing a variety of the income avenues we’ve explained here. No matter what kind of craft business you are running, having a Web site can make a huge difference in your profits.

The most advanced Web sites take advantage of e-commerce technology, which means you can actually sell your craft items on the site by credit card. But even if you don’t actually sell your items on your site, you can still benefit by creating a “Web presence” - a place where people can be introduced to you and your work.

Picture this: you have a booth at a craft fair, and a potential customer admires your work but doesn’t buy anything that day. But you get her name and address for your mailing list (via your [raffle](#)), and you give her a business card with your Web site URL. She visits your Web site, admires some pictures of your work, reads about your background, and reads about custom orders. She also sees a list of your upcoming fairs, and when you send her a postcard about your next fair, she immediately plans to attend.

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But this time, she feels like she has a personal connection with you because she's visited your Web site. Marketing research shows that people buy products after they have been exposed to them several times. The fact that she's seen your Web site **and** you sent her a postcard with your upcoming shows greatly increases the chance of her making a purchase.

Just remember that since your best income will come from repeat orders and referrals from pleased customers, one customer's purchase leads you to an unlimited source of future purchases.

A Web site is the best way to reach the maximum number of people at the minimum cost. And it's a lot easier than you might think. Your ISP (Internet Service Provider) may provide Web space for you for absolutely no cost. With a little bit of time, you can build a simple but functional Web site for free using their premade templates. If your ISP doesn't offer this kind of service, check out the free Web site options at [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).

If you're just getting started, one of these free Web services will fit your most basic needs. You can include the following information on your site:

- Your background and perhaps a photo of you
- A list of the different crafts you make
- Sample photographs of your best items
- A list of items that can be custom ordered, and ordering instructions
- A list of your upcoming craft fairs or parties
- Contact information for getting in touch with you

If you are serious about building a crafts business, though, you should seriously consider a more advanced Web site where you can take advantage of the following:

- Your own personal domain name (i.e., [www.CraftsForJoy.com](http://www.CraftsForJoy.com))
- Automatic submission to search engines
- Comprehensive, detailed tracking of statistics
- Automated opt-in newsletter features
- E-commerce capability, so you can sell your products on your site
- Unlimited file space for your Web site, so you can include lots of photographs of your work

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One option is to hire a Web designer to design the Web site for you, but that cost can be prohibitive. There are lots of do-it-yourself programs out there, but the one that we recommend by far is [SiteBuildIt!](#). I'll let Michael tell you more about it, here.

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## **Michael's Comments**

As Marney mentioned, you could go with a freebie web site, and that's fine if you don't have much money. After all, it's better than nothing.

But, I can tell you that you won't find many people using them who are serious about their businesses. Even those choosing a part-time business prefer a nice looking web site that conveys a sense of professionalism. A site that looks too amateurish is not going to get the sale.

The product the we use here at [Home Decorating Made Easy.com](#) to create our web site is called [SiteBuildIt!](#)

It requires no programming skills or any other technical knowledge. In fact, it has everything you'll need to build a full- or part-time business. You can even send out your own crafts newsletter.

We get over 60,000 visitors per month with very little effort. However, since I don't know what you have in mind, I can't make any such guarantees for your business. But I highly recommend [SiteBuildIt!](#)

And as I also stated earlier, if you decide at some point to purchase [SiteBuildIt!](#) using this special link...[Get SBI!](#), then for the next 6 months after your purchase, you can e-mail me at no charge as often as you like for insights to get your online business going.

### **Selling your crafts via other Web sites**

You also can sell your crafts online on other Web sites. There are many online craft marketplaces and craft malls where you pay a minimal fee to have a Web pages set up at a “virtual” craft mall.

Sometimes these sites keep a commission, and sometimes they don't. Look up “craft malls”, “virtual craft malls”, “online craft marketplaces” and the like in a search engine like [google.com](http://google.com) and you'll see a variety of these offerings that you can evaluate to see which one(s) are best suited for your work.

Another way to sell your crafts via other Web sites is to approach the owner of a Web site that sells complimentary - but not competitive - items to yours. For example, if you are a jewelry artist, you might search for a handbag Web site and approach the owner about making an arrangement for you to sell your work on her site.

As with selling [your crafts at consignment stores](#), you'll want to make sure that you have all the details regarding arrangements with other Web sites in writing, and that you have answers to all your questions prior to moving forward with the agreement.

### **Wholesaling your crafts to local retail stores**

An alternative to selling your crafts on consignment to local stores is to sell them wholesale. You'll have to carefully examine your budget and [pricing](#) to determine if wholesaling will be profitable for you. If you can make items in bulk and take advantage of bulk rates when purchasing supplies, it's likely you can make a nice profit from wholesaling.

When you wholesale an item, it means you are selling it to a retail store at a lower price than the normal purchase price. Most often, a wholesale price is half of the item's actual price. The retailer then doubles the price and keeps half the profit, and gives half back to you. For example, if you sell an item at craft fairs for \$10, you would sell it to the store for \$5.00.

Sometimes the “markup” (the percentage by which the retailer increases the wholesale price to arrive at the selling price) is less than 50%. This is good news for you, because it means you can wholesale items for a higher price. It varies from establishment to establishment, although 50% is rather standard.

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To sell items wholesale at local stores, you will need to approach the storeowner in person or by phone to find out if they buy items outright at wholesale prices. From there, you would follow up with the information requested by the storeowner, and negotiate an arrangement.

When a retail store purchases items wholesale, they buy the items outright from you, thereby they assume the risk if the item does not sell. Obviously, one plus of this situation is that you get paid up front. Another plus is that your items are sold in a public place and you don't have the burden of marketing. Depending on the store's location, traffic, and the appropriateness of the clientele to your craft, this could mean a lot of sales for you.

Again, you need to "do the math" to determine if you can make a profit from wholesaling. It's a method that works very well for some craft items, and not as well for others.

### **Wholesaling your crafts to nationally-based retail chains**

Once you have been working with your business for a while, you may want to wholesale your crafts on a national level by attending large trade shows. This is a great way to take your business to the next level and boost sales and profits, but it not something you should even consider until you are very comfortable with your business and are in the position to make a sizeable financial investment.

Trade shows are attended by thousands of representatives from retailers across the country or the world, who see your offerings in your booth and in a catalog you produce, and make wholesale orders. You can potentially walk away from a trade show with literally thousands of orders, which is very exciting...but you have to be ready to handle that kind of production and the administrative tasks that go along with it.

If you are interested in learning more about these kinds of opportunities, I recommend visiting the site for [George Little Management](#), which is the company that produces some of the largest trade shows for the gift, stationery, home goods, and greeting card industries. The information on their Web site will give you a good idea of the type of planning and resources that are necessary.

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### **Licensing your designs to gift manufacturers**

Another option is to sell your designs to a manufacturer outright. In this arrangement, you are not responsible for making items or marketing them....you just sell your design or idea for a particular craft item.

If you have a unique item or design, this is a potentially profitable venture. Usually licensing arrangements for new artists represented by a company consist of “one-time” fees, although sometimes they also include royalties of sales.

You can find extensive information about the licensing process, as well as a list of companies where you can pitch your ideas in the [Artist's Market](#) available for the current year.

### **Publishing how-to articles about your crafts and designs**

Finally, you can earn money from your crafts knowledge by submitting “how-to” articles to magazines. Naturally, craft magazines are an obvious outlet for this, but the following also pay for craft features:

- Women's magazines
- Parenting magazines
- Home decorating magazines

For a list of possible markets for your articles, consult the [Writer's Market](#) available for the current year. There is a whole section devoted to arts and crafts markets.

Another approach is to look at current magazines on the newsstand that seem like they would fit naturally with your articles, and look for writer's guidelines in the back of their issue or on their Web site.

Some magazines want you to submit a finished articles, while others simply want a “query”, which is a letter where you present your idea to them. They may want you to supply photos, or they may prefer that you mail them the actual item so they may photograph it themselves. These details will be included in the writer's guidelines.

### **How to price your crafts**

No matter how you sell your crafts, one of the most important aspects to consider is your pricing. Crafters use many different methods to figure out their prices. Some will simply double the price of supplies. Others create complex formulas like,  $(\text{supplies} \times 1.5) + (\$15.50 \times \text{number of hours spent})$ .

Pricing is a matter of striking a balance between what the marketplace can tolerate (i.e., what price are customers willing to pay) and profitability (i.e., what price will make this venture worth your while).

To determine what the marketplace can tolerate, research items similar to yours at gift shops, online, and at other craft fairs. You'll get an idea of the basic range that similar items sell for.

Local craft fairs are a great way to try out different pricing scales. Doubling supplies is a good place to start. If you keep detailed records, you can see what happens when you change prices of particular items from fair to fair.

Ironically, pricing crafts higher sometimes actually increases sales. This is because one of the motivations behind buying crafts is the perceived value of buying something that is "hand made".

I have, on more than one occasion, sold my work at craft fairs and found that if an item wasn't selling, if I increased the price (for example, multiplied the supplies by 3, instead of by 2, or perhaps even doubling the existing price), sales increased almost immediately.

For example, a decorated hat box selling for \$32 may be more appealing and be perceived as more valuable than one selling for \$16. I've certainly found this to be true in many instances. Unfortunately, there's no way to really know that you've hit your price "on the head" unless you experiment. Again, local craft fairs are often the best venue for this kind of experimentation.

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All of the options we've listed here require time and attention to the basic processes to start and market a business, which we will now address.

### **Part III: Basic Processes to Start and Market a Business**

The following are general steps required to starting any business, even if it is part-time. For more detailed information about starting a business, you can refer to a books in the Business/Careers section at any bookstore or library. You also can search the Internet using any of the topics below as key words. Additionally, most local chambers of commerce offer classes and workshops for new business owners at no charge.

1. Select a name for your business.
2. Decide if you want to incorporate your business. If not, you should determine if you should file a DBA ("Doing Business As") with your state, which allows you to perform business operations under the name of your business, if it is different than your own name.
3. Open a bank account for your business.
4. Determine if your business will take credit cards and, if so, open a merchant account. (Many Web site services offer this function as part of their packages so you may not have to open your own merchant account).
5. Find out if there are any special zoning laws in your area that pertain to running a business from your home.
6. Get information about your local Chamber of Commerce and organizations within your industry to take advantage of networking and information-sharing opportunities. Internet-based newsgroups are also a great source of information when starting a business.
7. Get well-acquainted with the tax laws pertaining to owning your business, and learn how to keep careful records that will make life easier when you file your taxes.
8. Order or print your own business cards and business stationery. Even if you do not have a Web site for your business, acquire an e-mail address used specifically for the business.
9. If you need a space outside your home, find the appropriate space and be conscientious about the lease process.

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It goes without saying that marketing is the most important ingredient for your business' success -- far more important than your talent or skill. Here are some ideas on ways you can market various decorating and crafts businesses to get your name and services out there:

- Build a Web site using [SiteBuildit!](#)
- Advertise in local papers and newsletters
- Write press releases to feature a unique aspect of your business and sent to newspapers, magazines, and Internet sites
- Offer discount promotions, free services and gifts
- Start a newsletter (online or printed) and offer advice or articles related to your service.
- Trade advertising in your newsletter with related but non-competing businesses
- Post flyers of your product or service
- Mail flyers, mini-catalogs, or promotional postcard to a targeted mailing list that you have purchased or formed yourself

Most importantly, never stop brainstorming about ways you can market your business to the appropriate audience. If you live your day-to-day life in a mode where you are constantly searching for new unique marketing ideas, you will find them! Don't expect too much too soon from your business. Remember your initial passion that brought you to this pursuit in the first place, and don't forget to enjoy your successes - however minor or major -as they come.