



Kent Stetson's postcard shows how he turns paintings into great handbags.

Photos courtesy of Diane Sulg

Polish Your Image With Great Marketing

By Diane Sulg

In addition to product, price, and customer service, there is one more important component for the professional wholesaler — your image! Not just the one you see in the mirror but also the one your customers see when they look at your digital and printed materials.

In this chapter of *The Creative Wholesaler*, we are going to examine every aspect of your marketing materials to ensure they convey a consistent, informative, and professional image. Chances are you already have a company **logo**, but if not, this is a great place to start. If you have the creative skills to develop your own logo, forge ahead.

On the other hand, if you are hesitant, it is worth the cost to have a professional

graphic designer create a look you love. Consider including a short tag line that adds a distinguishing or exciting flourish.

Use your logo everywhere you can to strengthen your brand image. For instance, if you make jewelry, it might look great on your earring cards.

Inexpensive **stickers** are easy to make, and ones with your logo can jazz up all sorts of materials, including simple bags and boxes. If you are inspired to create a particularly lovely or fun sticker, you might offer it as a free promotional item in your trade show booth.

You probably have a professionally printed **business card** already. However, check to make sure it is wholesale-friendly. For instance, you do not want to include your Etsy address when selling to a retailer.

Your card does not need to be elaborate. One-sided with basic information and a splash of color to make it memorable is ideal. If you prefer a two-sided card, use the reverse side to briefly describe your business and its products.

Create an **artist card** to succinctly describe your product and you as its maker. These cards are important collateral the retailer will include when selling a piece of your work. So do not make it too large, especially if you make a small item like jewelry, because the store will likely want to fit your card in with the product.

Your artist card can feature a small photo of you or a piece of your work and tell your story in a few short, memorable sentences. Do not add any contact information.

GREENWICH BAY TRADING CO.

Las Vegas Market | Booth E-321

& freesia
ING BODY WASH

SICILIA
fresh lemon
& extra virgin
olive oil
EXFOLIATING
SPA SOAP

lemon
thyme
HERBAL SOAP

GREENWICH BAY TRADING CO.
10% OFF
orders placed at
Las Vegas
Market
taking delivery by
April 7, 2023
Booth E-321
SINCE 1962

peppermint & aloe
SHEA BUTTER SOAP

ROSEWATER
& JASMIN
BODY BUTTER
with shea
& bot

minimum opening order •

Greenwich Bay Trading Company makes its line sheet a promotional item at trade shows. Wholesale pricing is on the reverse side of the enclosed card.

The retailer wants the customer to return to the store instead of ordering directly from you, so she is likely to toss your card if it contains your website, email, or phone number. However, your card is a great way to highlight the fact that your product is handmade with impressive materials, skill, and love!

Before you do your first wholesale trade show, consider making a **line sheet** to give to your prospective customers. On it, list each product you are offering, accompanied by a small photo, the product name, SKU, dimensions, and wholesale price.

At the bottom of the sheet, list your terms, such as minimum orders and payment information. While some exhibitors believe line sheets are no longer necessary, it can be a great tool for a new

exhibitor. Simple photocopies make an inexpensive marketing piece for retailers to review both during and after the show.

Many wholesale exhibitors combine their line sheet with a promotional item at a trade show. A good example comes from Greenwich Bay Trading Company — they include a small bar of shea butter soap with their line price sheet in a plastic bag. The sticker on the bag offers a discount for orders placed at the show, as well as an early delivery date.

Another useful marketing piece is the humble **postcard**. Make an eye-catching front, and put your basic business info on the back, perhaps at the bottom.

Leave most of the back blank, so you are able to use the card in several ways. For instance, you can mail cards out before the show to tell prospective buyers

your booth number. You can enclose them with a thank-you message in order shipments, and you can give them to buyers in your booth as a reminder to come back and place an order.

You are fortunate, indeed, if you have the creative skills to produce first-class printed materials. However, if you lack either the time or the talent, seek out a talented graphic designer for the most important marketing materials.

Be sure your materials are consistent with the heart of your business philosophy. Tell a good story that resonates with your ideal customer.

Give all your materials a similar feel and use great photographs, along with concise messaging. And do not forget to proof everything. Nothing destroys



Market Success Story

“Greenwich Bay Trading is a family-owned and -operated business crafting shea butter soaps and spa products since 1962. All our products are made in Raleigh, North Carolina. Participating in gift markets for over 15 years, we feel it is important to do these shows in order to stay connected with our customers and to meet new ones. We participate in both the Atlanta and Las Vegas winter and summer markets.”

— Greenwich Bay Trading Co.

a great image faster than poor grammar and spelling!

So far, this article has focused on your printed materials, and while these are important in today's world, we cannot ignore your online, digital image. Many of the same marketing strategies apply there, too.

Make sure you have a good-looking, up-to-date business **website**. If you are selling retail products there, your pricing must be compatible with that of your retailers.

You may want to add a section that includes all the stores where folks can find your products, thereby promoting your wholesale customers. In fact, if you are a serious wholesaler, you might want to include some testimonials from retailers who love selling your products.

While you can choose to have a password-protected wholesale area on your site, many artists today simply refer their wholesale customers to platforms where their work can be found, such as Faire or IndieMe. That saves you the time and effort of updating your product information in several locations. If this is the path you select, make it clear and easy for retailers to find your work with links to your sales pages on those sites.

While you might not have time to pursue **social media** on several sites,



Laurel Grey, a glass artist in Door County, Wisconsin, has a picture of herself on her artist card.

choose at least one location and post there consistently. Many artists like the visual appeal of Instagram, while others find Facebook friendlier.

These sites can give your work great visibility, particularly if you concentrate on honing your photography skills. Do not post poor-quality images. Check your spelling and grammar. Since you are making and selling a handmade product, learn to make some interesting videos that put your skills in the spotlight.

Remember the goals of your wholesale marketing. First, you want to attract a store owner who will buy your products,

so make your materials visually appealing and tell a good story. Let her know why you and your products are unique.

Then give her what she needs to sell your products to her customers. This can be your artist card, display tips, and the promise of great customer service.

Spend some time thinking through your overall marketing strategy. Prepare some great materials. Do not print huge quantities of anything the first time around.

See how your materials are used and determine which ones are important to your brand image. Keep updating and changing — remember the mantra of retail is “what’s new?” So, you will always be challenged to create new products, designs, and colors, in addition to new and improved marketing materials! ⚙️

Diane Sulg is executive director of CRAFT and founder & co-chair of American Craft Week (ACW). She is a handmade advocate who



provides valuable information in her one-day seminars at wholesale shows throughout the United States. She can be reached at dianesulg@gmail.com.