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**Psyched To Sell Crafts**  
SUPPORTING & INSPIRING YOUR POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

## Introduction

We were working on the content for our *"What Craft Venue is Right for You?"* quiz when we realized we had more useful home show information than we could fit into our quiz format. So in keeping with our mission to "support and inspire" (and thanks to the suggestion from our intern, Jennifer), we decided to make the full home show content available free to crafters visiting our website.

If you like this extended report, please consider purchasing our quiz which will help you gain insight into your personality type. More than just a questionnaire, the quiz will place you on the introvert/extrovert scale and match you with venues that are best suited to your personality based on your individual results. Although we point you toward the venues that may be right for you, once you take the quiz you will have access to all the quiz content which is packed with information about 16 different types of selling and promotional venues available to craft artisans, like you, who want to become successful selling their handcrafted merchandise.

Finally, please don't consider us sexist because we chose to write this piece referencing the female "hostess." We know there are a lot of great male crafters out there! If you're a male having a home show, the same principles apply.

Hoping you find success and happiness!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Reggie".

# The Home Show

## Category: Direct Sales – Focused on Selling in Small Groups

This venue **may** be good for you if you:



- Are outgoing and enjoy social interaction
- May be less outgoing, but are comfortable talking in smaller groups
- Are more comfortable in groups when you have a few supportive friends with you
- Have an eye for detail and are good at organizing your business Can stick to a deadline
- Are enthusiastic about your merchandise and your craft; what it means to you, the materials you use, etc.

This venue **may NOT** be good for you if you:



- Get very nervous standing in front of a group
- Have trouble “finding your voice” under pressure
- Are *very* disorganized
- Get nervous on the telephone
- Get flustered easily if things don’t go exactly as you picture them
- Don’t work well with new acquaintances

## How to Have a Successful Home Show

Proven to be a successful sales technique, a **home show** is an alternative to activities such as exhibiting in galleries or providing demos – venues that are also well-suited to anyone who is comfortable selling to a smaller group of potential customers – the mild extroverts among us. For those that have not heard of a home show for crafters before, let’s take a minute to understand the fundamentals of having a home show.

The home show is a great choice for individuals who enjoy spending time with friends and family, sharing information about their craft and who like to see immediate results from their efforts. This is also a good choice for people who enjoy more personal interactions, but who may not be as comfortable talking to larger groups. At a home show you can create a more intimate atmosphere between you and your customers providing them with a personalized experience and giving you a chance to work within your comfort zone.



As the name implies, a home show takes place in someone's home and is basically a get-together of friends, family and acquaintances that is centered around showing and selling the handcrafted merchandise you create. Closely patterned after Tupperware parties, "home shows" or "shopping parties" have recently become very popular for selling jewelry, body lotions, handbags, intimate

apparel and more. Hosted in a party-like atmosphere with snacks, drinks and sometimes themes and decorations, a home show provides you access to friendly customers in a casual atmosphere.

There are many benefits to having a home show. For instance, you're easily able to personalize yourself and your craft to customers. One thing that makes handcrafted items unique is that customers get to know the back story on the things they buy from you. What types of background information are customers interested in knowing? Take a look at these suggestions provided to us from actual craft merchandise customers:

- How did you get your start crafting?
- How has your crafting developed over time?
- What inspires you?
- What materials do you use? And, why?
- Have you studied crafting or trained with anyone to learn your craft?
- What is the process you use? Is any of your process unique to your handmade items?
- Do you ever get inspired by your materials?
- Have you ever learned from a fortunate mistake?

This more intimate knowledge about the items they buy may inspire customers to buy more, but it also has another effect. When customers know the narrative of your growth and inspiration as a crafter, they have a great story to tell to their friends and acquaintances. And, what does a good story do? It spreads! This "water cooler talk" or promotion through casual conversations is not something you find in many of the other types of venues. Home shows just seem to lend themselves to chatting about the enjoyable event they attended, the craft artisan they met and the merchandise that was on display. The benefits from this free advertising are

difficult to measure, but they can definitely have a positive effect on your business and your income.

Jonah Berger, best-selling author of the book *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, attributes a lot of business success to this phenomenon he calls "social currency." Defined, social current is the extent to which people share information about a business as part of their everyday social lives at work or at home. This sharing helps businesses to create unique brand identities and earn acceptance from new customers who are significantly influenced by these casual referrals. He goes so far as to say that "In today's age, building social currency is probably the most important investment companies can make" and which he has discovered plays a major role in things going viral on the internet. This is something crafters should keep in mind as they promote and sell their merchandise.

If that wasn't enough, another benefit of the home show is that they don't cut into your profit with expensive booth fees or the other sundry costs that come from traveling to distant shows, providing a large display and eating and drinking during the long days at your booth. You also don't have to vie for customers' attention. At a home show you are in a comfortable environment while your handcrafted merchandise takes center stage.

### **Who's Your Hostess?**

The first thing that often stops people from considering adding home shows to their business plan is the fear of hosting people in their home – a small apartment, small children under foot or other living situations that may make having people over a challenge. Sometimes people just don't enjoy being a hostess. If you can't see yourself hosting a party or, even more complicated, hosting a home party while also trying to focus on promoting and selling your crafts, you're in luck!

When I first heard about home shows for crafters, I thought they could either be self-hosted or hosted by someone else. However, I have since learned that the success of this method for selling your crafts only works if you have other people hosting them. This is because in order to grow your home show business you need to have different hostesses who have different circles of friends and acquaintances. This continually introduces you and your craft merchandise to a whole new round of potential customers.

The great part for the person selling their crafts is that, in most cases, the hostess takes care of the details of the party. They send the invitations, make follow-up contact with the invitees, provide the snacks, etc. On the day of the event all you have to do is show up with your merchandise, set up

an attractive display, talk to people about your craft and merchandise in a warm and friendly atmosphere and sell your handcrafted products. The hostess has fun throwing a party and receiving free merchandise (we'll get to that in a minute) while your network of customers and potential new hostesses grows and grows. The person who designed this sales method was a genius!

## Getting Started

**F. R. A. N. K.**

Finding people to host your home show might be easier than you think. Direct sales companies use the acronym, FRANK, to help their associates find both hosts and customers. FRANK stands for:

- **F**riends
- **R**elatives
- **A**ssociates (including co-workers)
- **N**eighbors, and
- **K**ids (people you know through your children)

When you look at it this way, you have a lot of connections with people who are close to you and probably have seen your hand crafted wares, but you can also think of many people who could be introduced for the first time to the wonderful merchandise you offer. Sometimes I hear people say that they don't have enough friends to make a home show worth the effort. That's where teaming up with a hostess take a lot of pressure off the craft artisan. You both can invite people to the event, coming up with just the right number of people for you to balance being comfortable in the group and having enough people there to make the event a success.

## Introducing the Home Show Concept to Potential Hostesses

Often the first step is the hardest, but if you introduce people to the concept of hosting a home show, you'll be surprised at how many people will be interested. A good way to start this conversation is to simply say, "Hi \_\_\_\_\_, you've mentioned before that you like the jewelry I create and since the holidays are coming up I'm wondering if you'd like to host a get-together with your friends and do a little home shopping? It would be a fun way to

hang out with everyone and, as the hostess, you'd get some great gifts – actual merchandise that you'll get to pick from my collection!"

Another way to start that conversation is when someone says, "I love your jewelry!" you can respond, "Thank you! You know, I have a program where you can earn free or discounted jewelry by having some friends over for a home shopping party." Especially in a struggling economy, people love getting free merchandise. The hostess can keep the items she chooses for herself or give some of them as holiday gifts to her friends and family. Once you open your eyes to the possibilities you'll find potential hostesses everywhere you look.

### **Your Hostess Rewards Program**

Often crafters don't know how to create a hostess reward arrangement that will suit both the crafter and the hostess. Of course, this may vary from crafter to crafter, but usually a hostess program includes giving your hostess a set amount in discount or free products, like an initial \$10 in free merchandise, just for hosting your home show. Then the big incentive! To encourage sales, it is common to offer the hostess another 15-25% of your show's sales in free products or discounts and \$5 off future items they may buy at any show booked from their show (this will help keep the "booking chain" going).



For instance, if the sales from your party are less than \$500 your hostess receives the initial \$10 in free merchandise and also the equivalent of 15% in additional free merchandise. If the sales exceed \$500 you can arrange for the hostess to receive a larger percentage like the 25% mentioned above. Make sure that all these details are agreed upon and put into writing before final arrangements for the home show are in place. No matter how good a friend or family member you're working with, it will protect you both from miscommunications or

misunderstandings if you agree on the terms and write them down. You want to make sure you and your hostess are in complete agreement and that they know they will be receiving their hostess reward in merchandise credits only and it cannot be redeemed for cash. Once you have agreed on the details it's time to start putting the other aspects of your home show together.

## **Planning the Event**

It's important to meet with your hostess to make arrangements that will suit you both and that will encourage attendance and sales. It is at this first meeting with your hostess that you'll want to go over the details of your event and discuss things like:

- how many people you want to attend
- if there will be a theme to your event
- if there is anyone you specifically want to invite
- what type of snacks will be provided, and
- how your hostess program works

You'll also want to agree on a firm date that works best for you, the hostess and the majority of your invited guests. You can't please everyone, but you should have a sense of how your friends spend their time. Are they always looking for something to do on the weekends? Are their schedules usually full of weekend commitments? Would they appreciate a mid-week get-together? Again, these are things you can discuss with your hostess to arrive at the best arrangement.

Do you want to add more flare to your home show? You can do this by incorporating a theme like "Margaritaville" in the summer, a theme related to your craft like "All That Glitters" for those of you who sell jewelry or "Celebrating the Holidays!" Not only does this bring a higher level of excitement to the event, but it gives you and your host ideas for decorations, snacks and activities. It's helpful to have this discussion with your hostess early in the planning process to make sure you're both on the same page and to make sure you both have time to come up with creative theme-based ideas.

This brings us to the topic of snacks and drinks. Your hostess should provide the refreshments for the home show. Of course, you can work out the details of sharing expenses, but as the hostess it should be her responsibility to plan and execute this detail. Trust me, on the night of your event you don't want to be distracted by food preparation. This is one of those areas that can be as extravagant or low key as you and your hostess decide, but remember you want your guest to be enjoying themselves. It's also a good idea for the hostess to keep the food and drinks in the same room or very close to the product display. Otherwise you wind up with people congregating in a room away from you and your merchandise.

## Connecting with Your Hostess

Building a friendly working relationship with your hostess will help you have a more enjoyable and more profitable home show. If everyone has a good time they will be more likely to buy from you and also more likely to want to host a home show for you in the future. At different intervals when you have contact with your hostess you can educate her on your merchandise and reinforce how wonderful your merchandise is received by customers. This will help keep her excited about the event and remind her that the more her friends buy from you, the more she will receive in return.

Throughout this process it's important to keep in touch with your hostess often to let her know how your preparations are coming and to find out about hers, making sure to keep the conversations upbeat and express your excitement over the upcoming event. Don't forget to encourage and complement her on the preparations she's made. You want her to be excited about the party too, excited about getting her friends together and, of course, excited about the free products she'll receive. I know I'm being a little repetitive about this, but having a hostess who is excited about the event will energize the whole mood of your home show.

## The Invitations



The importance of your invitations cannot be underestimated. It is usually up to the hostess to extend the invitations. The best way to make sure you get a good mix of people and that you have some of your supportive people there is to provide the hostess with a list of names,

addresses and phone numbers (or other contact information like e-mail addresses) of the people you want to attend and she combines this with a list of the people she is planning on inviting.

The invitation is also a great opportunity to suggest to your guests that they make a list of the people they will need gifts for especially if you are holding your home show around the holidays. There are free printable gift lists online that you could include in your mailed invitations or you can share a gift list app for their handheld devices. These lists are a great shopping tip

for all of us as we venture out to buy gifts for friends and family and an opportunity for you to sell more merchandise at your event.

To be successful you need to invite enough people to make the event profitable for both you and the hostess. Since this is the case, it's important to make sure the people you invite actually attend. This involves three important aspects: (1) making sure you've sent out enough invitations, (2) include a prominent R.S.V.P. and, (3) having well-timed follow-up contact with the people who have been invited. They should be made to feel that they have been specially invited into the inner circle of friends and acquaintances who will be attending this fun event.

The rule of thumb is that 1 in 4 people invited will attend, so make sure you calculate that into your plans and invite enough people. Many home show planners say that to have a successful show you need at least 10 people to attend but, again, this is your show, your friends and your event so adjust accordingly. This is an important detail you'll want to talk about with your hostess to make sure you're on the same page.

As we've discussed, you should arrange for your hostess to call and/or email your guests the day before your show to remind them about the event. Often it will just slip someone's mind even though they planned on attending, so a little reminder could help increase the attendance at your event and potentially increase your sales. As a side note, if you only accept cash or checks, it's important to let your guests know ahead of time so you don't end up with eager customers who only brought credit cards, a transaction you can't process. Also, don't forget to contact your hostess the day before the show so you can answer any last minute questions and get an idea of how many people she's expecting so there won't be any surprises the day of the event. If you've invited friends too, it's a good idea to touch base with them as well and let them know how important their attendance and support is to you.



## **Sharing the Limelight**

Some hostesses may like the idea of hosting several craft artisan at the same event. The benefit of this, beyond the opportunity for your hostess to receive more reward gifts, is the exposure it will give you to a wider array of customers. Of course, you don't want any crafters there who would offer merchandise in direct competition to yours; however, if your hostess hosts crafters who sell several different types of merchandise this can be a winning event. I wouldn't suggest doing it all the time unless you find particular success with this method, but if your "hostess list" is stagnating, it could bring the breath of fresh air you need to reinvigorate your home show business.

## **Outside Orders from the Event**

Naturally there are going to be people who are invited to the event and interested in your handcrafted merchandise but who will be unable to attend. The most successful way of handling this is to direct people who can't attend your event to your online shop or website. Make sure your hostess instructs them to use her name at check-out in order for her to receive her hostess rewards for their purchases. This encourages your hostess to promote your online shop because these items will be applied to the overall show total and your hostess will receive her percentage of hostess reward credits from these purchases too.

If you don't have a presence online but still want to obtain these pre-event sales, it's possible to share a catalog or merchandise sheet that includes images, descriptions and prices of your merchandise. If you have this resources let your hostess know they're available for her to distribute to anyone who lets her know they won't be able to attend. If you want these pre-event sales, make sure you discuss this with your hostess before she sends out invitations so she will be prepared to offer these options as people R.S.V.P. for the event.

## **Displaying Your Merchandise**

Now that we understand the responsibilities of the hostess, it's time to look at how you are going to display your merchandise. First, let's consider your inventory. So often craft artisans ask how much inventory they need for a home party and that question is difficult to answer. You never want to run short of merchandise in your display, but you don't want to display all off your merchandise at once in a



jumbled mess on the table either. The best way to handle this is to bring sufficient merchandise, but only put some of it out in your display. As people buy things, you replace the items with something else from your inventory. You want to present your customers with a “shopping experience,” so providing matching items, items that support your theme and items that coordinate well is a creative way of encouraging more sales.

Your display should be creative. You’ll want to use both the horizontal and vertical space on your table by creating height and depth. You can use boxes with a cloth draped over them or velvet covered display boxes for instance. It’s best to use contrasting colors for your background, so your merchandise really stands out. Don’t forget to consider your theme as well and use decorations accordingly. Lighting and props can also be used to help add excitement to your display. Just make sure not to go overboard and have your decorations become a distraction.

You’re going to want to do several trial runs of your display before the actual event, while keeping an eye on how long it takes you to put your complete display together (plus a little extra to catch your breath!). Then you can adjust your arrival time accordingly. It’s a good idea to get some feedback on your display prior to the event too; often an outside point of view can be very helpful.

It’s also a good idea to write a checklist of everything you need to bring including your inventory, money for change, sales slips, newsletter sign up forms, pens, display set-up, business cards, etc., and keep the list close at hand so you’re not harried at the last minute or forgetting things as you’re leaving the house the day of the event. I know it seems like a simple detail, but making sure you have a table to display your merchandise on is a detail that can sometimes be overlooked.



## **The Event – Introductions**

You’ve arrived at the hostess’s home, you’ve set up your display and the guests are starting to arrive. What do you do? Start by welcoming the guests along with your hostess and introduce yourself to them. Let them mingle, enjoy the refreshments and greet each other. You want to create a positive experience for everyone – you with sales of your merchandise, the hostess with free or discounted products, and the customers with an

enjoyable evening and a unique and fun shopping experience with handmade products. One way to do that is to let the guests unwind for a few minutes and get comfortable socializing before you begin.

Once the hostess feels that everyone has arrived and is comfortable, it's time to transition to the home show part of the evening. Sure it can also be about the food, the drinks and the company, but in the end, you want it to be about your products, right? Your hostess should provide an upbeat introduction of you and your crafting business as you step up to talk to them about you, your craft and your merchandise.

### **The Event – Your Presentation**

When you address the group, you'll want to thank your hostess for opening her home to you and for her time in making the arrangements and providing the refreshments. Thank the guests for coming and introduce yourself again, using your business name too if you have one. Then introduce your product and let the guests learn more about what you offer. Remember, this is what makes a home show so different from other selling venues – the guests get a chance to meet the artisan and get to know more about the products they're buying.

You can take a cue from the bullet points in the "How to Have a Successful Home Show" section describing how you got started, your inspiration for different aspects of your collection and the materials you use. This is also a great time to describe any awards you've won, outstanding compliments you've received for your craft work, or if someone famous or noteworthy has purchased or publically exhibited your merchandise. "The mayor's wife wore one of my brooches to the annual gala," is enough to pique some customers' interest. If you offer any special sales you can announce that too, for instance, a "buy two get one item at half off" discount or if you are offering a coupon for online purchases. Of course, let them know if you take custom orders as well.

While you have their attention this is also a good time to let the guests know what the hostess is getting for hosting the show. You should describe your hostess reward program to get everyone excited about holding their own show. If you want to make sure to get guests names and contact information on your mailing list, pass around the list on a clipboard with a pen and announce that there will be a drawing for a specific free item (like a pair of earrings), from the names on the list at the end of the night. Let them know that you'll be around to answer any questions, restate what types of payments you accept and anything else you want the guests to know, plus any items you want them to pay particular attention to in your

display (like the brooch that is very similar to the one the mayor bought for his wife). This will help direct your audience's attention to your display area, the perfect time to invite them to come over and see your merchandise.

At your display, give them time to really look over your merchandise, ask them questions about their tastes and direct them to something that you think they might like. Stay close to the table, but you don't want to hover too much either. Your goal is to be helpful and convey your genuine interest in them. At this point, a good hostess will also help motivate the guests to buy from you.

### **The Event – Closing Shop**

After a while, you'll find that things start to wind down. People may still be mulling around, but not purchasing anything. That's when it is time to announce that you're going to be ending the show soon and any guests who still might want to purchase something should purchase it now.

After this prompt, some last minute shoppers may decide on purchasing a few more items. This is a good time to have the drawing for the free gift from the mailing list sign-up sheet. Throughout the evening, when you're making your sales, remember to thank the customer and ask people whether they'd be interested in hosting a show of their own. At this point, you have everyone's orders and it's time to tally up the show orders and let the hostess know what she's getting.

A little secret, there are times when you and the hostess may have already planned which merchandise the hostess will want as her reward items. You



may have her items put aside, but when the time comes for the hostess to pick her reward items, you should inconspicuously put those items on the table to allow the guests to be part of the excitement of her "choosing" her merchandise. The hostess's friends and family usually love watching her pick her free items, ooing and aahing over her choices. It's a great time to remind them that this experience could be theirs if they want to hold a show of their own. It's at this moment that their incentive is highest for wanting to host a home show. That's why it's important to have this be an exciting conclusion to your event.

## **After the Event**

After each event, following up with the people who said they'd be interested in hosting a home show is important to keeping the "booking chain" going. Recall with them how much fun the event was and about the great merchandise the hostess received by hosting the home show. Of course, also touch base with any potential customers who may have shown interest in a custom order or any of the merchandise you had on display. Always follow up with your hostess too and thank her again for all her work. You never know, this could become a much anticipated annual event or her enthusiasm for the event could bring you more home shows with her friends in the future.

## **Conclusion**

The home show is a fun venue that is well suited for mild extroverts because of its flexibility, the encouraging nature of having friends, family and acquaintances as customers, the support of the hostess and the intentional focus on the merchandise. The home show requires a person to be comfortable in a small group situation, to be able to connect one-on-one with their hostess, to talk about themselves and their craft and to make friendly follow-up phone calls. It helps if you have at least a large tableful of inventory, if you are good at displaying your merchandise and if you are organized enough to keep track of sales, inventory and hostess rewards.

Of course, you will have to judge your own comfort level, but since this is an agreement between you and your hostess, it is one of the few venues where you have more control over the timing, number of people, and the support you have with you. If you're on the quieter side it is always helps to have a couple friends along to keep the conversation going, to ask questions that show your merchandise in the best light and to encourage sales. Having an outgoing hostess helps with some of the social aspects too. She can be greeting guests, offering drinks, directing people to your merchandise, etc. Creating this type of friendly and supportive relationship with your hostess is essential to a successful home show.

If you're comfortable at parties, casually meeting new people and interacting with people in a relaxed setting having home shows could be a lucrative option for selling your handcrafted merchandise.