



Factsheet: Top tips on selling directly to the public

Overview

There are plenty of opportunities for creative people to retail their goods and services directly to the public, such as open studios, trade fairs, markets, networking and the internet.

These top tips cover key issues, which will help you get the most out of every sales opportunity.

Know your customers

When choosing where and how to sell, think first about the type of customer that you want to attract; who are they, where do they live, why would they want to buy your product or service, how much might they be prepared to spend and when do they prefer to buy i.e. Christmas is an optimum time for selling crafts. The more prepared you are the more confident you will feel and the more professional you will come across.

People buy people

When selling to the public it is important to be professional, passionate and knowledgeable. Customers will find it easier to approach you if you are friendly and smiling. People tend to buy from people they like, so try to be welcoming and build a rapport. Your body language and style of dress can be very important and need to be appropriate.

Create a short sales pitch

Create a paragraph that you can use as an opener, which can then be developed into a fuller conversation, when meeting a potential customer for the first time. It should be targeted to the person you are speaking to and include your name, what you do and the benefits of your product or service. This should last less than 30 seconds and should sound natural (not rehearsed). Make sure you ALWAYS carry your business cards with you so that you are able to provide interested parties with your contact details.

Choose where to sell

Do your research. What has worked for your colleagues? Where, how and when do your customers want to buy? Think carefully about the costs involved in participating in a trade show or sales exhibition. Balance the costs, such as rental and any commission, against how much money you expect to generate. You may prefer to sell from your workshop or own home rather than take part in an organised event. Open studios, special house parties or table exhibitions in City institutions are also increasingly popular and successful. Make sure it is the right opportunity as there is usually a cost attached to showcasing.

Sell services

Selling your creative skills or services is very different than selling products. Whether you are giving a general overview of your services and business or bidding for a specific job it is very

important that you are well prepared for client meetings and that you target your presentation to meet their needs. You do not have to agree to any specific financial quote at the meeting - it is probably better if you get in writing what the client wants and return a proposal quote and design brief after the meeting. Make sure that you leave something tangible behind at the end of the meeting.

Use the internet

Although purchases via the internet are becoming more common across the board, many creative products do not sell very well through this channel, as people want to touch and feel the items before they buy. Many creative people take their first step towards selling their own products on the Internet via e-bay. Before attempting to sell online you should make sure you have clear policies relating to faulty or undelivered goods, delivery, payment, insurance and credit control.

Sort out your pricing

For exhibitions and tradeshow it is important to have two price lists, one for wholesale and another for the general public and press. Never display the wholesale price, keep them on a sheet that you can hand out to established gallery and shop owners only. It is advisable to have a minimum wholesale price of £150-£200 to prevent small orders. Getting this right is key so research competitor's pricing and market values.

Sell the benefits not the features

Try and put yourself in your customer's shoes and think of all the reasons why they buy from you. Remember to sell the benefits rather than the features; the features describe the product or service and the benefits explain what the features can do for a customer and focus on the client's needs.

Agree payment terms

Always invoice a client before or when delivering, stating your delivery terms. If you are working to commission, ask for a pro-forma invoice or a deposit for work to be carried out.

Build a customer database

It is important to collect contact details from both prospective and current customers. It is seven times cheaper to sell to an existing customer than to find new ones, so it is important to keep customers up-to-date with new products and services as well as letting them know where they can buy from you. This is also a great way to keep a record of where customers are coming from so that you can gauge what marketing tools are working for you.

Stay in contact

Once people have bought from you they are more likely to buy again and to buy more next time. Invite people to private views or events with email newsletters or invitations. Give them a special 'friends' discount if they come at a specific time or buy or order before a specific date. When you have something newsworthy to share, such as a new product or award, then let people know about it. You will be surprised how many people will be happy to hear from you again.

Further information

Pitching for work

Costing and pricing your creative works

Sell more to your most valuable B2C customers

How to use online payments

These tips were produced in conjunction with the Cultural Industries Development Agency (CIDA). Find out more at: www.cida.co.uk