

Sew, You Want To Make Money from Embroidery

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Some True Embroidery Business Success Stories

Maria just wanted to pay for her dream machine and so she decided to make enough every month for the payment with small jobs. Her first step was to create a market for her product. Her first thought was church because she was a very active member and could see a need. She started making custom baptismal sashes with the baby's name, date, a cross embroidery and verse. She built this business using her smaller embroidery machine and making the sashes in the evening. She volunteered to make custom wear for the priest and found that she accidentally advertised her business when he wore her beautiful work. She picked up some special embroidery work for the local dress shop for special occasions like weddings and quincineras. Her cousin the travel agent will refer family reunion groups that want matching shirts. She mostly only uses the built-in designs and fonts on her machine. She actually has had to turn away some business because she wants to keep it small and not work with business logos or hats. After all, she now has her dream machine and wants to use it for HER fun projects.

Susan was a designer and prototype maker for Halloween costumes. It was very seasonal work and she wanted to work from home with year round income. She was very nervous when she bought her first multi-needle machine. It took two years for her business to grow. The turning point was when she asked the new, local microbrewery if they wanted to sell logo merchandise in their taproom. (She and her husband were sampling the product at the time!) They said yes. She had their logo professionally digitized and is now running four multi-needle machines with two dedicated to hats and two for everything else. Her two teenage daughters work for their mother and run the machines after school. They actually study for school at the same time by listening to audio lectures while they work. She is considering two more machines. She no longer makes prototype Halloween costumes.

Cassie is a freshman college student with some trendy ideas. With encouragement from her dad, she started an embroidery business to help pay for college and put into practice ideas from her business major. She sells her items on TikTok and they are definitely **not** your “grandmother’s embroidery”. Three months after starting her business she has purchased her second machine (cash) and her father is telling her that she must stay in school even if the business is thriving. She has changed her major to fashion merchandising.

Jorge had a screen-printing business that was doing okay, but he wanted to fill requests for embroidery. He said, “I am tired of sending customers and their money down the street.” He had absolutely no previous experience with embroidery and that made him nervous. He took full advantage of his dealer’s classes and employee advice. He watched the built videos every time he embroidered until he was confident and successful with samples. He already had a client base and advertised by including a single “matching” embroidered hat with every custom screen print t-shirt order. It didn’t take long for word to spread and the two aspects of his business were each promoting the other. Potential embroidery customers sometimes opted for budget friendly screen-printing and some screen-printing customers bumped up to a more refined look with embroidery. His son, the computer wiz, learned to digitize as a “side hustle” and now is just one of his sources for that service.

Who Can You Market and Sell To (Just a Few Ideas)?

- Online – many online venues are available today for selling personalized or pre-made items online
- School – sports teams and clubs will need to have shirts, jackets, hats, gear bags and anything else they need to identify with team name, player name and number
- Travel Agent – create shirts or hats for groups that travel together such as family reunions or school travel groups
- Church – liturgical apparel and special events with special accessories will be even more special with beautiful embroidery
- Embroidery Party – marketing with a group of friends together just seems to work (own any Avon or Tupperware?)
- Craft Fairs – usually held during the holiday season, this is a good way to sell with less day-to-day commitment

- Wedding Planners and Bridal Wear – personalized items that work for a wedding are too numerous to even list and dress designers would probably be interested in replica antique lace in any color or fiber type
- Athletic Groups – bowling teams, gymnastics clubs, softball teams and swim clubs offer lots of opportunity to sell specialized embroidery that large embroidery vendors may not want to deal with such as leotards or swimsuits
- Clubs – home brew club, community garden, bird watchers, craft clubs and guilds, hiking or walking groups and anything you can find by searching online for “local club”
- Local Businesses – just drive down the street for inspiration with service businesses, retail stores, restaurants, microbrewers, company softball teams, bakeries and gyms
- Community – local government and government officials, especially in small towns, might really appreciate some embroidered shirts to identify them or their staff with the town logo
- Dog Shows, Cat Shows, Bird Shows, Horse Shows, Any Animal Shows – with a van, stand on wheels and moxie the machine can even work on site because Grand Champion Fluffy really needs a new embroidered leash, lead rope, cage cover or custom embroidered portrait

Some Questions to Ask Yourself Before Starting Your Business

- Who is your customer and what are they interested in buying? This can flow both ways. Decide what you like to, want to or are really good at making and figure out who wants to buy your product. Decide who you want to or are comfortable selling to and figure out what you want to make they can't live without.
- What will you sell it for and is it priced so you can make money? Never sell you or your product short, but be aware of any competition. Shop around for your product or something like it to check your price against the market price. Can you start with a lower price and gradually raise your price? Check out sources for supplies to determine price and availability. All jobs have an initial “set-up charge” for the first order. This includes creating the digitized embroidery file. If digitizing is not in your skill set, it absolutely can be outsourced to a professional. Check the quality of work and turnaround time by having something digitized this way before you start your business.
- Remember to always, always, always respect copyright laws. Any large business has undoubtedly put restrictions on their logo to protect it. Limited licenses are available for logo reproduction with colleges. Generally, if a client has official artwork for a logo they probably have the right to reproduce it, but always check. No, you will not take a

picture of the USPS logo and make a go of it for your favorite mail carrier to have a “custom” t-shirt instead of the official uniform.

- Do you have a space and the time to conduct your business? Even a home-based business will benefit from a dedicated space to house equipment and supplies separately from personal items. Could you share a space with another business such as a bridal wear shop or screen printer? Does your community require a business license for a home-based business? How much time every day, week or month will your business require and how much time do you want to invest? Make a good guess and add more time to your guess.
- How will you handle money? How will you accept money? Credit cards are easier than ever to set up with businesses such as Square. Direct payment with mobile apps makes secure transactions now possible.
- Will you need an accountant or accounting software? Ask your tax person if a business will affect how or when your taxes are filed. What are the special conditions for tax deductions such as a home office or equipment depreciation? Do you need to open, or will you benefit from, a separate bank account?
- Are you going it alone or will you need help? When your business takes off will you hire additional help? Check local and state laws for any human resources requirements. Be careful of using family and friends. They are easy to hire and not so easy to un-hire.
- Are you comfortable selling online? It’s a good way to reach a large market, but does require some computer skills. Try out selling online by selling something on Tik Toc, Etsy, Facebook Marketplace or eBay to become familiar with the process. New online marketplaces pop up every day. What online marketplace will your potential customer be likely to see you on and are you prepared to follow any new trend? Ask around to find out who is hanging out on what platform.
- How will your customers find you? Word of mouth and customer referrals can work for a smaller business, but a large-scale operation is always looking to expand with advertising. Your business probably will start out slow and build with effort. Are you easily discouraged or are you in it to win it?
- Keep customers coming back and suggesting you and your product to their friends. Be better than the competition. Consider shopping your competition to evaluate the price and the experience. Try to always “under promise” and “over deliver”.
- What continuing costs will you incur? Equipment needs to be maintained and the business will be on hold during that time. (Don’t forget to maintain yourself!) Shipping supplies, needles, bobbins, specialty hoops and specialty packaging are all costs to consider.

Believe in yourself.
Always, always believe in yourself.
You are unique and amazing.
You can do it.