



ARE YOU READY TO EXPORT - Video Summary

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Tip Four:

Research Your Markets In Advance

When I first started, I made whatever I felt like making. The collection had very little unity and I had no real objective other than to just be able to craft things and have people buy them.

My first summer, I obtained the craft show guide through the Ontario Crafts Council and signed up for a show every weekend. I learned the hard way (sitting in church basements beside people selling crocheted doll toilet paper covers that were more appealing to the customer). So I chose my shows more wisely, did fewer of them and slowly started to develop a brand and more cohesive line that I could show together.

I have learned to:

- Identify your customers (people + stores)
- Make a list of favourite stores or of the stores where you would love to see your work and how you would want to see it displayed
- clarify who your key customers are or who you would like them to be
- Imagine a fictitious version of your customer or of a celebrity that embodies your brand. In other words, profile your ideal client.

Several times before participating, I went to the New York gift show just to see what other people were making and selling. Now I pay attention to blogs and social media. I have figured out which to follow and to ignore and will follow other brands to see how they are reaching out to people as more of business and marketing models rather than for product inspiration.

I have learned to:

- research what competitors are doing.
- sign up for emails of other companies to see their outreach techniques
- look at blogs that feature competition to stay abreast of what others are doing and why they are being featured

- Attend large wholesale trade shows and let people know where you will be
- Identify your most influential contacts and put yourself forward

Trade shows can be valuable even without the sales. However, the days of my little book where people wrote down their address and I would mail out hundreds of hand licked envelopes are over. Collecting email addresses is now very important.

Magazine editors and craft writers are always telling me to email them with new items. It makes their job easier... But magazines that feature work are usually just pulling from items that have landed on their desk. Don't be afraid to build up a mailing and email list of press, blog writers or contacts that you think might be interested. They almost never will respond but if you happen to hand them something that ties in with the issue they are working on, they will forever be grateful.

I have learned to:

- map out a contact strategy without over-whelming customers
- have an annual plan for promotional activities with seasonal campaigns before they creep up on you and shipping times factored in for your holiday campaign
- schedule ahead of time directly into your calendar as a deadline
- pay attention to analytics that will show you where people are finding you from

We have a link on our web site to sign up for our mailing list and add customers after they have bought something as well. In fact, we have several mailing lists to be able to send specific emails (wholesale clients, customers, press etc.)

I would highly recommend mapping out a contact strategy at the beginning of the year so you don't do what I have done so many times: "oh, father's day is this weekend... I should send some ideas out to my customers" (too late).