

Classes That Sell

Creative ideas to fill those Seats!

We all know what ‘works’ in our shops- the tried and true style that our customers gravitate to. But what about the classes they take at other shops because you don’t offer them? Do you know? Do you look at what local other shops are offering and see what sells? How do you know what your customers want? Do you ask?



Booth 407

Sometime we ask and they tell us they want a certain class but then they don’t sign up. We assume it is because they really don’t want the class but sometimes it is just an inconvenient time or day.

So how about asking your customers what new classes they want? How about making it a contest? They submit 3 ideas for a class- if their suggestion is chosen and a certain number of people take the class, they get a voucher for a free class in the future.



Booth 1610

Be open to new ideas! We all get comfortable with what has worked but.... if you want to bring in new customers, you may need to try new things!

Give it time. Anything new takes time for it to catch on. What do they say about advertising? It takes at least 3-7 consistently placed ads for people to start to really notice. You can’t expect to win big on the first new idea!



Booth 312

Marketing

Once you have the class idea, it is all about marketing! In store marketing, social media marketing... let’s talk about some ways to get the news out there that you have classes that they must take.

Class Description

A class description is crucial. Many times we write just something quick and simple: Pack it Up! bag class. A fun bag with a zipper and cork.

A description should tell them more than that! It should tell them: what they are making, what they will learn, what they will accomplish, and something to entice them!

Address and answer their concerns before they can list them.



Booth 417

Example 1: The Pack it Up! bag- Afraid of zippers? Never used cork? Come play with us and make this fun, unique zippered bag and learn lots of new techniques.

Learn to make a braid, add a super easy zipper and work with cork! We will help you and you will be amazed with your bag. Only 6 spots in class so grab yours today!

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Example 2: Make a stress-free scalloped basket with your strips and pre-cut Bosal foundations! This 4 hour class will take you through all of the steps that it takes to create this pretty hostess gift and you will leave with a finished basket! Class supply list will be sent after sign up!

Example 3: Going to a Pot Luck? Need a hostess Gift? Join us and learn how to make a fun and functional Wire-Framed Casserole Tote. We will walk you through all the steps so you can leave with a finished Casserole Tote!

Online Marketing

1. You need to know where your customers are online so you can reach them!
2. Newsletter- you have to have a newsletter list! If Facebook goes away today, what method do you have of reaching your customers? If you don't have one, start one. Make it a must ready once a month! Offer a tip each month, information on your classes, new products, sales or clearance items... maybe have a new thing on sale only for newsletter customers. One shop offers a code for a free FQ- only on the Monday following the newsletter. Monday was her slowest day and she now has made it busier!
3. Facebook- have a business page for your shop. Update it daily- a new picture from your shop. You need to remind people that your are there. Become a destination for those who don't live in your area. Seems overwhelming? Spend one day taking 7 pictures and then post one a day for 7 days.
4. Instagram- same as Facebook- post daily. **In Store Marketing**

In Store Marketing

When new people wander into your shop, can they easily find out about your classes? Are they posted somewhere? Quilt Guilds often have a white board set up with future classes listed, images of the project, maybe a picture of the teacher... why shouldn't shops?

Create an area in or near your classroom, or outside the classroom where anyone can see if your classroom is sometimes inaccessible, with a listing of upcoming classes. You could have images of the projects or your shop sample. Have samples of the "add-ons" that go with the class available for purchase.

Have a handout available at the checkout counter that lists upcoming classes and put it in everyone's bag. *Even if they have bought recently from you.* You never know which time they will actually look at it and maybe decide to take a class.

Open House

A great way to advertise upcoming classes is to have an Open House. The Open House could just be a weekend where they come to the shop to sign up and get a discount on the class fee only that weekend. You would have goodies, shop samples, class handouts outlining what they need for class, the date and time...

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Or it could be more of an EVENT. You could hold it one day on the weekend for a few hours. You can invite the local teachers who will be teaching the classes to come and participate. You would have food, prizes and a sale. Have all the supplies they need to make the class project available and 20% off that day only. Have signups for the classes, let them sign up and pay later to entice buying the product. Show them the shop sample for the class, tell them what is fun about the project, what they will learn, why they should take the class.... make it fun, lively and exciting! If speaking to a crowd is not your thing, get an employee to do it, bring in a teacher that is good at that...

Samples sell. Ask the designer to borrow a sample of the project. Ask the designer for class handouts and lesson plans.

Kits- have a few kits available for those who want to make the project but don't want to pick their fabrics. If you don't currently offer class kits and people are used to using their stash, think about how to entice them. Make it exclusive, have a sample in the kit fabric (easier for small projects but can make a block of a larger quilt), have only a few kits available, make the kit part of the description. "A few kits available to make the project- everything you need from the fabric to the zipper is included! You will be ready to go with no prep needed!"

Class

Structure

1. There are a couple of different ways to structure the classes- as straight up class where they learn either a technique or a project.
2. A club is a great way to get people interested in hanging out at the shop. It is a little different from on Open Sew- another great way to get bodies in the shop! A club has a theme, it could be based on a favorite technique or a favorite designer. Everyone works on their own thing- but their thing is based on the subject. So if the club is all about bags- maybe called The Bag Ladies Club- maybe one person is making the Pack it Up! bag from Kate, someone else is making a bag from Annies... or Sew Sweetness... and they see each other's project and they want to make that one next! There is someone assigned from the shop to oversee the group and act as an advisor or helper when they run into trouble but they don't have to "teach".

You can also plan a demo during the club- maybe show the group a new bag, or hardware you got in or... Other club ideas: an EQ club, a precut club, an applique club.

3. A monthly event is another way to get bodies in the shop. A local shop holds Terrific Tuesdays- people pay \$1 to come to a 1 hour event. They get a handout for a free pattern, the shop shows them how to make the project, they can bring their own Show and Tells and they get to put their name in a basket for a raffle for every show and tell they bring. The raffle prize is something small but fun such as a mini charm, a spool of thread...

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4. A testing class is another great way to get bodies in the shop. Do you have a designer that lives local? Ask if they want to host a testing class. Limit the number of students, everyone who comes doesn't pay but they get the chance to make the pattern before it hits the market and once the pattern is for sale, they get a free autographed copy! The designer gets their pattern tested, the students get a free class and pattern (though they have to pay for fabric) and the shop gets bodies in the shop who will then buy from them! Maybe include a kit option with fabric.

Pre-Class checklist

Use a Pre-Class Checklist to ensure that everyone knows what to bring and what to prep ahead of time. Good prep makes a good class!

During Class

Set up the room prior to class. Have a little goodie at each spot for the class attendees- it can be as simple as a mint, or mini chocolate along with their class handout. Handout should include agenda for the class and it could include a spot for taking notes or taking down ideas. It can also be away for you to list other upcoming classes at the bottom.

Pictures

At the start of class, do a short FB Live- "We are just getting ready to start our "Pack it Up! bag class! We are going to have so much fun! I bet you wish you were here! Be sure to sign up for the next class." Show a picture of the group or the project or both!

Take pictures! Especially at the end of the class with the finished or partially finished projects. They can be your posts for the next few days. Ask your customers if they want to be in the picture and tag them if they do. Celebrate them and their accomplishment.

At the end of class, talk about upcoming classes and show samples.

Follow Up

After Class

Continue to market the class afterwards. Did your customers have fun? Let others know how great a time it was. Get their feedback, incorporate their suggestions - as appropriate- and post their positive comments.

Send a Thank You email to each student and include a photo from class.

One shop sends a post class email and occasionally includes a one time coupon for 10% off one visit in the shop in the next 2 weeks. Or it could be off the next class they take in the next 3 months.

Be open to new ideas, mix it up and see what works!