Secrets of Savvy Etsy Sellers
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Ever wondered why some Etsy shops seem to be so much more successful than others? Curious about those sellers’ secrets to success?

Read on to learn the secrets of not one, but nearly 30 different Etsy sellers. And these sellers weren’t stingy with their secrets, either! They have willingly shared them with us.

Let’s get started!

**About On the Dot Creations**

In February 2008, the On the Dot Creations blog launched with a primary purpose to promote the handmade community in general and Etsy in particular. And, of course, you’ll always find lots of polka dots!

Stop by to see what the fun is all about!

[On the Dot Creations](#)

**Take note:**
The tips in this e-book are the express views of the contributors. The Etsy organization is not responsible for the information contained therein.
Contributors

Vanilla Lotus
Everyday Grace
Daisys & Dots
The Wonderful Store
The Crocheted Baby
Sprout Studio
Silly Little Lady
The Purple Pear
Retro Mama
Birch Soaps
Twilightations
A Pretty Rock
Tracy B Designs
Mod Memento
A Punkin Card Company
Since the creation of this e-book, some of the Etsy contributors may have closed their shops temporarily. While I apologize for linking to empty shops, I feel compelled to acknowledge each contributor.
Cover Image Contributors

- Think Outside the Box
- Maui Dive Girl
- Quilly Nilly
- Sweet Pea Purses
- Memekiwi
- Melanie’s Crafts
- Five Dot Design
- Hub Girl
- Madison Reece Designs
Let’s face it. First impressions matter. Fair or not, customers will make a judgment about you and your products during their first ten seconds in your shop.

In fact, a customer’s first impression of your Etsy shop can determine whether that person is a lifelong customer or a one-time visitor.

Take heart . . . it’s really not that difficult to improve your shop’s first impression.
First Impression Secrets

1. If you don’t feel comfortable creating one yourself, hire a professional to create a logo, Etsy banner, and ads for your business. You must distinguish yourself with a high quality, easy-to-identify logo.

2. It is often a good idea to use a signature product as your shop avatar. This is added publicity for your shop, since your avatar will represent you in convos and the forums.

3. For a cohesive look to your shop, be sure that your items “go together.” Create a variety of products that go well together.

4. Brand your shop through your style of photography. This could include a backdrop that you use for every photo, or simply a photographic style that is uniquely yours.

5. Show handbags, pouches, etc. on a model so the customer can get an idea of the size of the item.

6. For children’s clothing or accessories, use your own children as models, or invite children of your close friends to model your items. Little girls, particularly, love to play dress up. Be sure to photograph children in natural light.

7. Give multiple views of items in your photographs, since customers cannot touch the item or see it for themselves.

8. If selling clothing, show front, back, and side views.

“You may have the best product, but if you have mediocre (or worse) photos, your product will not sell.”
Use your camera’s macro setting to capture the subtleties in your item.

Taking photographs that show the true colors of your items can be a difficult task. One trick that can help is to add an element of pure black and pure white to the photo frame when photographing the item (a piece of paper will work fine). Later, when you open up your photo in editing software, the program will be able to color correct your photos. Be sure to crop out the white and black elements, though.

Some photography tips:
* Build a lightbox.

* Read your camera’s manual.
* Try your macro setting or experiment with different lenses.
* Test the white balance.
* Keep your photo backgrounds simple so they don’t distract from your goods.
* Try something different: extreme close-ups, aerial views, etc.
* Use a good photo editing program. (Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, Picasa 3, Gimp, Picnik, and several other online options)

If you don’t feel comfortable photographing your items, you might consider finding a professional photographer to “trade” with. Here are some suggestions:
* Mail your products to a photographer
* The photographer takes professional shots
* You choose the photos that you like
* In exchange for the rights to the photos, the photographer keeps the products (or he/she could return them to you)

One photographer that has done this for several Etsy sellers is Danielle at [http://www.dporterphotos.com](http://www.dporterphotos.com)

Photoshop can be your friend, but remember to keep items as true to color as possible.
Marketing. You know you need to do it to be successful, but where should you begin?

You might think that you need a degree in marketing and lots of time and money to spread the word about your shop, but that’s simply not the case.

Some of the following marketing tips require little or no money. Read on to learn more.
Purchase the domain for your Etsy shop’s name. This way, you can include your website address on all your marketing materials, email signatures, and online ads with a short, professional-looking link. Follow these simple steps:

2. Purchase a domain for your Etsy shop. For example, [www.myshop.com](http://www.myshop.com). One domain will cost you approximately $10 for one year.
3. Under My Products, click Domain Manager.
4. Click your new domain name.
5. In the middle of the page, you will see a section called Forwarding. Click to enable forwarding.
6. Forward your new domain to your Etsy shop URL.
7. Now, when people follow your new link (from an email or business card, for example), they will be redirected to your Etsy shop.

Create a blog and maintain it! Use your blog to do the following:

1. Host giveaways of your products
2. Show sneak peeks of new product lines
3. Share tips/techniques about using your products

Include your blog URL (and shop URL if you have a website) in the following places:

* email signature
* Etsy profile
* thank-you message to buyers
* business cards
* promotional materials
* forum board signatures

“Blogging has been the most effective tool we have used to keep our customers up to date, inspire them to create, and gain new customers that may not have purchased otherwise. I highly recommend blogging to everyone who has a business!”

Advertising: Remember that more advertising does not necessarily mean more business. Pick your advertising carefully. Choose sites that appeal to your customer base.
Use Flickr!
1. Set up your profile. Use a signature item photo or logo as your avatar. Put links to your shop and blog. Add a short description about yourself and your business. The profile is the only place that external links are allowed, so use them there!

2. Upload pictures of your best products, both past and current, and upload frequently. Be sure to title your pictures and tag them appropriately. Take care to stage your photos effectively – consider Flickr to be a gallery or portfolio of your best work. Avoid including pictures of your family, pets, etc., as some viewers might consider this unprofessional. This is not to say that artistic shots of people (or pets) aren’t welcome, especially if the subjects are wearing your products.

3. Add your photos to relevant groups. Read the group’s posting rules, join, and post away!

4. Organize your photos into sets (and collections, if you purchase a pro account).

5. Comment on other user’s photos. It’s all about networking, inspiration, and having fun.

Find sites that appeal to your customer base (with lots of traffic) and offer to sponsor a giveaway. You’ll get lots of extra traffic to your Etsy shop, and you might pick up a few new customers. Be prepared to pay shipping costs to the winner of the giveaway.

Don’t expect to make immediate sales from a giveaway. It’s all about exposure. The more people that know about your shop, the better. You may not make a sale for a month or two as a direct result of the giveaway, but your Etsy shop will be bookmarked, hearted, and remembered for later.
A newsletter is an amazing tool for increasing views and sales. It reminds your customers of your shop. You can have a newsletter sign-up form on your blog, if desired.

Remember that it is considered spamming to add a customer’s name to your mailing list without their permission. One idea for adding names to your newsletter list is to convo your customer after a purchase, thanking them for their business, and informing them that you do, indeed, have a newsletter.

List new items often.

In the early days of your shop, direct most of your profit toward targeted market advertising.

Keep your audience (potential customers) in mind when marketing: age and demographics (income, lifestyle).

Although some Etsy sellers buy showcases to advertise their goods, they can become expensive. Posting in the forums, chatting, and renewing items is often more successful. Plus, these are “free” ways to increase your sales and get your name out there.
Does packaging matter? You bet it does!

Etsy sellers have different views on how much time/money to spend on product packaging. Read on to learn their opinions and suggestions.

Packaging Secrets
Packaging Secrets

“Many times, I spend just as much time designing my packaging as I do on the actual product. For example, a personalized box with an embossed logo is simple and elegant. I like to send my items to customers so they open the shipping package and say ‘Wow!’ Presentation is key!”

“I take the middle road with packaging. While I think it’s lovely to receive a package that feels like you’re opening a gift, I don’t want to significantly increase my prices to reflect a bunch of packaging that will find its way into the garbage anyway. Additionally, I don’t want to spend too much time preparing packages for shipping when that time could be more productively spent creating more products. I aim for a happy medium, using recyclable/reusable packaging that has a professional presentation yet isn’t excessively wasteful.”

Buyers of handmade goods have a strong preference for an eye-catching package, so choose an interesting and innovative way of presenting your products to be consistent with your brand. If possible, include a picture of your packaging in your shop listing. This may entice buyers to choose your item over a similar one that is not as creatively presented.

Ship your items through PayPal, which is already a part of Etsy and your transactions. You can print your own shipping labels, and PayPal takes the shipping costs out of your account. You’ll need a digital scale in your studio. If you choose to print the label on regular paper and then tape it to the package, remember not to cover the main scan barcode with tape. Another bonus of using PayPal is that you can keep track of shipping costs in your account, and they even track your packages!

Put your Etsy shop name and web address prominently on the outer packaging. Not only does the customer see it, but so does the person who handles the package (post office, UPS, etc.).

Your packaging may entice buyers to choose your item over a similar one that is not as creatively presented.
The customer is always right. Well, most of the time, anyway.

Read on to learn some tips for creating happy, repeat customers.
Communication: Be careful about your tone when communicating with your customers, particularly through electronic means. Keep your communications with customers light and friendly if at all possible.

Acknowledge sales with a thank you. Specify when you’ll ship and how long delivery is expected to take. Specify your returns policy (in the policies section).

Send a shipping confirmation, letting the customer know that their purchase is on the way.

Strive for good customer service so your customers will enjoy the handmade process. This is not a retail store giant; it’s your personal handmade goods in your personal store. Think of mom and pop stores; those people own their own stores and work hard at it every day. They take pride in their communities and the people they cater to. You should have this same mindset when selling to your customers. Allow them to see you for who you are and your goods for what they are: quality handmade goods.

Go the extra mile to keep your customers in the loop! Don’t rely on the automated emails from Etsy and PayPal to let your buyers know that things are in motion. It’s a great idea to send a personal email (or convo) after a sale to thank the customer for their purchase and also give a more definite idea of processing and shipping time. Online purchasing can be a little scary for some people, especially when ordering an item from a distant destination. These extra communication efforts offer an extra level of comfort and reassurance.

A happy customer will tell one friend about you, but an unhappy customer will tell ten friends about you.
Designer, marketer, customer service representative, accountant — sometimes it seems impossible to juggle all of the responsibilities that running an Etsy shop requires.

Don’t despair.

Here are some tips for balancing it all (and staying *sane* in the process).
Find a balance between your Etsy shop and your personal life. There should be a dedicated time to fill orders and create items for your shop. Otherwise, your house will fall apart . . . and then the chance of coming up with something creative becomes slim. Even if you’re at home all day, create a schedule that works for you and your family so that nothing and no one has to suffer.

Set up a schedule as if you were working at an office job. If you have a set time to “clock in,” this will help in terms of motivation as well as not feeling as if you should be doing something else.

Use a whiteboard monthly calendar to keep you organized. List what you want to accomplish in terms of creating, designing, bookkeeping, promoting, etc.
Before you go, here are eight more secrets from our savvy Etsy sellers. Don’t miss them.
Extra Secrets

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Set up your Etsy account so that all convos come to your personal email.

Keep your shop as full as possible. This gives you a greater opportunity to appeal to a wider audience.

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“It’s much more important to be creating new items to sell than to be obsessing about how many views and hearts you’re getting.”

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“Use the Download Sales Data function at the bottom of your sold orders page. It takes all your sales history and puts it in an Excel format. The information includes dates, buyers, prices, transaction numbers, and more. I can watch what my most popular items are, who my most frequent buyers are, or search for transaction numbers.”

41
Use Etsy’s Alchemy feature to find new customers and awesome jobs. Check it frequently to see if any bids pertain to your company.

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Be creative when making your item titles. Some Etsy sellers name their items with first names, etc. For example, Sophia Necklace, Ava Bracelet, etc.

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Encourage your customers to send you photos of them or their children/pets using your products. You could then display the customer’s photo in the listing (perhaps as the last photo). Get permission, of course.

To stay ahead of your competition, stay focused on your own business and keep things fresh.
In Closing

This e-book would not have been possible without the generous assistance of those who submitted tips as well as those who allowed me to photograph their Etsy items for the front cover.

Thank you, one and all.

May this e-book inspire us all to improve our Etsy shops!

julie
As you know, the Internet is buzzing with all sorts of great ideas for small business owners. I’ve listed below some articles and blogs that might be of particular interest to Etsy sellers. Enjoy!

**Modish Biz Tips**

**Decor 8 Creativity Tips**

**BAKERY**

**Squidoo Lens: Etsy Tools**

**Sarah Jane Studios blog: Press Kits**  
**Sarah Jane Studios blog: Protecting Your Art and Ideas**

**Katydid Designs Creative Business Newsletter**

If you know of other articles or blogs that would be a great addition to this list, please email me at onthedadotcreations@yahoo.com.

Thanks!