

Expanding International Trade Opportunity for Tanzanian Artisans

By Carolyn Jongeward

The importance of handmade crafts in Tanzania is readily evident in the very large numbers of women and men engaged in handicraft production, and in the wide range of crafts available, including woodcarving, basketry, textiles, beadwork and leatherwork. The handicraft sector is comprised of artisans, women's groups, small enterprises and organizations, and also includes a diverse group of public and private service providers for the development and support of craft production, marketing and trade.

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Practical Tips for Marketing Fair Trade Crafts

By Tex Dworkin

The popularity of fair trade products is currently on the rise. As consumer consciousness increases, so does the demand for fair trade crafts that are authentic, unique and whose producers are paid and treated justly. Yet, in order to be successful in selling these crafts, there are numerous marketing tips that must be considered and applied by fair trade businesses.

A good cause does not ensure a sale

It is difficult to convince strangers to feel as passionately about your craft group's mission as you do. So it is wise not to rely solely on charity to sell your crafts. Otherwise, you are limiting the amount of people who will buy your products and restricting your own success. Instead, focus on the merits of your products, including quality and aesthetic appeal. Fair Trade Federation member Gecko Traders, marketers of hand dyed and hand crafted silk accessories, has a terrific tagline; "If your eyes like it your heart will love it." Their products are hand crafted by disabled and disadvantaged people in third-world countries, but sell because they are well made, practical, and aesthetically pleasing to customers.

Presenting your products similar to this sustainable material gift box is environmentally conscious and aesthetically appealing.



Long-term trade relationships are the key to a sustainable business

Building long-term trade relationships is one of the Fair Trade Federation's core criteria. Your goal in marketing fair trade crafts should be to

align with buyers who are interested in purchasing from your group on a continual basis; otherwise, you may do your group more harm than good. For instance, if you make a sale of 200 baskets, but are used to selling baskets one at a time, you may need to hire additional people and purchase more tools and supplies to fulfill the order. If there are no future orders, then you're left with increased overhead costs without the sales to support them.

By developing long-term trade relationships, you encourage repeat business from which you can utilize the consistent income to invest in and grow your business. Through personal relationships with buyers over time, you can gain valuable insight about product design, consumer demand, pricing, and other important factors that will contribute to the future success of your business.

Every product has a story, so share it

Many fair trade crafts sold on the market today have informative story cards attached or nearby them on the shelf, and there's a reason why. Including story cards with your products is a simple yet effective way of informing consumers about what makes your products special. Cards often contain information on where the product was made and by whom, the artisan group's mission, and what material the craft is made of. If your craft group has a website, consider including that as well, so folks interested in learning more about your work may do so.

Imagine there are two glasses on a store shelf,

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baskets," he tells us. "The staff also travels [long] distances on foot to procure products for the shop and customers."

One area that has improved business for the Binga Crafts Centre is that of e-commerce. The internet allows the Centre not only to sell its products to a wider range of customers, but also provides them with the opportunity to network with other national and international organizations. The Centre's products can be viewed and purchased through its website: www.bingacraft.co.zw. Mudenda notes that although the internet has improved business, the Crafts Centre now is faced with the additional challenge of keeping up production so that orders placed through the internet can be filled as quickly as possible. Again, lack of transportation and sufficient funds will affect the operations of the Centre unless new funding partners are established, which the Centre is currently in search of.

Overall, the story of the Binga Crafts Centre is that of great success. Future plans for the Centre include carrying out effective market research, establishing Ilala plantations for its members, and continuing to provide quality control and other workshops. Mudenda tells us that it is the Centre's goal to become "one of the best suppliers of African craft in the continent". Binga Crafts Centre and the women and men who create these beautiful crafts are well on their way to becoming just that. A glance at the Centre's website proves this. Most importantly, Binga Crafts Centre hopes to continue to provide a means to a better way of life for its members and for the overall Binga community.

For more information on the Binga Crafts Centre, please visit their website at www.bingacraft.co.zw or e-mail them at bingacc@ecoweb.co.zw.

Though weaving a Tonga Basket is a long process, each pattern is unique and represents aspects of each artisan's everyday life and local habitat.

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one with a "Made in China" sticker on the bottom, another with a story card attached stating "made from recycled soda bottles at a cooperative in Guatemala." Most likely the recycled glass will appeal to the growing number of consumers who are making socially conscious purchasing decisions, so it is important for the glass maker to include that message with the product. For ideas about design and what information to include, check out existing story cards next time you're shopping!

Presentation is key

To sell crafts, you must create quality products, but your job does not end there. Presentation is an important aspect of the sales process, so it is crucial that you address this step. Presentation includes the product packaging, labeling, and how it will display on the store shelf. Just beware of using excess packaging in this green age!

A dishtowel sold loose on a store shelf will inevitably end up in a disheveled pile. Consider folding three dishtowels and tying them together with natural raffia or a local sustainable fiber from your region. Add your attached story card, and you've got yourself a dishtowel gift set ready for display! Boxes, baskets, and bags made from naturally sustainable materials are creative packaging solutions to consider. Romblon, a type of pine found on many islands in the Western Pacific, is one such option. A box made of this sustainable plant would be a wonderful packaging solution for a set of organic soaps. Another option is to package items in 100% biodegradable (see-through) packaging. If you have web access, e-mail is all you need to track down a graphic design student in need of some real-world experience to design a nice label for you so the quality of your packaging,



label and that of your

all, reflects product.

If you go the extra distance to present your product professionally, you may increase your product's perceived value to consumers with only a nominal increase in the cost of production.

Understand Consumer Needs and Market Trends to Grow Your Sales

By identifying the needs of your consumer, you'll be equipped to produce goods that sell. If you produce shirts, make sure they are sized according to market standards, and with ceramic pottery, be aware of the common demand for lead-free, dishwasher and microwave-safe pieces. Similarly, dolls marketed to children should not have removable eyeballs or other detachable pieces that can be potentially swallowed.

Are there products that your group is capable of producing that are underrepresented in the market you are trying to penetrate? A great way to identify product niches is to ask buyers. Find out what they are interested in carrying that they're having trouble locating. There are a plethora of fair trade candleholders available in the U.S. market, but few if any Chanukah menorahs. Alternately, make

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sure to avoid producing products that have already saturated the fair trade market.

By identifying products that are not available in fair trade versions, you may stumble upon a niche.

While crafts play an important role in keeping cultures and traditions alive, you can create hot sellers by applying traditional production techniques to current trends. It's easy to research such trends by referring to magazines, retail websites, or the Crafts Center Trend Report. Currently, accessories made from recycled materials such as feedbags and soda cans are popular, practical and time saving products are in demand, and pet product sales continue to rise.

Fair trade dishtowels are sold as a beautiful gift set rather than individually to increase their value.



A collection of fair trade toys from Sri Lanka are both baby-safe and eco-friendly.

To successfully market fair trade crafts, produce products

that sell on their own merit, pay heed to current trends, and let customers know what makes them special. And remember; the more products you sell the greater impact you can have on your mission.

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This summer's hottest trends take you to the tropics without leaving your house

By Paula Smith

With summer temperatures soaring, everyone is trying to beat the heat. The hot new colors for summer are cool and breezy with shades of green and blue. You'll find décor and crafts ranging from a pale powder blue to deep indigo. With accents of golden beige and espresso brown, these fresh, new colors will remind you of a relaxing summer day at the beach.

Linens, mosaics, beading—all of these textures are important accents to cool pieces for the summer. Linens are taking on a softer appearance, showing up on window dressings to add a breezy, casual feel to your home this summer. Mosaics have been around for centuries but this year they are “in” for adding that elegant, yet whimsical touch to tables, pottery and mirrors. Any craft project can be made with mosaics and is certain to impress your guests. Beading can be used in all areas of craft work; from jewelry to fashion to home accessories, and can show off your urban chic or global exotic personal style.

With the long summer days, it is essential that handmade home décor items for summer are simple. Colors and details should remain streamlined and vibrant,

allowing the consumer to mix and match without spending hours indoors attempting to maintain a perfect order. Textiles and artifacts should reflect the warmth of summer and vary between minimalist and luxurious attitudes. A more simplistic individual would choose a monotone palette, whereas people with more lavish tastes might incorporate one color with accents of gold.

Jewelry has moved from silver to gold and turquoise. Either one or two chunky gold bangles or many thin gold bracelets worn together are popular among women and can be worn night or day. A business woman should be able to feel comfortable in her jewelry as she goes from work to a night out on the town. Paired with large gold hoop earrings, the bracelets can pull an entire outfit together. Turquoise is another gorgeous summer option with its vibrant color and natural appeal. Turquoise has the flexibility of being created into a pair of simple drop earrings or a stunning layered, multi-stranded choker.

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