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Safety & Material Compliance Issues
Craft and hobby companies use proactive approaches to reduce the risk of safety problems. Here’s what’s being done in the industry.

Stress Management for Retailers
The Retail Owners Institute® gives helpful tips on learning to manage stress, benefitting your body and mind, as well as your employees and store.

Member Profile: MultiCraft Imports
This company is Canada’s largest supplier of mass market arts and crafts goods – here’s how they manage a volume business.

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A Season of Change

With the arrival of autumn, focus shifts from vacation mode to back-to-school. In many parts of North America, fall is marked with brilliantly golden colored leaves that announce the passing of one season into another.

This past February, CHA invited the Honorable Nancy Harvey Steorts, former chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CSPC) and president of Nancy Harvey Steorts International, to address the topic of consumer product safety in a CHA General Session during the 2008 CHA Winter Convention & Trade Show.

In her address entitled “Consumer Product Safety: The New American Crisis,” Steorts presented the association with some staggering information on the state of consumer product safety in the U.S. CHA witnessed a dangerous scenario outlined by Steorts, with over 400 product recalls in 2007, a 200 percent increase in uninspected imported products, and more than 45 million toys and other children’s products recalled for various hazards, it was no wonder pundits called 2007 “the year of the recall.” According to Steorts, “Standards need to be designed that have more teeth in them and there needs to be more collaboration with all stakeholders.”

I encourage you to read the entire Steorts presentation available online at www.craftandhobby.org/pdfs/ProductSafetySpeech.pdf. She outlined several great suggestions for developing consumer safety best practices for the craft and hobby industry that can also be applied on an individual company basis.

Just as summer turns to fall, a season of change has arrived for consumer product safety, too. This past August, President George W. Bush signed H.R. 4040: Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 into law. This legislation is being called “the biggest overhaul of U.S. product safety regulations in a generation,” and it aligns with Steorts’ recommendations.

The proposed legislation calls for the highest standards in dealing with lead content for products designed for consumers age 12 or under. It will outlaw phthalates, a known carcinogen already banned by the European Union.

The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act will increase the budget for the CSPC to $136 million, giving the agency new authority to impose penalties on violators. It will also require the commission to develop a public database reporting of injuries, illness or deaths related to products. Children’s products will now need to bear tracking labels that identify a path from manufacturer to retailers and registration cards will be required for some juvenile products. Both of these recommendations were made by Steorts during the CHA presentation and are designed to help in the event of a recall. Additionally, the new legislation brings in state government as an important partner in policing, giving state attorneys general power to enforce CSPC regulations.

While most changes won’t impact goods this holiday season, many retailers and manufacturers have self-imposed higher consumer product safety standards in anticipation of the new law, and to address growing consumer anxiety over product recalls. It is unclear how this legislation will impact the craft and hobby industry or individual CHA members, however, we know that this legislation means safer products and greater consumer confidence in manufacturers, retailers and government. We applaud our legislators for helping to provide higher standards of quality, safety and protection to responsible manufacturers and retailers.

In this issue of CHA Portfolio, we continue the important discussion of consumer product safety for our industry. We look to CHA members that have successfully navigated product recalls in order to learn from their experience as we enter a new, safer period of consumer protection and legislation.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments. Please feel free to contact me directly at (201) 835-1201 or sberger@craftandhobby.org.
The Craft & Hobby Association is a not-for-profit organization consisting of approximately 5,000 member companies worldwide engaged in the manufacture, distribution and retail sales of products in the $30 billion craft and hobby industry. The association offers a broad range of member services, including market research, education and consumer branding initiatives, and operates two annual international trade show events—the CHA Winter and CHA Summer shows— that attract more than 20,000 industry professionals.

**MISSION**

• Stimulate the sales growth of the craft and hobby industry
• Create consumer demand • Help members succeed • Lead the industry

**VISION**

A vibrant industry with an exciting image, expanding customer base and successful members.

---

The CHA Board is elected by the membership and is working hard on your behalf. Opinions are always welcome, and the best way to make your ideas heard is by sending an email to the Board’s Member Connect Committee at memberconnect@craftandhobby.org.
According to consumer advocates, 2008 is very close to overtaking 2007 as the “year of the recall” in the number of products, including food items, that have been recalled for health and safety issues. The craft and hobby industry is facing challenges in designing and manufacturing products that meet U.S. government standards, similar to those faced by the toy and gift industries.

There are several important factors to consider: In the design phase, are your new products checked for possible problems (choking hazard) and re-worked accordingly? Does your company or factory partner have quality control staff knowledgeable about U.S. standards, as well as...
the standards that other countries have for their own imported goods? Does your company have testing procedures and/or an independent facility to ensure all products are safe before wide-scale manufacturing begins? These basic safeguards will certainly add incremental costs to the final product, but weighed against a massive recall, disposal of unsafe or contaminated products, and loss of retailer and consumer confidence in your products, the fees are nominal in comparison. Some CHA members are taking action now to be proactive about this industry-wide issue.

**Safety in the Production Phase**

While it is true that more foreign manufacturers, especially Asian manufacturers, produce craft and hobby items, and that these countries don’t have the same safety standards as the United States, it is possible to ensure the manufacture of safe products even if these countries do not have the same safety standards as the U.S.

“Know your vendor,” advises Jim Stanley, vice president of technology, research and development, and quality for Plaid Enterprises in Norcross, Ga. When choosing a vendor, don’t let lowest price be your primary decision-making factor, he recommends. “The lowest price does not always produce the best value,” he says. Selection of a vendor that you don’t know well may require more testing to reassure you that the product is safe and the cost of the extra testing will negate any cost savings the initial price may have represented, he explains.

When working with foreign manufacturers, be sure you know exactly where the product is produced, suggests Pegi Smith, director of sales and marketing, Delta Creative.

“There is a need for industry members to do more than just stay current,” says Michael P. Catan, director of product compliance for Darice Inc. The biggest problem for companies in the craft and hobby industry is the lack of standards specific to craft or hobby materials. From a testing perspective, any of our craft or hobby products that can be used by children are classified as toys,” he says. Craft materials don’t fit easily into a toy category but with the lack of craft specific standards, companies have to spend time and money testing for and meeting standards that are written for toys, he adds. “For example, my company sold an ice cream making kit to a large retailer. The Food and Drug Administration tests were OK but the retailer insisted that we test the plastic bags, plastic spoons and a paper hat included in the kit to document that they met safety standards for toys.” The test involved dropping the items from a height of three feet and documenting that the part did not break into small pieces with sharp points.

“The craft and hobby industry spends an unnecessary amount of time and money testing our products as toys,” says Catan. Although he does not want to decrease safety standards, he explains, “I’d like to see our industry push for standards that are specific to craft items. We need standards that make sense for our products.”

**Pay Attention to Pending as well as Approved Regulations**

**Remember that some items must meet “toy” standards**

Taking a proactive approach to consumer product safety is how Duncan Enterprises has avoided recalls due to safety issues throughout the company’s 62-year history, according to Valerie Marderosian, vice president of sales and marketing for Duncan. Companies in the craft and hobby industry also need to be aware of what is going on beyond the walls of their own company to be prepared to meet future standards. “We actively search out legislation that could lead to changes in the regulatory landscape,” she explains.

Wilton Enterprises keeps an eye on legislative and regulatory issues with a staff person whose primary responsibility is to keep track of those activities, says Nancy Siler, MS, RD, LDN, CFCS, vice president of consumer affairs and public relations for the company. “In addition to a fully-staffed, quality control company….our food and regulatory specialist keeps the organization fully informed of food and labeling regulations and requirements. This addition to the staff has helped us in our efforts to stay current.”

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– Pegi Smith, director of sales and marketing, Delta Creative

Delta Creative. “The biggest issue with Chinese manufacturers is the practice of using subcontractors,” she says. “Some of the subcontractors work out of garages with no supervision.”

“Even when you know your foreign vendors, it is important to have a process in place to inspect
the factories,” says Stanley. “We have staff members in China who regularly do that.” The frequency of inspections is based on the complexity of the product, with the manufacturers of complex products receiving more inspections.

**Safety Checks**

If you are shipping products directly from a foreign manufacturer to a customer, have a process to test products before they leave the country, says Smith. “Some of our large retail customers have their products shipped directly, in order to ensure quality and safety, we test them in China before they are shipped.” Samples of the product are tested in the factory and if further testing is needed, the samples are taken to a lab in China.

Even if you have an inspection process in place at your foreign country plants, don’t forget random testing on products when you receive them, says Jim Stanley. “We perform random tests on all products. It is much easier to check products for safety and prevent them from reaching the consumer when they are sitting in boxes on your loading dock.” The number of products tested depends upon the length of your relationship and your experience with the vendor as well as the overall risk of finding lead or other hazardous material in the product.

Be sure to share the results of the tests with your vendor, suggests Stanley. Send a copy of the results to let the vendor know that products in the shipment were tested, what type of test was performed and that no problems were detected, he says. This follow up lets the vendor know that you are checking for safety and quality on a regular basis.

Another safety issue that affects craft and hobby manufacturers, importers and suppliers is the new law, H.R. 4040: Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008. One key aspect of the law will be to limit lead to 600 parts per million (ppm) within 180 days of August 14 (the date the bill was signed into law) and that limit will gradually be reduced to 100 ppm within three years of this legislation.

With lead occurring naturally in the environment, it is impossible to remove all traces from every product. Yet craft and hobby industry members are paying close attention to methods to reduce the risk of lead levels that exceed standards. “We started talking to our vendors months ago about the proposed standards,” says Michael P. Catan, director of product compliance for Darice Inc. “We have never had a vendor intentionally use lead as an ingredient in any of our products but lead residue that occurs as part of the manufacturing process can result in higher than standard levels.”

Darice also relies upon the expertise of an outside lab that not only tests products but also inspects factories and educates vendors about ways to reduce the risk of contaminants. “Our jewelry does not contain lead as an ingredient but it is manufactured in a mold,” points out Catan. Lead residue can build up in the mold and a necklace will absorb it during the process. “If you produce a batch of 1,000 necklaces, the first 100 might test high for lead because they picked up the lead residue, and the last 900 will test fine,” he says. One way to prevent the lead residue buildup is more frequent cleaning of equipment, one of the activities that the lab inspectors teach and evaluate during inspections, he adds.

**Product Labeling**

Proper labeling of a product is another aspect of product safety. “Even though lead in products has been the focus of media coverage, the number one reason products don’t pass safety standards is because labeling doesn’t meet standards,” says Catan. “Our company had a foamie kit that included a chenille stem. We labeled the product as appropriate for ages 6+ but the testing lab failed the product. The sharp point on the chenille stem required a label that stated 8+. The age on the label was changed to 8+ and the product passed.”

Testing not only looks at materials used to produce the product, but also reviews potential use and abuse, points out Stanley. “There are two types of art and craft products, those that are non-toxic and not hazardous and those that have components that are toxic and hazardous. Even toxic and hazardous products can be used safely if they are used according to the label instructions.” Plaid’s paint
products typically have labels that include warnings that the product may be flammable or that the consumer should not inhale or ingest the product.

In addition to formal laboratory testing to ensure safety, Wilton Enterprises uses consumer testing to identify necessary warnings related to misuse of a product. “Consumer testing is based on how a consumer might use or abuse the product,” says Nancy Siler, MS, RD, LDN, CFCS, vice president of consumer affairs and public relations for the company that produces bakeware and food crafting items. “For example, prior to launching a new cyclone whisk, our test kitchen staff worked with about 30 samples in a variety of sizes to determine what features we wanted in ours and how we could improve on the basic version.” Although this test identified quality and performance issues as well, it helped Wilton staff determine how a product could be misused, she adds.

While a proactive approach to safety is critical during the design and manufacturing stages, consumer education is also important. Labels are a key component of consumer education but companies typically offer more educational support to ensure safe use of products. “We provide a wide variety of products, varying from kid friendly craft products to professional grade adhesives, and consumer education is vital at all levels,” admits Valerie Marderosian, vice president of sales and marketing for Duncan Enterprises. “While we strive to produce safe, hazard-free products, certain consumers may use our products in ways that they were not intended to be used.”

Duncan uses a third party lab to establish labeling requirements per ASTM D-4236 for all products and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are available online for consumers, points out Marderosian. “Additional questions that cannot be answered from the label or the MSDS can be submitted to our customer service team.”

Although most of American Art Clay Company’s (AMACO) customers are professionals, educators or long-time hobbyists in the ceramic industry and know how to use the products, AMACO has technical support staff available to answer questions by telephone or by email, says Lori Jenkins, technical services and product safety coordinator for the company.

A commitment to respond to emails and phone requests within 24 hours during the business week is important to ensure that the consumer knows how to safely use the product, points out Jenkins. “We always encourage our customers to ask questions. We tell everyone that there is no such thing as a dumb question, especially if it involves safety.”

Learn More
Arts & Creative Materials Institute at www.acminet.org
American National Standards Institute at www.ansi.org
American Society Testing and Materials (ASTM International) at www.astm.org
Kids In Danger at www.kidsindanger.org
For retailers, a certain amount of stress can be positive, but constant stress is hard on your body, your personal relationships and your business. You don’t need to be reminded to eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. But have you taken steps to decrease the strain you feel? That, too, can increase your effectiveness as a manager. To gauge your present stress level, take the following quiz.

First, Test Your Stress Level
For each statement below, assign a numerical value, depending on how true it is for you (4 = strongly agree, 3 = somewhat agree, 2 = somewhat disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree).

1. ___ I enjoy my work.
2. ___ I rarely lose my temper over trivial incidents.
3. ___ I don’t mind delegating responsibility.
4. ___ I set aside time for reflection and long-range planning.
5. ___ Unexpected disruptions in the store’s routine don’t disturb me.
6. ___ When I catch a cold, it never lasts long.
7. ___ I can effectively handle my workload.
8. ___ My employees seem happy to come to work.
9. ___ I rarely feel nagged by unnamed fears.
10. ___ I spend adequate time with my spouse and close friends.
11. ___ I get to sleep easily.
12. ___ I have mentors I can talk to about retailing.
13. ___ I have a clear idea of my store’s goals.
14. ___ I have recently taken a vacation that helped me feel rested and invigorated.
15. ___ I always feel well-prepared for time spent with my banker and accountant.
16. ___ I don’t use alcohol, drugs or overeating to relieve tension.
17. ___ I spend more time problem-solving then paper-shuffling.
18. ___ Customers enjoy the atmosphere of my store.
19. ___ I often come up with new ideas.
20. ___ Employee turnover in my store is low.
21. ___ My store follows a business plan that I monitor and understand.
22. ___ I almost never suffer from nagging physical discomfort such as headaches and indigestion.
23. ___ People are used to hearing me laugh out loud.
24. ___ I get some form of regular exercise and eat healthy foods.
25. ___ When an emergency prevents my presence at the store, my employees know what to do.

Now, Total Your Ratings
Find the category that identifies best how stress has affected your life:

75 or more: A winning attitude!
74 to 50: A good attitude, but you need to release some stress and increase the efficiency of your store’s routine.
49 to 25: Step back, take a deep breath and seriously re-think the way you spend your time.
0-24: If at all possible, read the rest of this article on a beach in the Bahamas!
Focus on the Five Major Stress- Producers
People decide to open their own retail business for a variety of reasons:
• The chance to control their financial situation by their own efforts and expertise.
• The sense of freedom and self-respect that comes from charting their own course.
• The opportunity to do satisfying work.
• The ability to structure their own time.
• A chance to interact and communicate with people.

These reasons also happen to be the five biggest producers of stress. While each reason can be satisfying, it can also be stressful. Understanding your business’ purpose will help make your job more enjoyable and productive.

You CAN Control Finances!
As the owner of a retail business, you get to decide what to do with profits. On the other hand, you may be personally liable for your store’s debts.

Financial management is one area in which retailers can reduce stress by working smarter, not harder. Why? Because solving real problems is less stressful than fending off nebulous fears.

Take the time to comprehend your store’s income statements and balance sheet. If you slept through Financial Management 101, work through the online seminar on the Basics of Retail Finance at The Retail Owners Institute® – www.RetailOwner.com. It’s self-paced, interactive, and fun (!) for you (and perhaps others in your store). And it will give you a much better understanding of the controllable – and uncontrollable – variables in your store.

Obviously, if your store has a problem, the numbers themselves won’t tell you what to do. But armed with a basic financial understanding, the problems will move from the area of unnamed worries to the realm of concrete challenges. This allows you to develop specific remedies and to take strategic action.

You don’t need to be reminded to eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. But have you taken steps to decrease the strain you feel? That, too, can increase your effectiveness as a manager.

Reflect, Relate – and Recharge!
Structuring your life around goals set from your own unique desires is incredibly satisfying. An independent retail owner is in the position to give his/her ideas substance in a way few other workers can. But before you can translate your vision into reality, it must be clear in your mind.

Set aside a specific time each day for reflection and planning and keep it sacred. Once you are in touch with what you want to accomplish, you’ll be amazed how your operations streamline themselves. Moreover, these quiet times will help you relieve stress.

Another way to reduce stress and keep tabs on your larger goals is by putting your network of professional contacts to use. Have lunch with your friend who owns, say, the flower shop down the street or attend a weekly discussion group sponsored by the Small Business Administration (SBA), your local chamber of commerce, or even your local public library.

Taking the time to talk to other business owners will reduce your stressful feelings of loneliness and isolation while tapping into a valuable source of shared information.

Finally, cultivate a love of the unexpected. Visions need to be rooted in reality, and reality is rarely predictable. By staying flexible and open-minded, you’ll reduce your level of frustration and increase your ability to take advantage of new business opportunities.

“Am I Running This Business…or Is It Running Me?!?”
You chose retailing because some aspect of the industry strongly appealed to you. You love the products, or the people who buy the products. Yet, there is often a catch: instead of controlling your work, it can too easily begin controlling you.

Most store owners are reluctant to delegate. Unfortunately, no one can run a business single-handedly. Effective delegation involves giving an employee a task and the authority necessary to complete it. (That is, they have both
the responsibility and the authority.) Express confidence in that person’s ability to do the job. Be prepared to take mistakes in stride; delegating may initially require some patience, but it’s worth it. Empowering employees inspires loyalty and dedicated, competent employees will make your job much easier in the long run.

Make a flow chart to find out if you are using employees to their full potential and effectively managing the store’s workload. Prepare a list of every major function your store performs. Arrange similar functions into groupings including sales-related tasks and inventory control. While a few tasks may be difficult to classify, a hierarchy of major functions should emerge paralleling the workflow through your business. Write your employees’ names next to the jobs they perform.

Previously unsuspected gaps may appear in your chart, as well as unnecessary overlaps. The chart should suggest better ways to utilize the talents of specific employees, increasing their productivity and taking some of the burden off your shoulders.

That “Quality Time” Thing
As owner, you don’t need anyone’s approval to schedule a business lunch. The negative side is that you can’t report to anyone when you call in sick. Because you don’t punch a time clock doesn’t mean you work less. Many independent retail owners put in 60 or more hours a week – and then they take home the paperwork.

If you are troubled by nagging physical problems, your body is telling you it’s under stress and needs a little time off. Believe it or not, you can manage your time effectively and earn peaceful time off. Focus on the quality of time you put in rather than the quantity. The following are techniques to increase the quality of your time:

- **Delegate** responsibilities.
- **Set priorities.** Postpone or eliminate low-priority items.
- **Know when you’re at your best and save those times** for high priority activities. Some people are most efficient in the morning, while others hit their peak after lunch.
- **Use remnant time effectively.** The time between customers or appointments is valuable too.
- **Streamline your paperwork.** You need to keep adequate records, but you are in business to sell merchandise, not shuffle paper. It may be time to finally add or upgrade your use of technology. And with the online resources available today, you also can outsource many services rather than trying to manage it all in-house.
- **Give yourself a break.** Whether it’s a 10-minute snooze or a two-week camping trip, getting away will give you a new perspective and make your work time more efficient.

Keep (or Regain?) Your Enthusiasm
As a retailer, you probably like people. The success of your business greatly depends on your relationships with customers and suppliers, but it relies even more on your relationships with employees. As you work to create good relationships with your staff, remember that people mirror the attitudes they see in others. If your employees are tense and irritable, you may need to relax. If you project a relaxed and enthusiastic attitude, you’ll soon find yourself surrounded by motivated, effective workers.

A sense of humor and a good attitude can help drive any business to success. To illustrate this, consider the following story.

A tense, tired drugstore owner sat in the ballpark across the street from his store, watching the local team practice. As he was thinking about how much he dreaded going back to work, one of the players hit a home run. Suddenly the druggist thought, “Why can’t I run my store like a game?”

As he returned to the store, his phone rang. A woman living nearby began to give him a list of items to deliver. The druggist signaled his clerk to quickly assemble the order. The clerk dashed out with the order while the druggist continued chatting with the customer. A few moments later, the woman’s doorbell rang and she excused herself to answer the door.

“How did you do that?” she asked when she returned to the phone. “That was the very order I just gave you!” That druggist, Charles R. Walgreen of Walgreen’s Drugs, burst out laughing.

An enthusiastic attitude is vital to being an effective manager and reducing your stress. If, like Mr. Walgreen, you look at retailing as a game and play it with zeal, your business will profit – and so will your health!

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If you’re among the retail businesses looking for ways to maximize their open-to-buy budgets, then you will surely appreciate the business model of MultiCraft Imports. The Canadian company, which opened its doors in November 2005 with two warehouses in Ottawa, specializes in providing budget-conscious customers with discount arts and crafts supplies and is able to make a profit by selling its goods in large quantities to distributors.

MultiCraft’s products, most of which are made in China, are featured at discount stores across Canada such as Giant Tiger and Wal-Mart, in addition to dollar stores, making it Canada’s largest supplier of mass market arts and crafts goods. Director of Sales Chris Blake is quick to attribute much of his company’s success to the Craft & Hobby Association’s annual Winter Convention & Trade Show, where MultiCraft has displayed its products for three years running. The event’s ability to draw arts and crafts enthusiasts from many countries has enabled the company within the past year to expand its sales territory across the globe. MultiCraft currently sells products in Australia, Italy, Germany, France and all across North America and Latin America.

“As a small Canadian company with about 75 employees, we consider CHA to be a great asset for us and a mechanism to open a lot of doors, especially with the Winter Show, which is very international,” Blake said. “Without CHA, we would not have had the same level of growth in the international markets. At the last show, I was amazed at how many Australians were in our booth. How else would we ever get those customers?”

–Chris Blake, director of sales, MultiCraft

Blake said trade shows have proven invaluable to the company, largely because MultiCraft’s focus on selling large volumes of inexpensive goods gives it an advantage over its higher-priced competitors. “The industry has made its money on people with lots of disposable income, but look at

BY NICK FORTUNA
what’s going on economically now. There are certain items that don’t need to cost what they do.”

Besides its prices, MultiCraft’s formula for success depends on staying on top of industry trends and frequently introducing new items to keep its product line fresh. At any given time, distributors can choose from about 5,000 different scrapbooking items and 4,000 other specialty goods for hobbies such as beading and jewelry making.

“We use a lot of designs from our overseas vendors, and we will take their designs and tweak them for our consumer base,” Blake said. “Our approach is different in that we’re in and out with a lot of items. We’ll bring in an item in huge quantities; sell it at an attractive price and then move on to a new style. We are constantly rotating items so we constantly have fresh goods coming in. The industry is very consumed with new products, and we try to meet that need every 90 to 100 days by introducing new items.”

One of MultiCraft’s biggest successes as of late has been its French-language line of arts and crafts supplies marketed under the Joie de Vivre brand name. The company initially launched the line to capitalize on its proximity to Quebec and its French-speaking populace but soon found that those products also could be effectively marketed in Europe. Wherever it sells its goods, however, MultiCraft is well aware that since its prices are low, it must sell only in bulk if it is going to make a profit, an approach that has led to a faster-than-expected rate of growth since the company’s inception.

“We’re much happier to sell to the distributor than to the end user because it just doesn’t pay at our price points,” Blake said. “We’re all about shipping products in 12s or 24s instead of 3s and 6s, and that’s how we’re able to offer the products at these prices. There’s a lot of ambition around here, and we’re definitely driven to take our products to the masses and find new opportunities.”
The CHA Summer Show attracted more than 7,166 verified craft and hobby industry professionals and 348 exhibiting companies from 44 countries around the world. Reaffirming the CHA Summer Show as the largest craft and hobby trade show of the season, more than 80 new exhibitors participated in the Show in 126,895 square feet of exhibition space.

“Despite challenging economic times, we’re pleased with the amount of business we saw conducted on the show floor, with overall attendance only down 6 percent from last year” said Steve Berger, CHA CEO. “It’s a testament to the importance of trade shows during slow economy periods and the resiliency of the craft industry.”

The buyers in attendance didn’t appear to let the slow economy hamper purchases. Based on interviews with several exhibiting companies, the CHA Summer Show was a great success.

Deborah Curry, partner, Fancy That, said, “This is our debut at the CHA Summer Show and we couldn’t be more pleased. Compared to some of the other shows we’ve been to this year, we are seeing a lot of traffic here. This is the perfect arena for our new product and the timing couldn’t be better.”

“We’ve had people in our booth all day, but it’s not to the point where no one can get in and look at the products. It’s good because it creates a different atmosphere where buyers aren’t rushed to make an order, so they are making smarter buying decisions,” said Lynette Carroll, marketing director, K & Company.

“This show meets all our needs. Our target customers are here, which are the small independent stores, but we’ve also been approached by the larger stores, which has been great! It’s absolutely a good fit for us,” said Connie Campbell, owner, Combat Creations.

Education framed around the show theme, “Kids’ Crafting: Inspiring Growth and Creativity,” also taught attendees how to reach the growing U.S. kids crafting market, consisting of 73 million children under the age of 18. So in addition to all the products and excitement on the show floor, attendees took advantage of more then 70 classes, workshops and seminars at the show, which provided retailers, manufacturers and designers with business techniques and solutions to carry them through the current economic downturn and beyond. Featuring such sessions as “Why and How to Use Classes and Clubs to Generate Store Traffic” and “Actions Speak Louder than Words! Veteran Sales Techniques That Work,” the Summer Show’s educational lineup provided CHA members with effective solutions to enhance their business and drive sales.
CHA hosted a Kids Craft Day Fair for 150 children at the General Robert E. Wood Boys & Girls Club of Chicago (BGCC) Center on July 16, 2008. In honor of this event, an official proclamation designating July 16th as “Kids Craft Day in Chicago” was issued by the Honorable Mayor Richard Daley, mayor of Chicago.

Along with Terri O, CHA’s national craft spokesperson and CHA’s research partner Phoenix Multicultural, more than 60 companies donated product, time, effort and employees to make this event special for the children of the Boys & Girls Club of Chicago. “Kids’ Craft Day is a wonderful opportunity for our young people to explore their creativity, learn new skills and have a unique experience,” explained Angela Benke, BGCC program director.

All told, over $40,000 worth of craft products and supplies were donated to ensure that the BGCC had a complete year’s worth of crafting curriculum and products to share with kids’ clubs in the area.

1. Arte Latin-Oh!
2. Arts and Crafts by Rayson
3. Amos Craft Publishing (Pack-o-Fun Magazine)
4. Beacon Adhesives
5. BOC Design Group
6. Janlynn Corporation
7. Canvas Corp LLC
8. Caren’s Crafts
9. Colorbök, Inc.
10. Clearsnap, Inc.
11. C-Line Products, Inc.
12. Coats & Clark
13. Cream City Ribbon
14. Creative Hands
15. Creative Imaginations
16. Creative Treasures
17. Crescent Cardboard Co., LLC
18. C&T Publishing - Create and Treasure
19. Darice, Inc.
20. Duncan Enterprises
21. EK Success
22. Ellison/Sizzix
23. Eyelet Outlet
24. F+W Media
25. Fibre-Craft Materials Corp.
26. Fire Mountain Gems
27. FloraCraft Corporation
28. Happy N Scrappin’
29. Indus Trading Company
30. Jack Dempsey Needle Art
31. Jann Johnson, Designer
33. Julianna Productions
34. Kalmbach Publishing
35. Kathy Peterson Designs
36. KS Productions
37. Laura Kelly Designs
38. Leisure Arts
39. National Nonwovens
40. Magic Mesh
41. Making Memories
42. Mark Richards Enterprises, Inc.
43. MCS Industries, Inc.
44. MomCentral.com
45. Martingale & Co.
46. McGill, Inc.
47. Memories Across Miles
48. Mundial Inc.
49. On the Surface
50. OTT-LITE® Technology
51. Fabric (IPLOW Group)
52. Plaid Enterprises
53. Polyform Products
54. S & S Worldwide
55. Ryland, Peters & Small
56. Sakura Color Products of America, Inc.
57. Sbar’s Inc.
58. Scrapbook Adhesives by 3L
59. Scrapbook Mania
60. ScrapMap.com
61. Sillycone Inc.
63. Spanish Memories, Inc.
64. The DMC Corp.
65. T.Hee Greetings, Inc.
66. The Butterfly Loom
67. The Craft Pedlars
68. Walnut Hollow
69. World Piece Emporium
70. Xyron Education
CHA announced the winners of the CHA industry awards, including the Innovations Showcase, Golden Press Kit, Designer Press Kit and Exhibiting with Excellence awards presented at the CHA 2008 Summer Convention & Trade Show on July 19th. These coveted CHA awards represent the industry’s most prestigious recognition for product innovation, trade show exhibition and press kit design.

“At CHA, we’re continually encouraging our members to use their creativity and talents to grow the industry through innovation,” said CHA VP Sandy Ghezzi. “The quality and skill demonstrated by the innovative new products, incredibly designed and professionally staffed booths, and creative press materials submitted by our members helps set a high standard that motivates and spurs the industry toward excellence.”

2008 Innovations Showcase Winners
The Innovations Showcase brought together the newest ideas and most innovative products from exhibiting companies in four product categories as well as the overall “Best of Show.”

Winners were:
• BEST OF SHOW – Kodomo Inc., for original designs from Japanese artist, Zigen (see photo)
• ART MATERIALS & FRAMING – Paverpol USA, Inc., for its non-toxic, environmentally friendly textile hardener
• FABRIC/QUILTING/NEEDLECRAFTS – Clover Needlecraft, for its Jumbo “Quick” Yo-Yo Maker
• GENERAL CRAFTS – Duncan Enterprises, for its Crafty Chica Products by Kathy Cano-Murillo
• SCRAPBOOKING & PAPER CRAFTS – Fiskars, for its Push and Print Stamp Factory

Exhibiting with Excellence
The CHA Exhibiting with Excellence Awards were presented to companies whose dynamic displays, merchandising techniques and inviting staff enhanced the overall atmosphere of the show floor. One winner was chosen in each of the following product categories:

Press Kit Award Competition Winners
Several exhibiting manufacturers vied for top place in the Golden Press Kit competition, which awards the design/content, creativity and thoroughness of each company’s press kit. CHA Designer members also had a chance to display their press kit innovations as part of the Designer Press Kit competition. Press members selected the following favorites:

• GOLDEN PRESS KIT – FIRST PLACE – Ellison/Sizzix
• SILVER PRESS KIT – SECOND PLACE – Piggy Tales
• BRONZE PRESS KIT – THIRD PLACE – Anna Griffin
• DESIGNER PRESS KIT AWARD WINNER – Stamping Today Studio (Sara Hodsdon)

CHA CEO Special Recognition Award Presented to Karen Ancona
For over 20 years Karen Ancona served as the editor of Craft & Needlework Age Magazine (CNA) and on numerous association committees. Karen helped inform a growing craft industry about new and emerging craft products available. Her work at CNA, in conjunction with consumers and HIA (now CHA), helped define the modern craft and hobby industry we know today. Her articles provided valuable insight leading to industry growth in new areas such as rubber stamps and scrapbooking. Steve Berger, CEO of the Craft & Hobby Association, presented Karen Ancona with the 2008 CEO Special Recognition Award for her meritorious contributions to the craft and hobby industry.
In a presentation made on Saturday, July 19, 2008, at the Craft & Hobby Association (CHA) Summer Convention & Trade Show in Rosemont, Ill., CHA CEO Steve Berger made two announcements. The first was that the CHA Summer Convention & Trade Show, which had been held in Rosemont for 23 years, will be moved to the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) in Orlando, Fla. the summer of 2009. The second was introducing CHA’s first-ever consumer show, open to the general public, to be held on July 31-August 1, 2009, also in Orlando. The relocation of the Summer Show to Orlando and the addition of a new CHA consumer show piqued the interest of both CHA members and the media, and became the topic of blogs, news articles and CHA teleconferences for the next several months.

“We are excited about the new consumer show and holding the Summer Show in Orlando,” explained Steve Berger, CHA CEO. “Over the past two decades, the Summer Show has established a reputation for being the summer’s premier craft and hobby event – we are eager to enhance that reputation and legacy by introducing a new consumer show and taking the Summer Show to the dynamic destination location of Orlando.”

The Move from Rosemont
The city of Rosemont has hosted the Summer Show for over two decades and there has been a steady decline in attendance and exhibitors dating back to the ACCI show in 2003, with one exception, the year CHA assumed production of the show. When ACCI and HIA unified, the new entity, CHA, took over the Summer Show in 2004 and for two years, it grew (4-5 percent increase in exhibitors; 40 percent increase in pre-registered attendees). After that, the declining trends continued. Over the last two years, the CHA Summer Show has witnessed a decline of both exhibitors and attendees. At the most recent 2008 Summer Show, attendance was down by almost 7 percent and exhibitors were down by more than 13.5 percent.

To help reverse this trend, the CHA 2009 Summer Show will be relocated to the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, July 28-30, 2009, with education starting on July 27. The CHA Summer Show days have changed to run Tuesday through Thursday to allow more buyers to attend without weekend conflicts.

The relocation and other improvements emphasize CHA’s commitment to growing and expanding the CHA Summer Show. As the leader in pre-eminent craft and hobby industry venues, CHA anticipates that the move to Orlando will further strengthen the CHA Summer Show as a critical buying show across all segments.

The CHA Summer Show is the largest summer trade show in the craft and hobby industry, with over 7,400 attendees. It enjoys solid international representation with about 20 percent of attendance composed of vendors from more than 44 different countries. Most importantly, the Summer Show is the key buying event of the season, with 97 percent of buyers purchasing products as a direct result of attendance.

CHA staff solicited member feedback on viable alternatives to
Rosemont. In the CHA 2006 Summer Show Attendee Survey, 40 percent of those interviewed rated Orlando as either first or second choice of venues as an alternative to Rosemont. CHA conducted research that found consumer craft spending is highest in the Southeast at $12.1 billion dollars, almost twice that of the Midwest consumer craft spend at $6.9 billion. CHA buyers were also evaluated, and there are 204 designated buyers in Florida verses 209 designated buyers in Illinois. Additionally, Orlando is a major destination location and ranks second by Tradeshow Week magazine as the leading host city by number of tradeshows, share of market, and square footage.

Other cities in the Midwest were explored, but because 60 percent of CHA Summer Show attendees travel by plane to the show, having direct and international flights available was a limiting factor for other host city options. Initial reports on airfare to Orlando rate very competitively with those rates to fly to Chicago O’Hare, although individual fares will vary based on point of origination, fuel costs, carrier and when tickets are purchased.

The CHA Consumer Show
“CHA members have been asking for a consumer event for years to feature their products and designs,” explained Steve Berger, CHA CEO. “As the leader in pre-eminent craft and hobby industry venues, we are proud to launch the CHA consumer show and to provide the general public with an exciting venue to explore and discover crafts. CHA is always exploring fresh ideas and concepts that generate a greater interest in crafting, and this one is a winner.”

For the first time in its history, CHA will open its show floor doors directly to consumers. To be held following the CHA 2009 Summer Show at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla., CHA’s preliminary estimate is 5,000-7,000 members of the general public will attend the CHA consumer show on Friday, July 31 and Saturday, August 1, 2009, given that it is the launch year.

Composed exclusively of CHA member exhibitors from manufacturer, retailer, service provider, distributor and wholesaler sectors of the craft and hobby industry, the CHA consumer show will feature top-tier education from craft industry experts, make-n-take hands-on projects at exhibitor booths, and entertainment in a family-friendly environment.

CHA envisions and recommends that manufacturers host make-n-take projects, education classes and develop project sheets to show product usage but avoid sales competition with retailers. Savvy manufacturers will explore partnerships that best highlight their products to build interest among the general public that will drive consumers to retail outlets.

CHA believes that the new consumer show will be a success as crafters from around the country can see all types of craft products in one pace, to learn about and try their hand at something altogether new and interesting to them. The cross-participation opportunities will be a key driver to the show.

Survey Shows Positive Reaction to Orlando

In August, Creative Leisure News (CLN)* published the results from its online news poll among its readers about their plans to attend the CHA 2009 Summer Show in Orlando. CLN asked attendees (buyers and other non-exhibitors): “Will you attend the Summer Show in Orlando in 2009?”

• 40 percent answered, I attended the Chicago Show and will attend the Orlando Show.
• 12 percent answered, I did not attend the Chicago Show but will attend the Orlando Show.
• 32 percent answered, I’m not sure whether I will attend the Orlando Show.
• 16 percent answered, I did not attend the Chicago Show and will not attend the Orlando Show.

Additionally, CLN posed another question: “For attendees who are considering attending the trade show in Orlando, will you consider extending your stay to observe the consumer show?”

• 46 percent said yes
• 38 percent said no
• 15 percent reported not sure

*Reprinted with permission from Creative Leisure News
The green movement has gained momentum among consumers and businesses around the world. According to the New York Times, 35 million Americans regularly buy products that claim to be earth-friendly. Sales of "green" products are currently at $209 billion and are expected to double by 2010. Some of the companies within the craft industry have already embraced the concept of “going green” but with such a broad definition of “green,” it is hard to know where to begin. The CHA 2009 Winter Convention & Trade Show, to be held January 25-28 in Anaheim, Calif., will introduce the craft industry to the concept of green with the theme It’s Easy Being Green. Special seminars, workshops and displays will target these areas:

Best Practices: Introducing the craft industry to management and operational business practices that favorably impact the earth and your bottom line. Connecting with Consumers: Raising consumer awareness of “green” possibilities within the craft industry.

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**It’s Easy Being Green**

The CHA 2009 Winter Show Theme is Green Crafting

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**Portfolio FALL 2008**
The CHA Nominating Committee Announces the Slate of Board Candidates

The CHA Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the slate of candidates recommended for election by the membership. The new nominees are: Georganne Bender (Kizer & Bender Speaking!), and Mark Hill (Creativity Inc.) as candidates. Rob Bostick of Judikins and Stamp, Stamp, Stamp was nominated for a second term. The nominees will be running for a three-year term on the CHA Board of Directors.

In making the announcement, Chair Bob Ferguson (Ferguson Merchandising LLC/Ben Franklin Crafts), stated, “We are pleased to announce the slate of nominees for the CHA Board of Directors. The candidates have impressive professional backgrounds and diverse experience in the craft and hobby industry. The candidates will be great additions to the CHA Board if confirmed by the membership.”

The Nominating Committee is comprised of three members of the CHA Board of Directors, and three members-at-large elected by the general CHA membership. The Board representatives were Bob Ferguson, Larry Olliges (Dee’s Crafts) and Maureen Ruth (Creative Marketing Solutions). The members-at-large were Beth Mauro (F+W Media), Pam Riddell (Maps-2-Memories and The Riddell Group) and Ed Rogala (Midwest Products Co. Inc.).

The newly nominated Board candidates to serve will be officially elected by a proxy ballot which will be mailed to each member company’s voting contact by Nov. 24, 2008 as outlined in the association bylaws. The elected candidates will be officially introduced at the Annual Business Meeting, which will take place on Tuesday, January 27, 2009 in Anaheim, Calif., at the CHA Winter Convention & Trade Show.

Meet the New Board Candidates

Georganne Bender
Georganne is an award-winning speaker, author, and consultant. As half of the KIZER & BENDER Speaking! team, she has presented keynotes and seminars internationally to diverse audiences since 1989. Prior to co-founding KIZER & BENDER Speaking!, Georganne held corporate senior management positions in store design and marketing, as well as store management and buying positions. She’s played an active role in the creative industry for 28 years.

Georganne is a retailer and a retail consumer advocate. She possesses an in-depth understanding of consumer demographics and psychographics and has been an active member of CHA-related committees and task forces for many years.

Mark Hill
Mark has over 25 years experience in the art and craft industry, holding senior management roles at Larson Juhl, Plaid Enterprises and in his present role as executive vice president of Creativity Inc., the Los Angeles based holding company for Westrim, Autumn Leaves, Blue Moon Beads, Crop in Style and DMD Industries.

He has had many years of industry service on the consumer marketing, market research and trade show committees.
CHA is seeking candidates to serve on its Nominating Committee for a one-year term in 2009. This is an autonomous group of CHA members responsible for interviewing and nominating candidates to the Board of Directors for 2010.

The CHA Nominating Committee is made up of three current board directors elected by the Board and three at-large members elected by the membership. Two alternates will be elected for each group. To be eligible to serve on this committee, candidates must be employed by a CHA member company which has voting eligibility.

Employees of CHA member companies may nominate themselves, or another CHA member employee, to be an at-large member of the Nominating Committee. The Nomination Form can be completed and submitted online at www.craftandhobby.org/2009membernom.html or via fax to (201) 797-0657. The deadline for candidate submissions is November 14, 2008.

After the nominations are completed, the general CHA membership will choose the final five member representatives to serve on this committee. In November, this proxy ballot will be included with the Annual Business Meeting announcement in addition to the ballot used to elect the nominated board candidates for 2009.

The elected member representatives will be announced and introduced at the Annual Business Meeting Breakfast, January 27, 2009, 7:30-9:00 a.m. in Ballroom ABC, Anaheim Convention Center, in Anaheim, Calif.

Questions about 2009 Nominating Committee nominations may be directed to the Member Services Department at CHA (memberservices@craftandhobby.org).

The International Task Force of the Craft & Hobby Association (CHA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Association Global Services (AGS), a leading international association management consultancy. This appointment underscores CHA’s long-term commitment to provide meaningful membership programs for all its members regardless of their country of origin.

AGS was hired to address the growing demand for international programs from the CHA membership and to evaluate existing CHA programs geared toward improving CHA’s international presence. Additionally, AGS will recommend global opportunities for participation by CHA members through identifying international channels that can expand the craft and hobby industry abroad.

Under the terms of the agreement, AGS will evaluate the international CHA membership value proposition, assess international craft industry business issues, and provide a strategic plan of action that will identify and address global concerns for both international and domestic members of CHA leading into the next decade.

“CHA is uniquely qualified to provide help and to confront the challenges of globalization facing the international craft and hobby industry,” explained Carolyn Schulz of Creative Solutions and chair of the CHA International Task Force. “As a matter of fact, about 16 percent of CHA membership is internationally based in dozens of countries around the world, while more and more domestic members are interested in expanding internationally. Hiring AGS is a great next step toward helping address the international issues facing our members.”

AGS is the leading provider of quality professional not-for-
Current CHA members are able to renew their dues for 2009 by going to one of two CHA Web sites. The link to access the online payment site can be found on the home page of the association Web site at www.craftandhobby.org. Or, if preferred, go to the Show website at www.chashow.org and select “Renew Dues/Pay Booth Space” under the My CHA dropdown menu.

If you have not logged in previously, you will need to sign in with your email on file with CHA, provide the CHA ID (found in the upper right corner of the printed invoice) and the zip/postal code of the company address (or leave blank if your country does not use postal codes).

Also note: changes to your personal name, address, phone, or email can be made online by selecting My Information or My Company (also found under My CHA) prior to selecting the option to Renew Dues/Pay Booth Space. A request to change a business name can be made to membership@craftandhobby.org or by using the online request link provided.

Once it is established that you are employed by a current CHA member company, you will be able to create your unique password, or reset your password if forgotten (do not contact CHA to provide lost passwords). Open invoices will be displayed for your company’s dues and/or booth space balance, if applicable. If you have any questions about a dues invoice, please contact Jennifer Snider at (201) 835-1213, or for booth space invoices, contact Donna Cennimo at (201) 835-1217.

As a reminder, CHA members may register but will not receive an Express Pass® to print their CHA 2009 Winter Show badges unless their membership is current for the upcoming year; the dues renewal deadline is October 31, 2008. Online tickets sales for business seminars, show events, the Keynote and workshops are expected to be available in early November.
Conspire To Succeed with CHA by taking full advantage of your available member benefits. Logon to www.craftandhobby.org/memberbenefits.html or contact Jon Krance, marketing manager at jkrance@craftandhobby.org or call (201) 835-1214 if you have any questions.

Here are two of the new benefits:

Staples Business Advantage Program: CHA member companies can purchase office supplies at prices offered to “the big guys.” Members can place their orders online at www.stapleslink.com, by phone, or at any Staples store outlet. All CHA members based in the 48 contiguous states, including Alaska, have been automatically enrolled in this program. (Note: this program is not available to members in Hawaii or in other countries.)

Member Networking Site
CHA members can stay connected year-round by communicating through various forums by logging into www.chamembernetworking.org/cms:

Business Building: Post your question, need or comment related to establishing or operating a craft related business. These may include merchandising, marketing, legal, financing, staffing or any other issues.

Member Press Releases: Learn about new products or upload your own press release announcements.

Networking: Post your message for feedback on topics like selling or buying a business, staffing needs, inventory liquidation, locating a domestic or international distributor, finding new clients and/or basic career related inquiries (no resumes, please).

Trade Show: Post your question, need or comment related to the CHA Convention & Trade Show events and/or other craft/hobby industry shows. This includes ticket exchanges, networking opportunities, education seminars and workshops. Audio recordings of the member teleconference calls with CEO Steve Berger regarding the Summer Show move to Orlando, Fla. in 2009 are now available.

CHA-CHING. Your CHA Membership Has Big Value!

Lauri Pietruszka, Exhibit Sales Manager

As Exhibit Sales Manager, Lauri Pietruszka plays an integral role in CHA’s Meetings and Expositions Department. She oversees and manages all trade show exhibit sales including show floor layout, booth space allocations and exhibitor relations, among other responsibilities.

Lauri joined CHA in July 2007 as Business Development Coordinator. She was promoted in May due to her efforts securing new business, exhibitors and sponsorships, coordinating special show floor sections, and assisting with CHA trade show marketing and operations.

Previously, Lauri has worked as a consultant for non-profit organizations and law firms and has held positions with leading financial, advertising and marketing agencies. “Since I’ve been at CHA, I’ve discovered that a trade association uses absolutely every skill that I have ever learned in business, marketing, advertising, event management, and sales,” Lauri said, “There really is never a dull moment!”

Lauri holds a bachelor’s of science degree in business administration from the University of Rhode Island. She is an avid sports fan, enjoys traveling, and resides in West Paterson, N.J. with her husband John.
I spent my free time this weekend sewing myself a bag out of fabric from a new collection by fabric designer Anna Maria Horner. I don’t need another bag. With three young children and a busy job as the VP and publisher of Wiley’s craft books, I don’t have a plethora of “free time,” and it can be argued that a trip to the mall is more efficient than temporarily turning my dining room into a design studio. But I was sewing a bag because I’d spotted the pattern months ago in a book on our fall list, Seams to Me by Anna Maria, and I could no longer hold myself back from making, fondling and owning that bag. So at 10:30 Saturday night, the first moment this weekend I had time to breathe, I started lovingly cutting and stitching my bag.

For the record, it’s gorgeous.

In fact, I think that before Seams to Me even hits bookstores, every pattern in the book will have been made at least once by someone on our staff. When we published Day of the Dead Crafts this summer, we all began designing calaveros for Dia de los Muertos. We laughed and compared notes about the latest roller-derby worthy creations on our needles as we were reviewing galleys for Knock-Down Knits, a collection of knitwear and accessories (knit arm sling anyone?) items inspired by roller derby.

Wiley has been publishing craft books under the successful For Dummies and Teach Yourself Visually brands for several years. More recently, we began building a single-title crafts program. True, from a business perspective, we analyzed our competition, our own publishing program, and where we believed there was a need, and we built a publishing strategy. But the core of the program was the passion of the editorial and marketing staff, book publishers by day and rabid crafters by night who personally knew the industry well and knew what they were looking for in craft publications.

Unlike other types of businesses, I think it’s impossible to be truly successful in the crafts market without getting your hands dirty. It’s not enough to understand the market academically; you have to have both a tacit (and tactile!) understanding of what makes a crafter tick. The individuals creating or executing your business plan have to know from experience what it feels like to needle-felt wool, appliqué a design by hand, or execute an interesting beadwork pattern.
You have to know what your customers are looking for, and the only way to do that is to be part of that audience.

I joined the craft world when my Grandma ran out of ways to entertain a squirrely six-year-old she was babysitting. So she pulled out her knitting bag and a skein of sayelle yarn; a lifelong knitter was born. I can’t count the number of yarn shops I’ve frequented since my six-year-old self learned to knit. I make purchases at most of them, and I appreciate the store workers who can tell me which fibers will pill more quickly, which needles can be taken on airplanes, which patterns have construction that can stand up to a kindergartener at play. But when an excited shop worker grabs me by the hand and excitedly tells me what’s on her needles, why she loves it and her favorite substitute yarn, I end up going home with armloads of loot. Those passion-inspired purchases are some of my best finds.

Crafting is a business: a big business. Those of us creating business plans have to pay attention to variable gross profit and cost of goods. But beyond the spreadsheets, we have to know how to marry good business decisions with what will sell and what will speak to crafters. In my experience, there’s no way to do that without being as passionate about this business and what you’re producing as your customers will be.

As for me, at this moment I have only about eight hours left before the kids are in bed, the evening dishes are put away, and I get to spend some quality time making myself a Golden Tickets vest.
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