



## From the Editor

### Time to Party!

The Fall is a wonderful time of year. In most parts of the country the weather is mild, and Fall holidays like Halloween and Thanksgiving are great for sharing good times with family and friends.

Also, football season produces “football widows,” the wives and girlfriends of men who enjoy watching the games on Sunday with their buddies, and that provides another reason for parties -- just for the girls!

Those are all opportunities to have “home parties” for your jewelry. A home party is a jewelry selling event hosted in a private home where the guests have fun, enjoy food and drinks, and buy jewelry!

Modeled after the famous “Tupperware” parties, the host invites her own friends over, warming up the event, preparing people to buy, and giving you a terrific and fun environment in which to sell your jewelry.

In this issue, we’ll focus on tips and techniques for making your home jewelry party a success. We’ve culled these ideas from many sources, including readers who responded to our request for success tips ... so read, enjoy, and get ready to sell!

Go make something great!



David Weiman  
Editor and Publisher



## 5 Quick Tips

1. **Don't leave home without it.** A friend of mine, wearing her own jewelry out, was asked for her card by a prospect. Guess what? She didn't have any! Make sure you ALWAYS have cards with you to hand to prospective customers. Leave some near where you keep your keys to remind you.
2. **Stand when selling.** At a recent jewelry show, I saw someone sitting at her booth and reading. Ouch. When at your booth, always stand so you can greet people and talk eye to eye. It will be easier to talk and to show them your jewelry that way. You will never see a salesperson in a jewelry store sitting down.
3. **Offer your jewelry for fundraisers.** If you belong to an organization that does regular fundraising, offer your jewelry as a "door prize" or other incentive. This is a way of getting your jewelry known in your local community, and you get the chance to help a good cause at the same time!
4. **Make color a choice.** Don't lose a sale just because a piece doesn't have the color gems or beads a prospect prefers. Offer to make a custom piece with the colors the prospect wants for an additional charge. This type of semi-custom work will reveal the preferences of an individual buyer and you can offer to continue to do custom work for them in the future!
5. **Avoid "rotating" images on your home page.** If you have a slide-show of pictures of your work on your website's home page, consider removing it. You run the risk that your site visitors will pause and stare at the rotating images, instead of doing what they're supposed to do: Shop for jewelry!

To share a selling tip, send an e-mail to [david@marketingjewelry.com](mailto:david@marketingjewelry.com)

 Q & A

*Q: I recently did a home party with a friend of mine who makes and sells scarves. We thought it would fun to sell together, but during the party it occurred to me that some people were buying her scarves instead of my jewelry! What do you think about doing a home party with another type of accessory maker?*

A: You discovered one of the problems with doing home parties with a partner: If someone buys your partner's accessories first, the customer may feel guilty about spending any more.

Many people (although not all) may go to a home party with at least some idea of how much they may be willing to spend. If that gets used buying something from your partner, it may be an obstacle to them buying from you.

One way around this would be to offer some "sets" that have your jewelry and her scarf priced together, or even an ensemble of your jewelry (earrings and a necklace, for example) with a scarf that complements the set at an additional price for the entire set. That will reframe the purchase.

Another possibility is to do the home party by yourself, but bring some of her scarves with you and use them as part of your display, selling them only with a matching jewelry purchase, but offering your friend's card if someone wants to buy just a scarf.

Finally, you can avoid any "cannibalization" of your sales by doing home parties by yourself. If you want to help your friend out, you can insert her card into the bag that you give to your customers.

Send your questions to [questions@marketingjewelry.com](mailto:questions@marketingjewelry.com). Please indicate if we can use your name if we publish your question.

# Feature

## Home Parties

By Lauren Davis



Trying to find a way to make your work more fun? Home jewelry parties are events in which jewelry makers make connections by engaging a host to invite guests to a party where jewelry will be one of the featured “guests”!

Jewelry artisans usually rely on friends or other contacts to host the party, and the artisan benefits from the warm environment and party atmosphere as guests meet the artist, learn about their work and – most importantly – buy from their collections.

While there is no exact science to running a home party, many follow a similar format: guests are invited to a host’s home, jewelry is displayed for sale, and the host is thanked with some type of incentive.

Home parties are excellent for jewelry artisans. Why? Because they promote the kinds of personal contacts with prospects that connect buyers and sellers together.

The home atmosphere of the event is very warm and invites potential clients to feel comfortable getting to know the featured artisan. A hostess will usually supply some form of refreshment or catering, while guests are able to interact with the seller and each other.

At their leisure, the invited may shop around while having the opportunity to have involved conversations with the artisan about specific pieces or entire collections.

## Finding Hosts

Start with people you know. They are the ones most likely to know your jewelry and want to help by hosting the party. You can provide them information about what a home party is all about by writing a brief information sheet. The information sheet can also be available to hand out when you sell at events, and you can convert it into a web page, as well.

Do not include specific terms (such as hostess incentives) because they may change over time or be negotiated differently with each host.

Also, bring your home party information sheet to each home party you do. Why? Because guests who are there are an excellent source of future hosts! You can even provide the host with an incentive to encourage guests to host their own party. For example, Kim Julen of Ideal Designs offers the original host a \$10 jewelry credit for each party booked through the event.

If you're new to an area, or if you aren't comfortable asking friends or other acquaintances to host a party, contact party planners in your area (they'll be listed in the phone book) and talk with them about including jewelry as an option for their clients.

What about hosting them yourself at your own home? That's what Nancy Van Tessel of Draped in Jewelry has been doing. "I hostess an open house in my own home in the spring and again in the fall," she explains. "Last year I did a test with a holiday open house. I made the same general amount of money as my previous fall open houses (approximately \$2300), but the type of sales were different. I sold more of my lower end items, because people were buying gifts."

Does this mean people spend more on themselves than they do on others? Host your own party and find out!

## Host Incentives

Host incentives are the direct payments or discounts that you offer the host in return for their hosting duties. (Other expenses for hosting the party, such as invitations, postage, food and drinks are all negotiable.)

Some artisans will give the host a percentage of sales, a flat fee, a discount off of a future purchase, or some combination of any of the above!

Kim says that she offers \$10 in free jewelry for hosting, 10% of sales (excluding the tax) in free jewelry, \$10 in free jewelry for each party booked from theirs (redeemable at or after that party) and \$10 in free jewelry for having 20 or more guests. The incentives can add up fast, as a recent host earned \$154 in credit!

Megan Casto, of Casto Creations also offers 10% of all sales (excluding tax) as credit toward a jewelry purchase. Additionally, she offers a free pair of \$20 (or less) earrings, and the host earns another pair of earrings for every guest who signs up to be a host. "The host also gets 50% off one item of her choice with no price limit," Megan says, "which isn't part of her credit allowance.

While the type of incentive may vary, it is important to keep in mind that the host-jewelry maker relationship is a business one, so it should be treated that way. Not only is this proper etiquette, but it also develops a good business relationship with your hosts. As Nancy points out, keeping your incentive plan on the "generous" side can win you "repeat hostesses." This can be especially helpful if you have a particularly successful show in a certain location that you would like to make a more regular occurrence.

## Invitations



If you design and print the invitations and provide them to the host, this ensures that the correct marketing message will go out to the guests.

That's exactly what Megan does. "I start by asking the hostess to make a list of people to invite," she says. "I will create the invitations and print out as many as she needs, but she mails them and provides postage."

Another option is to use an online party planning site, like [www.evite.com](http://www.evite.com), to create and send invitations. The tracking system in Evite gives you an excellent idea of how many guests to expect, and it forms a valuable source of new leads for future parties.

## Number of Guests

There's some math you'll need to do to estimate, in advance, whether or not the home party (or home "show," as Nancy prefers to call them) is going to result in a profit for you. The only equation you need to remember is  $\text{revenue} - \text{expenses} = \text{profits}$ .

The guests at the party - assuming they are good prospects for your jewelry - the better. But like anything else in business, there is some risk involved. So try to figure in advance how much you might potentially make. After you get a few home parties under your belt, you'll be in a better position to know what to expect in the future.

## Price Ranges



Deciding how to price for home parties is no different than pricing for any group of prospects: There has to be a "fit" between what they're expecting to pay and what you need to earn a profit.

It will help to discuss with the host the kinds of people she intends to invite to the party. Learn as much as you can about their choices in clothing and accessories. If they love jewelry and desire one-of-a-kind pieces that are artisan made, then you're in good shape! If they're mainly bargain shoppers who buy their jewelry at flea markets and Wal-Mart, you might want to pass.

Nancy advises bringing items in all price ranges. This way you are able to cater to guests with different needs, such as a holiday or birthday gift shopper with a few smaller things on her list, or a client who is looking to splurge on a unique quality piece for herself. A range of prices will also allow clients to see what you may be able to offer them potentially if their needs change at a later time.

### **Jewelry Making as Part of the Party**

In addition to selling your jewelry, if you have any teaching skills, some jewelry makers have found great success in teaching guests how to make a simple piece of jewelry, like a pair of earrings or a bracelet.

Not every one has to participate, but it's another way of demonstrating your skill, and in giving them an experience they'll remember and a piece of jewelry they can show and tell to friends! Each time they tell someone about the experience, they'll be thinking (and talking) about you!

### **How to Include Home Parties in Your Overall Selling Mix**

If you're not doing any parties right now, consider setting a goal of doing one soon. Definitely by the end of the first quarter of 2008.

Be careful about how you measure "success," just as you would for any type of direct-sale venue. For example, you may not sell as much as you would have liked, but you might find that guests who attended the

show buy from you weeks or even months after having met you at the show.

Home parties do not need to be the primary means of income for your jewelry business. Some artisans choose to do only a few parties a year to supplement their sales and make new contacts. They can be a great way to continue generating income during times when there aren't many art and jewelry shows in larger venues to book, or during a weekend if jewelry making is more of a hobby enjoyed outside of full-time employment.

Jewelry makers who are just beginning to toy with the idea of selling their jewelry may find home parties a more comfortable venue to begin in than at a full-scale jewelry show. Parties let you learn how prospects respond to their designs in an intimate setting before diving into a sea of competitors.

In our Q&A section above, we advised against partnering with other types of artisans at home parties. However, Kim's experience is that a combination of goods – such as jewelry and purses – can “[yield] a higher turnout of people than just jewelry alone.” She also says that it's more fun to have a party with a friend!

However you decide to do it, home parties can be an excellent way to meet new people, sell in a warm and cordial environment, see the reaction to new designs and sharpen your selling skills.

## Briefs

### Make Your Direct Mail Envelopes Work Harder!



When sending mailings and promotional materials to customers it is important to put your best “face” forward, and that face is the envelope!

Many people underrate and overlook the envelope’s selling power, but the envelope does double duty: It carries your promotional material, and it has to convince them to open it.

A recent article in *Target Marketing* explains that the outer message can be improved not only by standing out from the junk mail and bills people receive in the mail, but also by tying the initial content outside into whatever is inside the envelope.

To do so, you may consider what your customers love about your business and feature that on your packaging. It may be a picture of a new design, your photo, your slogan (if you have one) or some other element that they connect with you.

In terms of copy, use teasers that relate to what’s inside ... for example, “Our new Fall jewelry just arrived ... (along with a bonus inside for you!) ...”

Also, use both sides of the packaging to catch eyes; making sure that no matter which side is seen first, it gains meaningful exposure.

Finally, remember that modern consumers are bombarded with advertising on a daily basis, and are not looking for another advertisement. Make your package look welcoming and personal to eliminate some of that feeling.

## Consider a “Key Man” (or Woman!) Insurance Policy



If you run your jewelry making business with a partner, ask your insurance agent about “key man” insurance.

Key man insurance policies are life insurance policies bought for an individual who makes a substantial impact on a business. These are especially important for small businesses to consider because it provides a way to continue the company in the event of the death of an important partner.

Husband and wife jewelry selling teams, which are common in our field, are perfect candidates for key man insurance policies because each partner often contributes a significant amount to keeping the business running, whether it be fiscally or creatively.

The emotional loss of a spouse is devastating ... key man insurance can help ensure that what two people worked so hard on together can continue into the future.

## Get an Intern



One of the most cost-effective ways you can dramatically impact your business is to get an unpaid intern from a local college or university. Many small businesses are unaware of the benefits of interns, or they think that their jewelry business isn’t big or important enough to have an intern. Think again!

A small jewelry business is an excellent opportunity for a business intern, as well as a great way for you to get extra help.

A business student intern can help you set and prioritize goals or help you write a business plan. Also, an intern may help you apply business theory that they have learned and still have fresh in their minds.

Contact local colleges, junior colleges and universities that have a business program with a request for a business student looking for more real world experience in business planning and marketing.

## Maximize Your Focus



When working from home, distraction may creep in slowly without you even noticing them! You respond to some personal e-mails, get up for a snack, or gab with friends instead of finishing projects.

According to Mindtools.com, there are many internal and environmental factors that contribute to how focused you can become with a project. And once you know what they are, you can use them to your advantage to make sure the time you spend on jewelry making and selling is efficient and effective.

Internally, you must believe that you are able to accomplish the task at hand based on your skill level and capacities. Remember that you can accomplish whatever you wish. If you're lacking a skill, take a class or learn online how to gain that skill. Also, it's best to stay relaxed and alert in order to achieve focus. This will allow you to free your mind of other stimuli. Finally, staying positive will keep non-productive thoughts from creeping in!

Externally, your environment has to promote productivity. Be aware of your comfort level, and also eliminate as much distraction as possible. Check your e-mail at set time points, not every time you hear a message. Make "To Do" lists and stick to them.

## S T A F F



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