

# Going the Extra Mile by Janet Perry

*Providing extra personal touches for your customers*

Almost any book you read about small business will tell you that marketing yourself is the name of the game. But if you are like most people, the things which occur to you either cost big bucks or don't work.

The key to successful marketing is what is called "touching the customer." Every time you get a chance to provide the customer something extra, contact them in a way which looks individual, or speak directly to their needs, they feel better and will spend more money. And spend it with you.

There are plenty of little things you can do at little or no cost which will give you a boost in marketing. Whether your shop is new or established, big or little, you can put some of these ideas in place as soon as you put down the issue of this magazine.

Do you give classes at your shop? Or do people come to visit from outside the immediate area? If you are like most needlework shops, the answer to these questions is yes. So why not put together a one-page sheet showing your favorite restaurants (and perhaps those of your employees)? Every time you get a registration for a class from out-of-town, pop this into the mail with a confirmation. Those customers will appreciate the information.

Keep some extras of this sheet under the cash register. Hand them out whenever a customer says "Where's a good place to eat lunch around here?"

And send those confirmations for every registration. Use this as a chance to remind them about pre-stitching (if needed), information about the class and what materials to bring. I can remember signing up for a class, tossing the info about the class and showing up with NOTHING I needed - what a mess!

If you offer two day classes, do the same thing for places to stay. Since the cost of classes and materials is often high, look for good, safe, places which don't cost too much.



Develop an electronic mailing list. If customers sign up for it, send them something once a month. It doesn't have to be anything even as formal as a newsletter. Perhaps a few days early notice of a sale or a note about the new class schedule.

Maybe you are getting a chart or canvas you just love, or you've seen a clever finishing idea -- send it along. Share a good tip from a customer, celebrate people's entries and prizes at the county fair. Remind people to enter the fair. Maybe even tell them where to get entry forms.

Create an electronic mailing list of your customers. Send directly to them, use your shop name as the "from" name. They won't see it as junk, but you will touch them even if what's in the mail isn't immediately relevant. They will see your mail, read it and think of you. If they don't hear from you that sale might go to another shop.

Have a place at your shop for stitchers to sit and stitch and make them welcome to do so. This doesn't have to be anything very fancy. Experienced and friendly customers will help you sell more just by being there. Many

shops even stay open one evening a week for stitching. This is a wonderful idea, but welcome people to stitch in your store anytime. Keep a small canvas or cross stitch piece started and available. When someone comes in who doesn't know how to stitch, you can show them and maybe even have them try it. Sometimes taking that first step is the biggest problem.

If you sell stands, keep one on hand (maybe with a piece mounted on it) for people to try. I bought three stands and tried lots of others before I found the one I love. Trying before you buy will sell these investment items. If you can afford it, use a stand you sell for your classes. I bought one stand because I used it at class, another because I tried it at a show.

Ditto with that new thread. Have some for people to try, even if it's just at the shop.

Make a list of the threads you carry (maybe even with the prices). I would love to have these on file for all my regular shops. Put them in your thread room or by the cash register. If they know you have it, and they aren't sure about another shop, they will buy from you.

Do you want fries with that? Every time you buy fast food and don't order fries, you get asked. It's a tried and true method of adding to the sale. You can do it too. Do they want to buy some or all of the thread. Do they need stretcher bars? If they buy stretcher bars, offer to mount the canvas for them. If they buy a canvas, give them a couple of needles and a needle threader with your shop's name on it.

Ask your customers to hang some pieces in the shop for a few days. Bring people into the shop for a white elephant sale (of their white elephants) donate the proceeds to charity. They'll buy additional items from you.

Do you do mail order or ship orders from your website? Make the package a little gift. Wrap the canvas in tissue paper and tie with some thread or ribbon. Do the same with the threads.

Include a plastic "project bag" and a copy of your class list or newsletter. It takes a bit more time to send them this way, but when the customer gets a package like this -- it's like an unbirthday present. Tissue paper is inexpensive and festive. You can use odds and ends of yarn or ribbon. You might even be using plastic bags for the customers who come into the store. But you want that mail order customer to remember you and buy from you.

Send a letter to your local needlework guilds offering help on having field trips to the shop. These are becoming more popular and the stitchers love them because they have a fun day out, see a new shop and spend money. Lots of my friends save money to go on these trips.

Offer help for them in the form of that restaurant list, setting up a lunch reservation if needed. If you serve food or coffee have a special treat ready and waiting. Assemble gift bags with free charts, needles, the newsletter and/or class list and whatever other goodies you can find. A day which sets out to be special becomes even more so when you make it an event. Some shops I know even will schedule these on days they are normally closed so the shop is open just for the field trip.

While many needlework products don't need to be demonstrated, there is no doubt that seeing a product used or seeing a model will sell the item. So add a few demos to your schedule. Have your staff teach them or have a customer who has loved this product, designer, technique or thread, show it off. Use your email list, newsletter or a listing in the shop to let people know about it. Make them a specific time each month. People will come to learn and to see how to use what they've bought. Ask the customer who raves about this product to share their enthusiasm. Maybe even a new teaching career will be born!

**Janet Perry is an independent needlework designer, teacher and marketing consultant to needlework and crafts shops. Formerly she was the popular needlepoint guide at About.com. You can email her at [janetp@napanet.net](mailto:janetp@napanet.net)**



## Cross Stitched Notecards

Cross Stitch Notecards with images of Fanta Cat's stitched Illusions Designs and two variations of Lord Melton the Stitching Dragon are currently available. The 4¼" x 5½" folded notecards come with matching envelopes. Mix and match, bundle them as sets, or sell them individually. Tuck them in goodie bags for stitching parties or retreats! Retail \$1.25 each. Contact Fantasy Crafts Distributing, PO Box 565, Grafton WI 53024. Phone 262-375-8792 or visit [www.fantasycrafts.com](http://www.fantasycrafts.com)



## Federal Collection

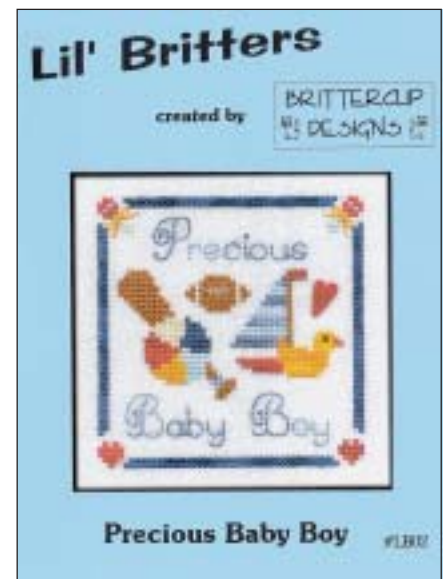
The Federal Collection of frames from East Side Mouldings are available in six new colors. Spring Bird, a new wee one design from Heart in Hand, is framed with a 1-3/8" wide Federal Collection moulding. The color is Olde Flag, a federal blue cracked over antique red. Contact East Side Mouldings, 569 Furnace Hills Pike, Lititz, PA 17543. Phone

800-840-6077 or visit [www.eastside-mouldings.com](http://www.eastside-mouldings.com)



## Ducky and Bunny Kits

Ready for spring? These colorful Easter kits are great for tree ornaments, gift tags or plant pokes! The kits come complete with 14ct perforated plastic, floss, buttons, needles, and instructions. Size 3½" x 2½". Retail \$6.00. Contact Charlette's Collectibles, 1824 Octubre, El Paso, TX 79935. Phone 915-592-3661 or visit [www.charlottescollectibles.com](http://www.charlottescollectibles.com)



## Precious Baby Boy

This new Lil' Britters leaflet (4¼" x 5½") contains a design to stitch for a new baby boy. Filled with all the fun things boys play with as they grow: a rubber ducky, sailboat, balls and a bat. The model is stitched over two on 28ct Antique White Linen and embellished with a red velvet heart from Just Another Button Company. Precious Baby Girl leaflet by Britter Clip Designs also available. Retail \$2.50. Contact Norden Crafts, 502 Morse Ave., Unit K, Schaumburg, IL 60193. Phone 800-323-1252.