

Today, whenever someone who is involved in a labor-intensive craft complains about their inability to make a profit from the sale of their work, I often ask them if they are creating what they want to make, or what people want to buy. There's a big difference between the two, and this is a marketing topic discussed at length in most of my books.

If this is your problem, perhaps you would be better off, financially speaking, if you were to explore some of the other ways creative people can make money from craft and needlework skills and know-how. For example, what do you know that someone else doesn't know? Can you teach it, lecture about it, demonstrate it at shows, or put it in writing? If so, you have a marketable product indeed.

Can you offer a special service that's hard to find? Then tell people about it. Have you ever created an original project and thought others might like to try it, too? Maybe you can sell the idea as a how-to article or even put it into a kit you can manufacture yourself.

Can you design original patterns and charts for needleworkers? Try selling them to shops or magazines, or publish a book of your own designs to sell by mail, at fairs, or on your own Web site. Or consider selling your patterns and designs as electronic downloads that buyers can easily print themselves.

Certainly there are better ways to make money from needlework skills and know-how than selling hundreds of hours of your labor at giveaway prices. Projects that take this kind of time should only be made for yourself or a loved one with no thought about the time invested in it. Here, your profit will always be the "love of doing" plus the joy you will experience if you decide to give your precious creation to someone you love. More than likely, they will treasure your gift for years to come.



In fact, the last time I visited the friend who had purchased my Taaniko weaving (pictured at left), it brought tears to my eyes to see that she still had it prominently displayed as a work of art in her home. Always remember this: Whether you sell your stitchery and other creations for a good financial profit, or simply give them away, they have special value to the person who owns them.

Many crafters have told me how hard it is to part with a really special piece of work. "It's like I'm giving away a tiny piece of myself in the process," they say. But what's wrong with that? As the years pass, little pieces of yourself will be living on in countless homes and may even end up outliving you! When you consider how many of yesterday's handcrafts are now on display in antique shops

and museums, it doesn't take a great leap of faith to imagine that this could also happen to some of your special creations. Think about that the next time you put countless hours of work into a piece of "unprofitable" stitchery or craftwork.

Reader comments to this article when first published:

"Great article, Barbara. Every time I watch Antiques Roadshow and see a wonderful creation of old, I think 'I want to make something as lovely that stands the test of time and is worth something in memory and as a collectible.' This to me is true art, and worthy use of time. I think love is a very key factor." - Sue D

<><><><><>

"I found your article most informative. I have been crafting for years (knitting, embroidery, rug hooking, etc.) and never knew how much to charge for things I've made. As you said in your article, it seemed that either no one would buy my products or I didn't make any money. I never thought about selling the product 'indirectly' by selling through other media. You've given me something to think about. Thanks very much." - Louise Saulnier

<><><><><>

"I have almost every one of your books and was considering selling them, but just can't seem to let them go. I have you to thank for my 'success' as a crochet pattern designer. Although I have yet to make my 'millions,' I have a steady income each month from the sale of my patterns on Etsy. I am now considering making up kits and selling the patterns to yarn shops, and recently opened your books to refresh myself on what you had said about those methods.

"I stopped selling the custom items about two years ago because of wrist problems. Even with my limited marketing efforts, I still do well and people seem to love my patterns, so I know if I put a bit more effort into it, I could do better. I'm even planning on writing a book, since crochet is so popular right now – hopefully I won't miss the wave. Thank you so much for your continued advice – through your books and now on the internet." – Akrista

<><><><><>



Visit [Barbara Brabec's World](#) for a wealth of articles and resources on many topics related to home-business startup, management and marketing. Check the Table of Contents for each of Barbara's [home-business books](#) to see which ones might be most helpful to you. All of them include advice from Barbara as well as from many successful business owners and industry pros in her network.

Excerpts from Barbara's crafts books will also be found on [The Author's Den](#) website in the [Crafts/Hobbies department](#).