



Success Tactics

Business Plan? Marketing Plan?

Part 2

For the laser engraver, there are a dozen different laser manufacturers out there, so it would be impossible to discuss all the quirks and settings for each substrate and machine you are going to run. The truth is you could have two of the exact same machines in your shop, with the same wattage, and the optimal settings are slightly different for each. Could be the age or use of the tube is different for each laser, or it could be the machine on the left had a dirty mirror! Because of this, the laser is not the important factor on whether a laser engraver becomes successful.

A laser is a very simple machine to operate, and almost as easy as your inkjet printer. The difficult part is learning the software program on your computer and how to send the finished “document” to your printer. With a laser, the program predominately used is called CorelDraw and there are seminars and tutorials that teach you the basics of CorelDraw. So I don’t want to spend time on something that is already available by experts in that field. Even if you are an expert running your software, this may not make you a success.

So I want to cover what the laser is capable of doing, such as raster (engrave), vector (cut), and also what you can do (create) with this machine. This is what can determine your success.

In the seminars, I would like to brainstorm many ideas for products that may appeal to Anywhere, USA and also worldwide. We will also discuss product ideas that have emotional and impulsive selling power; either by design or by the wording you place on them. Some examples include pets, military, professions, loved ones, tourist locations, etc. At the same time, we will try to show how diverse a product line you can make with a laser.

I want to spend time on products that can be sold annually (needed each year) and products that are geared towards once in a lifetime. An example of “once in a lifetime” would include a wedding, newborn baby, funeral, graduation, promotion, etc. Class participation will be used to extend those ideas during the seminar.

I want to cover what I think a successful business plan is, whether you have started your laser business or still looking to buy a laser. We can discuss the benefits and expenses of home business and storefront business.

The second biggest question I get (first is which laser should I buy) is “How can I make money with a laser?” Well, if we have established a product line, a business plan, then the last thing we need is sales. You can make the best product in the world, at a reasonable price, but yet still fail because you did not plan on how you were going to get exposure. Exposure = Sales.

I would like to discuss different ways to get exposure. Let's discuss my Give-To-Get methods and ideas (see last month's Newsletter for one example). We will discuss wholesale and retail sales. Using a flow chart during a group discussion can help come up with many sales ideas.

Somewhere, we will think about throwing in some new ideas for substrates to use with your laser. I look forward to what we may accomplish at these seminars!

Let me do a quick recap on the previous Newsletter. My opinion is most of us can convince ourselves (with a Business Plan) that we need to purchase equipment for one reason or another. A business plan should not be a sales pitch that we give ourselves. The most important part of the business plan is determining how we plan to get exposure, which equals sales for the products we make. Even the best products will not sell without exposure!

For this Newsletter I would like to take one idea and see how many products we can come up with. I will also try to include one more “Give-To-Get” exposure idea and wrap up with some thoughts on a list of products that could have national appeal. Maybe we could expand this topic with a Part 3 just to discuss ways to get exposure!

Let's get started by going to the beginning of our business plan. I want to start a laser business. What am I going to make? What do customers want? What will sell? Right now we are not going to consider retail price, costs, or profits. I just want to concentrate on ideas. I want you thinking of what products will, can, and do sell nationwide.

I would have a hard time zeroing in on one item or one product to justify my purchase of a laser. Remember I have A.D.D. (Attention Deficit Designing)! ☺ But let's see how far we can get with just one product idea and how easy this part of the process is. What in your life, your mother's, your spouse's, your kid's life has brought them joy or made them proud (caused emotion)? A pet, a child being born, a child graduating, someone getting married, school sports, Grandma, Grandpa, someone joining the Military, getting out of the Military, buying a house, the college we attended, promotion, retirement, etc. I could go on and on! Each of these product ideas can create emotion for anyone, anywhere. Could we take one topic and create a product? Can it become a massive product line? How many other product ideas could be expanded this same way?

Let's take “PETS” as our first idea. The pet industry is a multi-billion dollar a year industry. Actually, pets are a very large international product as well, and animals are owned at every level of the financial spectrum. DOGS, CATS, HORSES, BIRDS, REPTILES, ETC. Each one could produce a very large product line.

First one on my list is a dog. How many breeds? More than 100? Yes! What different substrates can you use to make products for dogs? How many different products can we think of? What do people with dogs need or buy?

WOW! A product line that can contain over 100 different breeds, made from different substrates at different price points! Where do we start? Not to sound morbid, but think from birth to grave for the product needs. Also, make a list using the same criteria for places to sell the products (we will come back to this later).

At birth, the dog owner is going to need a dog tag, a collar, and a leash. Your laser beautifully engraves leather, metal anodized tags, plastic, custom dog bowls, nameplates, and custom-made dog chew toys (I haven't seen these yet, but I know a creative entrepreneur could design something.). As the dog grows, owners take pictures and may like a custom wood picture frame or even a novelty license plate. I've even seen impressive cork-engraved table coasters. Would a dog lover buy them with their dog breed engraved on it?

Here is the morbid part (the unfortunate truth). The dog will die and in today's world it is very common to have a pet cremated. Therefore, a dog urn, grave marker, and those types of products will be needed. Your laser will engrave marble, granite, wood, ceramic, and many other substrates. I am trying to name customized products you can add the dogs name to. I know these are onsey/twoisy type products but my point is there are ways to mass market (get exposure) for onesy/twoisy custom products that can be very lucrative. Yes, mass market!

Remember in last month's Newsletter when I spoke about "Give-To-Get" and using your budget to set up other retail locations to increase sales? Well, here is another way of Give-To-Get sales. When you go into a print or mailing center you'll see a display showing a complete sign shop including banners, car magnets, lawn signs, etc. When you see a shop that displays all kinds of custom rubber stamps you can order, do you think those places make those products? No! Those are displays from a manufacturer just like you.

This is my point. How many dog items could you put together for a custom display? What I mean by this is you could have a display with a personalized collar, leash, dog bowl, marble or granite picture of a dog, nameplate, coaster, and maybe even an urn or grave marker for some retail locations to display for sale. Of course these products would have to have a mark up that would allow the retail location to make money. But every dog location from birth to grave could be a possible retail location. Kennels, veterinarians, pet hospital, groomers, breeders, pet stores, crematories, and in our area they even have pet boutiques, clothing stores for pets, and wash basin rental locations to give your dog a bath. Some stores are not just for pets but carry a large line of pet products. Each of these locations may accept a well put-together custom display of dog products that can be ordered and personalized. A display that cost the store **no money, no inventory**, but makes them money if someone orders, this should be of interest to

them. This package should be complete with easy to order forms made up for the retail store to fax the order with the correct (dog name) spelling to you. I think if you put together a nice clean package of personalized products, you may get many locations, locally, in your state, and within the surrounding states. Once in those locations what is your next step? How about cat products, horse products, and maybe these locations might carry a line of cash and carry products from you!



Besides the onesy/twoisy type custom-engraved products, you can also think of mass-producing a generic product line that has the image of the different dog breeds on ornaments, plaques and picture frames that could be sold wholesale to some of these same shops. I've included a picture of someone's rotating ornament stand that could be used for many other products, as well. Are there dog shows in your area or breeders who might need some products? This one idea gave us how many possibilities for a laser engraver to become successful?

It is time to get assertive and go after those dreams. You know the most rewarding part about making an emotional product is the smile and joy you will bring someone. Go make someone smile and have some fun!

Tom "BUZZ" Bernard
LaserBuzz