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Perfect product presentation

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NEW FOR THE AUTUMN
These are our new designs for this autumn - some blackwork, some cross-stitch, in a variety of styles.

Contact us at:
Unit 6, Southview Buildings,
Burton Road, Heckington, Lincs., NG34 9QS
Tel/Fax: 01529 461056
Email: sales@classicemb.co.uk
Hot Property

The UK property market may be struggling, but when it comes to licensed products, these properties couldn’t be more in demand. Last year, figures suggested the general licensing market was worth in excess of £2.4 billion, with plenty of room for growth, so it’s unsurprising that so many manufacturers are investing in the best brands about.

Coats Crafts, Trimcraft, Design Objectives and Bothy Threads are just four of the many craft suppliers able to deliver licensed craft kits featuring children’s favourites including Disney Princess, Miffy and Forever Friends. Indeed, by providing craft kits with recognisable names attached, young, first-time crafters will be encouraged to pick up a new skill, whether it be stitching or paper crafting. Find out more on page 17.

Given that this is an October/November issue, we thought we’d track some some fabulous festive products to kick-start the season. Begin planning your window and in-store displays early to capitalise on one of the most lucrative crafting occasions of the year, and your tills will be ringing!

Also in this issue we spotlight some delightful decoupage, solve your retail technology problems and discover how to perfect the art of product presentation.

Finally we have a terrific competition for one retailer to win a fabulous bead selection pack, worth £500, from Creative Beadcraft.

Good luck and enjoy reading

Demelza Rayner
Group Editor
industry news

Keep up-to-date with the industry’s movers and shakers by reading our regular round-up...

Michael Powell Art reveals new design
Designer of the Year Michael Powell has revealed the latest addition to his award-winning range of cross stitch kits, the charming English Village 2.

The design features a quaint and traditional scene and is a partner to the pretty best seller, English Village 1. There are 49 fantastic colours with 12 blend shades in the comprehensive kit, which uses full stitches and backstitch as well as a few french knots. The design is supplied as standard on 14 count Aida in antique white, whilst full instructions, a colour illustration, pre-sorted thread cards, anchor stranded cotton, and a clear symbols chart is also included. The creative company is hoping that this wonderful new product, which has an RRP of £34.95, will replicate the success of the previous English Village design.

For further information visit www.michaelpowellart.co.uk where retailers can register to order online.

Innocent, Age Concern and Sainsbury’s launch The Big Knit 2008
Smoothie brand innocent have joined forces with supermarket chain Sainsbury’s and charity Age Concern as part of The Big Knit 2008 to help more older people keep warm during the winter months.

The partners are hoping to have 400,000 little wooly hats knitted to sit on the top of innocent smoothie bottles in Sainsbury’s stores from 3rd November 2008. For every hat-wearing smoothie sold, innocent and Sainsbury’s will each give 25p to Age Concern, which amounts to £200,000 for the charity.

Since The Big Knit was started in 2003, innocent have knitted more than 800,000 hats and raised in excess of £375,000 for Age Concern, with funds going towards providing hot meals, fuel grants and social activities for those living in isolated areas. Famous faces including Russell Brand, Joanna Lumley, Chris Tarrant and Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie have all designed wooly hats for this year’s event.

Post creations to Fruit Towers, 1 The Goldhawk Estate, Brackenbury Road, London, W6 0BA. For further details, knitting instructions and patterns, visit www.innocentdrinks.co.uk.

Lantern Moon bag new business
Lantern Moon continues its expansion into the UK with the launch of baskets and bags to the retail trade. Currently better known for its range of luxury knitting needles, the company was founded upon the simple rice basket. Lantern Moon use over 25 different natural materials in the creation of their ranges, which combine traditional handcrafting skills that have been passed down from generation to generation. Almost all are made into finished products near to where they are grown, thus sustaining local Vietnamese communities.

Lantern Moon is distributed in the UK by Moral Fibre Ltd. Telephone +44 (0)1422 381 359 or send an email to sales@moralfibre.eu to find out more.

Jones & Co gain exclusive distributorship of US scrapbooking range
Jones & Co (Nottingham) Limited has become the exclusive UK distributor of an exciting new range from the USA.

SugarTree have a superb collection of unique scrapbooking papers and Jones & Co has initially decided to stock approximately 50 of the innovative company’s stunning designs, which feature vivid depictions of sharks and elephants as well as artistic papers for traditional occasions such as birthdays and Christmas.

Managing Director, John Ashley discovered SugarTree at the CHA Summer Show in Chicago earlier this year, and a catalogue of the full range along with the exciting new stock is now being sent out to eager customers.

For further details of the range telephone Jones & Co on +44 (0)115 978 1263.
CHA announces details of Winter 2009 Show

The Craft & Hobby Association has announced details of its 68th annual Winter Convention & Trade Show, which will take place at the Anaheim Convention Centre in Anaheim, California from Sunday 25th to Wednesday 28th January 2009. Educational seminars will begin on Saturday 24th January.

With a theme of It’s Easy Being Green: Discover the Possibilities, the event will help exhibitors focus on providing innovative, environmentally friendly and sustainable craft products for consumers of this emerging market. The ‘Green’ Show theme was designed to help the industry take some first steps at going green and to capture some of the expanding $208 billion dollar green market.

Billed as a global marketplace for the constantly growing arts and crafts industry, the event will feature seven major sections including Scrapbooking & Papercrafts, Fabric/Quilting/Needlecrafts, Art Materials & Framing, General Crafts, License & Design, and International Pavilion as well as a specific section for New Exhibitors.

In addition to the thousands of new products on offer from representatives of an anticipated 40 countries, the exhibition will be supported with networking events, over 100 educational workshops, sessions and classes. Close to 17,000 attendees are expected to visit the event.

To learn more about the upcoming 2009 CHA Winter Convention & Trade Show, including a complete schedule of all programs and events, exhibitor listings, travel discounts and other key show highlights, visit www.chashow.org.

I.T.S launch new website


I.T.S offers an extensive range at competitive prices set up to provide fabric retailers and garment/soft furnishing manufacturers. The company’s focus is on multi-functional fabrics, from anti pill polar fleece and micro fleece to hi-lo funky furs, all of which can be used for numerous end uses. The majority of the fabrics are made exclusively by I.T.S along with a custom design service.

Fabrics are available from stock in cut lengths of 10/15 metre pieces or full 40/50 metre pieces, with a minimum order of one roll. National and international delivery is available, whilst fabric swatches and a brochure can be viewed online.

For further information call +44 (0)1745 562 120.

BoxMart launches Natural Kraft Gift Box range for Christmas 2008

BoxMart, which supplies unbranded and eco-conscious gift packaging for consumer facing businesses, has launched the Natural Kraft Gift Box collection of packaging products which feature a natural, environmentally-conscious appearance as retailers and craft enthusiasts gear up for Christmas 2008.

Since the Natural Kraft Gift Box range was first announced, demand has been high, with customers drawn towards the products’ simplicity and the untreated natural base. The collection’s natural finish also facilitates a high degree of personalisation, another significant appeal to the craft market. BoxMart’s gift box collection offers retailers and craft enthusiasts alike a great breadth of choice when considering their Christmas displays. With both standard closed-lid and clear-lid options available in various sizes and shapes, customers can choose from the classic festive colours of green, red and gold, amongst many others.

For more information visit www.boxmart.co.uk.

Adjustoform Products moves into the craft market

For more than 40 years, Adjustoform Products has produced adjustable dress forms for the sewing market, and is now the largest commercial manufacturer, with exports to all corners of the world. Virtually every year Adjustoform brings a new item to the market, and the Handarbeit & Hobby Fair in Cologne in April this year saw the launch of the first form for use by hobby and craft enthusiasts.

Called ‘Sew Easy’ the new table top form is practical, convenient and quick to assemble, ready for use in numerous craft projects. This new form is perfect when used as a firm base for embellishing jackets and blouses with hand embroidery and appliquéd.

‘Sew Easy’ is also an asset in jewellery-making where materials such as beads and charms threaded on wire can be judged for appearance before the design is finalised. Needless to say, ‘Sew Easy’ is also ideal for the dressmaker who requires a perfect fit for jackets, blouses and waistcoats, and even to ensure perfectly positioned sewing repairs such as replacing a zipper.

Email Chris Darwent at adjustoformsales@btconnect.com for more information.

I.T.S launch new website


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For further information call +44 (0)1745 562 120.
...and you thought felt was only in plain colours!

Kunin craft felt is available not only in 40 great solid colours, but also in a wide range of exciting designs - Embossed, Glitter and lovely seasonal designs in Printed Felts, as well as a new Shaggy Plush to be launched soon.

The Kunin Group always has something new and exciting to tell you, and is the most exciting manufacturer of craft felt in the world.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
FROM THE EXCLUSIVE EUROPEAN DISTRIBUTORS
OF KUNIN FELT CONTACT:
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Expand into the dolls house market with The Craft Pack Company
The dolls house market has grown steadily over the last few years, and has recently been transformed by many younger collectors taking up the hobby. This interesting area of the craft and hobby industry crosses over to the main market, as many general materials can be used for dolls house crafts.

The Craft Pack Company has been supplying the trade with a wonderful collection of miniature dolls house project kits for three years. Passionate about miniatures and enthusiastic about trade customers, the ambitious company have been working hard to present an opportunity to offer an innovative and highly appealing product range. A brand new trade price list is now available, with free samples and product information.

Visit www.thecraftpackcompany.co.uk to find out more.

Brother launch new flagship sewing and embroidery machine
The newly-launched next generation machine from Brother, the Innov-is I, features the four in one concept of sewing, embroidery, quilting and craft. With its advanced technology, quality and performance, this product is aimed at discerning sewing enthusiasts who demand the best.

The Innov-is I boasts a unique Intelligent Eye camera system, allowing the needle area to be magnified onto the crystal clear LCD display for easy viewing. Using fine tuning sensory technology, the camera detects the fabric edge and ensures that it is uniformly stitched at the desired distance. Added to this is a frame embroidery positioning function which recognises and automatically sets the starting position, saving valuable time. This combined with the revolutionary Surround Natural Lighting System, which offers high colour reproduction with no shadow, means that crafters can enjoy a 360º naturally lit working area.

The Innov-is I has an incredible 441 built in embroidery patterns, including 120 exclusive designs and the new faster Control Processing Unit (CPU) ensures that patterns are ready to stitch almost instantly. Plus, with the advanced user interface of two host and one slave USB ports, the creation and transfer of designs is now quicker and easier than ever before.

For further information on Brother and its range, access www.brother.co.uk/sewing.

Paperworld reveal 2009/2010 trends
Paperworld will continue to offer early information on the trends for the coming season ahead of their next show, which takes place from 31st January - 3rd February 2009.

The Paperworld Trend Book gives an initial overview of colours, themes and styles for the approaching season, and at the exhibition the much anticipated Trend Show will present the essential ingredients of the best product ranges for 2009/2010.

“Paperworld has made a name for itself as a trend-setter in the paper, stationery and office supplies sector. The Trend Book is essential reading for anyone who wants to know about the dominant styles for next season, and the Trend Show is a must for their diary,” said Michael Reichhold, Paperworld Director.

Delicate, Geometric, Power and Slow are the names of the themes that the bora.herke style studio has marked out for Paperworld, and these themes will identify the various “worlds” at the Frankfurt Fair and Exhibition Centre in January.

For further information on the Paperworld exhibition visit www.paperworld.messefrankfurt.com.
Payper Box helps customers through the credit crunch
Craft retailers should push aside all talk of doom and gloom according to leading supplier Payper Box Ltd, which is advising the industry to adjust to the tough trading conditions by attracting consumers with better value products.

Rather than lowering prices the advice of the company’s Director, Jon Cowen, is to offer higher quality and more variety in their stock offering so that sheet for sheet retailers can increase their margin. Payper Box has built its reputation on the supply of the highest quality card all sold at the same low price, and with 30 years of experience in the paper industry, the company’s buyers scour the country for unusual and exciting items of card.

The credit crunch has meant that more quality items have become available on the clearance market, and the smart company’s current A4 stocks cover the widest range since Payper Box started trading six years ago. The great quality A4 ranges include plain colours, coloured embossed papers, metallic embossed papers, patterns printed on white, patterns printed on gold, holographic papers, Christmas designs, and pearlescent papers. Payper Box also has two new colour printing facilities and its own embossing machines with over 200 hundred patterns, For those who wish to sell Pick and Mix card, Payper Box have new colour printing facilities and its own embossing machines with over 200 papers, Christmas designs, and pearlescent papers. Payper Box also has two papers, patterns printed on white, patterns printed on gold, holographic A4 ranges include plain colours, coloured embossed papers, metallic embossed papers, patterns printed on white, patterns printed on gold, holographic papers, Christmas designs, and pearlescent papers. Payper Box also has two new colour printing facilities and its own embossing machines with over 200 hundred patterns, For those who wish to sell Pick and Mix card, Payper Box have new colour printing facilities and its own embossing machines with over 200 papers, Christmas designs, and pearlescent papers.

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Most items can be viewed at www.payperbox.co.uk and the company is always happy to add new shops to their ever growing customer list.

Patch Corner Crafts unveils its new logo
Patch Corner Crafts has announced the launch of its new logo, designed with help from their customers and clients.

All existing customers were sent images of four possible logos and asked to vote and leave comments on their favourite design. The overwhelming response was that 75% of customers preferred the logo Patch Corner Crafts are now pleased to use, with positive comments praising the clear and jazzy design.

The company will be using this logo to launch their growing range of die-cut shapes, which are now available to trade customers at impressive wholesale prices. With over 400 different die-cut shapes available, Patch Corner Crafts has something for all areas of card making, scrapbooking, children’s crafts and wedding stationery and favour boxes.

Access the website www.patch-corner-crafts2004.co.uk for further details.

Slater Harrison MD announces retirement
Having worked for Slater Harrison for the past 38 years Mike Braddock, Managing Director, is taking early retirement this month.

Mike says: “I have enjoyed every working minute of my working life at Slater Harrison, starting in the laboratory and progressing through the company to become Managing Director. I would like to thank my colleagues, past and present, for their loyalty and support for helping make Slater Harrison the market leaders in many of our outlets. I am sure that we will go from strength to strength with Carl at the helm and wish him, and all my friends in the business and trade every success for the future.” Mike will remain on the board of directors of the LS Dixon Group.

Carl Smallwood has been promoted to Managing Director: “All at Slater Harrison wish Mike a happy and well earned retirement. It has been Mike’s entrepreneurial leadership over the years that has secured Slater Harrison as market leaders and we intend to build upon this success by continual investment in personnel and production facilities, and by developing innovative products for both new and existing markets.”

For more information on Slater Harrison products call +44 (0)1625 578 900 or visit www.slater-harrison.co.uk

New web services packages introduced by Cybertill
EPOS and e-commerce technology company, Cybertill Limited, has introduced a new specialist web services team to its business, to offer an extensive range of packages to get its clients online or improve their existing operations.

The move was motivated by clients asking Cybertill for more specialist web services skills, which removes the need for them to find their own web designers. With the recent growth in e-retail continuing to defy the general retail downturn, Ian Tomlinson, Managing Director at Cybertill, argues that no retailer can afford to be without an online store. “Web shopping is at an all time high and shows no sign of reducing. Our clients are very internet-savvy and are keen to extend and improve their online offering.”

Four web services packages are offered at differing levels of investment, each of which aim to put an online business on a secure and professional footing. An entry-level templated Bronze package, for example, enables smaller businesses or new starts to easily create their own site, and for retailers opting for packages branded Silver, Gold and Platinum, Cybertill Limited will undertake the site design and construction.

To find out more access www.cybertill.co.uk
Patch Corner Crafts manufacture and supply over 400 different die cut shapes packed in clear grip seal bags so that you can decide the best way to display them in your shop layout to maximize sales.

Our Die Cuts come in a wide range of sizes and themes to cover every crafter's needs from wedding favour boxes to mini garden tools we have something for everyone. We have one of the largest ranges of Die Cuts available from a single manufacturer and aim to fulfill your every need in this area. We aim to do everything possible to maximize your sales offering you the choice of colour, pack size and even mixed bags to suit your customer base and target market.

To view our full product range of die cut shapes you can visit our website:

www.patch-corner-crafts2004.co.uk

Where you can order directly as all orders over £50 receive a discount which brings them down to wholesale prices. Or request a CD containing jpeg images of all shapes available, price list and order form. Minimum order £50 carriage calculated on actual weight of order and will be added to invoice for payment before goods are dispatched. Payment can be by cheque, debit/credit card via paypal or paypal account.

Tel: 07815 712110
www.patch-corner-crafts2004.co.uk
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Madeira UK Ltd

Product: Mini Size Chests.
Contact: Telephone +44 (0) 1765 640 003.
Price: Price available on application.
Specification: These beautiful, handmade wooden chests have two easy glide drawers to protect thread from light and dust. There is a choice of six exclusive Madeira styles, including Gold and Rayon 200 or 1000 m.
Retailer Benefits: Each chest makes a handy tool for the dedicated sewer and embroiderer; making a great gift and add-on sale.
Other Information: Reordering is simple as colour numbers are clearly printed on the bottom of each drawer.

Classic Embroidery

Product: Deco Elegance by Heatheranne Designs.
Contact: Email sales@classicemb.co.uk.
Price: Price available on application.
Specification: The stunning blackwork and cross stitch kits have been drawn from the artwork of Di Kaye, using stunning metallic threads, beads, sequins and, in some cases, pretty Swarovski crystals.
Retailer Benefits: Classic Embroidery is a popular producer of needlecraft kits, with a range containing more than 400 designs.
Other Information: A full catalogue is available from the company on request.

Dempsey Designs Ltd

Product: Boys Card Making Kit.
Price: RRP £10.
Specification: The Boys Card Making Kit is ideal for the demanding birthday boy or first time crafter, including full instructions with eight cards and envelopes that are perfect for all occasions.
Retailer Benefits: The fun product, as well as the rest of the range, has been designed and manufactured in the UK, a fact that is much appreciated by consumers.
Other Information: Dempsey Designs has 60 craft kits in its range, all of which make great gifts for both adults and children.

Viridian Trading Ltd

Product: Opal Hundertwasser self patterning sock yarn.
Price: Price available on application.
Specification: Opal Hundertwasser self patterning sock yarn is based on work by the artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser, reproducing his vibrant colours so that every knitter can wear a work of art.
Retailer Benefits: Opal has a popular following among crafters based in the UK and this range is sure to be no exception.
Other Information: Viridian is also the distributor of self patterning sock yarn manufacturer Trekking and Clover accessories.
Beadalon

Product: WildFire™ beading thread.
Price: Price available on application.
Specification: WildFire™ beading thread features strength and durability with a smooth, thermally bonded coating to create a superior stringing product that cannot be pierced with a needle. It is the perfect thread for seed beadwork as it is super strong, waterproof, and zero-stretch.
Retailer Benefits: This knottable, supple cord is great for multistrand seed bead designs and can be sold alongside the Spin-N-Bead, another Beadalon product.
Other Information: WildFire™ is available in black, green, and clear.

The Bold Sheep

Product: Baby Baaginners.
Contact: Access www.theboldsheep.co.uk.
Price: RRP £7.50.
Specification: The adorable Baby Baaginners are children’s stitching kits designed to introduce little ones to needlecrafts. Each kit contains Binca fabric, wool, a needle and easy to follow big, clear charts and instructions.
Retailer Benefits: In stocking kits for youngsters, retailers can establish loyal sales from new crafters as they grow.
Other Information: The eight designs in the range are the butterfly, cat, dog, spider, daisy, potted flower and two heart designs.

Design House Papercrafts

Product: Rubber Stamp Sheets.
Contact: Call +44 (0)1243 268 094.
Price: £14.75.
Specification: The company have 12 new seasonal and sweet rubber stamp sheets, all of which are in DL format and unmounted, but mounted onto EZ Mount.
Retailer Benefits: The rubber stamp sheets have been specifically designed to co-ordinate with the company’s other Christmas paper themes.
Other Information: Other festive items from the company include new Waterfall Kit sheets.

The Button Company

Product: Hemingworth Polyselect threads.
Contact: Access www.buttoncompany.co.uk.
Price: RRP from £4.95.
Specification: Revolutionary Hemingworth Polyselect machine embroidery and quilting threads are available in a rainbow of colours and metallics. The innovative thread storage spool acts as a dust proof container and as a thread guide in use.
Retailer Benefits: The assortment of thread sets range in sizes from 300 to just six colours, which is a great way to introduce consumers to the collection.
Other Information: Made from trilobal polyester, the thread is not only vibrant and glossy, but also strong and colourfast.
**A&C Black**

**Product:** Knitty Gritty by Aneeta Patel  
**Contact:** Telephone +44 (0)207 758 0200.  
**Price:** RRP £14.99.  
**Specification:** Knitty Gritty is the essential paperback guide for absolute beginners and is packed with photographs, useful notes, tested patterns, and workshops. Projects range from gorgeous baby booties to bags and wraps.  
**Retailer Benefits:** With knitting becoming increasingly popular in younger generations, this funky, how-to-guide by Aneeta Patel is a must-have that will appeal to even the most tentative of crafters.  
**Other Information:** Author Aneeta Patel is an experienced knitting teacher and works for the British Knitting Federation promoting the craft across London.

**DIY Framing**

**Product:** Frame Shop In A Box.  
**Contact:** Visit www.diyframing.com.  
**Price:** Price available on application.  
**Specification:** This product features a full set of popular DIY Framing tools along with moulding, mount board, foam board, hanging hardware, and framing glue to make an 11x14 frame.  
**Retailer Benefits:** The kit includes a free copy of the Logan 245 Complete Guide to Home Picture Framing, making it fantastic value for money and a great gift idea.  
**Other Information:** The tools included are the Pro Saw, Precision Sander, Studio Joiner and Fitting Tool.

**Fiesta Crafts**

**Product:** Paint, Make and Play Nativity Scene.  
**Contact:** Telephone +44 (0)20 8804 0563.  
**Price:** Price available on application.  
**Specification:** The new Paint, Make and Play Nativity Scene set is an easy to make wooden craft kit with fantastic added play value, offering start-to-finish creative involvement. Everything needed to complete the finished design is in the set, including paints, a brush, snap-together walls, and pre-printed outlines that make it easy to create a detailed Christmas scene. Additionally, there are Christmas Presents and Christmas Story Wall Hangings that will make waiting for the big day even more exciting.  
**Other Information:**

**Trimcraft Ltd**

**Product:** Dovecraft Wonderboard.  
**Contact:** Visit www.trimcraft.co.uk.  
**Price:** Price available on application.  
**Specification:** Unique to Dovecraft, the Wonderboard is designed to make producing cards and boxes quick and easy. The lightweight and portable product also comes complete with a scoring and embossing tool. Included with the product is an eight page instruction booklet full of ideas to inspire crafters, which could lead to further sales of materials. The clear lines and fixed grooves of the Wonderboard help to give a professional finish to projects.
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www.craftykids.co.uk
Visit any store and, chances are, you’ll be able to find a number of licensed products; from Dora the Explorer backpacks in Woolworths, to FCUK beauty products in Boots, to Alan Titchmarsh tools in your local garden centre. Everyone, it seems, is getting in on the action.

And no wonder: According to figures released by NPD at Brand Licensing Europe just over a year ago, the general licensing market is worth in excess of £2.4 billion, with plenty of room for growth. This figure, which is based on a market aimed at kids aged between 0 and 14 years old, equates to an astounding annual spend of £214 per child or £4.11 per week.

One of the most lucrative areas of the market is character licensing, whereby characters from films, tv shows, cartoons and comics are developed as brands and then licensed out to third-party manufacturers. For example, Disney characters can be found on 1,000s of different product lines, as diverse as toys, bed linen and jewellery.

For craft retailers, stocking licensed character products can introduce a whole new audience to the joys of stamping, stitching or paper crafting. By keeping an eye on forthcoming films and tv series, along with re-releases of classic cartoons, it’s possible to stay one step ahead of the competition. Then, when the show/film is released, an eye-catching window display can be created using the newest licensed craft products.

Hot Property

One craft supplier actively embracing character licenses is Coats Crafts, who has been working with licensed product for many years: “We were the very first Forever Friends licensee and have been working with Hallmark on this ever popular character for 20 years,” declares Clare Watson, Marketing Manager.

More recently, Coats Crafts has captured the imagination of the crafter with their ‘Knit Your Own Shaun the Sheep kit’: “When I saw the popularity of the Shaun the Sheep TV show I contacted Aardman and asked if we could recreate this cheeky woolly wonder into a knitted version. It seemed such an ideal match and has become a best seller. This autumn we have strengthened the range with a ‘Knit Your Own Timmy’ and a range of other needlecraft kits including cross stitch and rug making.”

“Licensing is useful, because your product is under the umbrella of a recognised brand. You therefore have a ready made client base and it is easier to bring the kits to market.”

Kate Hoyle, owner of Bothy Threads, is also aware of the benefits to be had from using a known property: “Licensing is useful, because your product is under the umbrella of a recognised brand. You therefore have a ready made client base.”

Company who developed the brand back in the 1970s, Licensee, DMC, say: “We feel that licensed designs play a really important part to bringing new stitchers into the market through well-known characters and images.”

Lucrative Licensing

One band could have many licensees, as shown by Forever Friends. Indeed, given this popular bear brand has recently turned 21, it’s unsurprising that it attracts new licensees every year; the first being Coats Crafts and the most recent being Design Objectives.

“We are truly thrilled to be the new licensee of Forever Friends and can barely wait until the products hit the shelves for everyone to enjoy,” explains Forever Friends licensee brand manager at Design Objectives, Holly Roche.

The range launches with four gorgeous everyday and two beautiful Christmas ranges, which are all set to go down a storm. The ranges include co-ordinating products in the form of beautiful papers, matching stickers and fabulous stamp designs too, perfect for all cardmaking and scrapbooking projects.

While the Forever Friends may have a number of licensees, this pales into insignificance when compared to the Disney licensing empire. Featuring some of the best-
loved character licenses of all time, including Micky Mouse and Cinderella, crafts featuring the properties are often best-sellers.

DKL Marketing is sole distributors of Hama Beads in the UK and Ireland and has had particular success with its Disney range: “Our Disney Princess sets have made a huge impact in Hama’s growing market with its confident and continued success of late,” they say. This success has led to the introduction of many other Disney favourites to the licensing range. These include Mickey Mouse and Friends, Bambi, Winnie The Pooh and more.

Wizard Crafts has a range of 16 Flower Fairy shrinkles, designed to appeal to young, female crafters. Speaking about why they decided to secure the license, Barry Robson, managing director, says: “It became increasingly apparent that public demand for this timeless and beautiful character was there.” He feels that by being selective, the licenses they use will be relevant to today’s crafters. “There will be more Jolly Nations Shrinkles appearing soon, as this is a really popular license.”

Building a Brand

While many licenses are targeted at the younger end of the market to encourage new crafters, there are also plenty of licensed craft products that appeal to an older demographic. For example, in 2008 Trimcraft chose to work with Laura Ashley to produce a complete range of paper craft products. “As a luxury British brand, renowned for stylish, innovative, high quality products, Laura Ashley was perceived as being an ideal fit for the modern craft industry,” asserts Satyen Fakey, Trimcraft’s Business Development Director.

Trimcraft subsequently guided the brand seamlessly into the industry and following the success of the initial Laura Ashley range, is currently working on a second release for autumn 2008.

Trimcraft believes that licensing is a growth area within the craft industry, however the company firmly believes that before working with any new product or brand, consideration must always be given to the target market and the importance of any current dedicated paper craft brands, Dovecraft or DCWV for example, that overall have a greater sustainable lifecycle.

To date, the craft market has under-utilised the huge potential of this global market, which could offer the retailer excellent returns.

Further information

Bothy Threads
+44 (0)1638 665 149
www.bothythreads.com

Coats Crafts
+44 (0)1325 394 242
www.coatscrafts.co.uk

Creativity International
+44 (0)1384 485 550
www.cilimited.co.uk

Design Objectives
+44 (0)845 450 3900
www.docrafts.co.uk

DKL
+44 (0)1604 678 780
www.dkl.co.uk

DMC
+44 (0)116 275 4000
www.dmccreative.co.uk

Trimcraft
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Wizard
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We take a look at some top new craft tools…

**ZEVA MUNDIAL**
+44 (0)161 763 6868
www.zeva-mundial.co.uk

Zeva Mundial has a wide range of scissors for crafters. Shown here is the 824 set of 6” craft scissors, and the 825 set of 5” scissors. Each set contains 12 pieces (three of each model). The net trade price (excluding VAT) is £4.95 for each set.

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**BURFITT TOOLS**
61 +407 338 990
www.burfitt.com.au

A Western Australian medical instrument designer has revolutionised the craft and hobby world with a wonderful range of specialist tools and instruments.

Managing Director of Burfitt Medical, Mr Murray Burfitt, recognised the benefits of an old sheep shearing tool when expanding his range of hobby and craft tools.

The new cutting tool is a very effective thread cutter. It has straight or curved blades that are 110mm (4 ¼”) in length. The one finger grip makes it user friendly, and because your entire hand works the cutter, there is less chance of fatigue in your forearm muscles.

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**BEADALON**
1 610 466 6000
www.beadalon.com

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---

**B regeneration**
+61 2 9442 8804
www.b regeneration.com.au

B regeneration has developed a new range of high-quality craft tools specifically designed for the needs of the craft and hobby world. These tools are of the highest quality and performance, and offer a unique combination of durability and functionality.

---

**CRAFT DIRECTION**
+44 (0)161 763 6868
www.craft-direction.com

Craft Direction is a leading supplier of quality craft tools and equipment. With a wide range of products, including scissors, tools, and accessories, they offer everything you need to make your crafting projects a success.

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**NEW PRODUCTS**
+44 (0)161 763 6868
www.new-products.co.uk

New Products has introduced a range of innovative tools and equipment for the craft and hobby world. These products are designed to make your crafting experience easier and more enjoyable, with a focus on quality and performance.

---

**TRENDS**
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www.trends.com

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amate studios – high quality pendant trays, ring blanks and bracelets handmade in Mexico. Ideal for filling with polymer clay, epoxy, enamels etc to create special jewellery. applepie memories – acrylic stamping blocks; plain or with finger grips and alignment grids. around the block – brads, frame tapes, paper taggers, paper chalkers, stickers, kits, the papercrafter and more items for papercrafters. black market paper society – inspired texture papers in 6 themes from this very new paper producer created to inspire excellence in design and paper crafting. fine style – hundreds of different neat display packs containing a huge variety of buttons as well as glass, shell and metal pendants for jewellery makers.

jones crafts – stones and glass beads on strings, paper flowers in bottles, various sizes and types of bags containing mixtures of buttons, metal bells and more. lisa pavelka – signature range comprising of texture stamps, border moulds, embossing cutters, waterslide transfers and more from the polymer clay grand master. magic mesh – 22 colours in fine weave and 8 colours in medium weave of this self-adhesive, repositionable, decorative mesh. offray – ribbons, need we say more.

oscrap – brads in 3 sizes, felt flowers, tote bags, clear the closet embellishment holders, c-jellies and more items coming soon. pepperell – stretch magic, p’leather and supreme waxed cotton cords for jewellery makers; also pony bead lacings, magnetic beads, supervalue packs and coming soon, pom poms in mixed themed bags, large ones in kits, several Christmas ideas. sugartree – innovative scrapbook papers like you have never seen before. tweety jill – 10 fantastic books by Jill Haglund the renowned American author together with a book collection of scrapbook and collage papers; now also some extremely high quality and inspirational sets of rubber stamps as well as an expanding range of superb card kits.
How has the product offering evolved over the past five years?
Since taking over five years ago, Hobby Habit has handled the distribution in the UK for Le Suh decoupage, which really helped to build the business. Last year saw a huge increase in interest in the craft market and decoupage really came into its own.

Hobby Habit expanded the range of products in order to meet this increased demand and took on Studio Light and Hobby Post, and the firm is now evolving further to take on die cut decoupage as customers are most interested in this as the current trend. We are also looking into moving into stackers and twisted decoupage as we are always looking for new products, ideas and designers, and the latest stunning range from Nancy Watt is testimony to Hobby Habit’s innovative approach.

How do you decide which new products to take on?
The Hobby Habit Group has a number of licensed products and is always investigating new licenses such as Sandra Kuck and a wealth of British artists, such as Nancy Watt who has introduced the Art Deco Lady decoupage range including twisters and stackers. The decisions we make are always based on available licenses, product quality and notability.

The Hobby Habit Group likes to be a step ahead with new themes, new ideas and an understanding of the market to make interesting products available to our customers.

What are your best-selling lines and why?
Best sellers include traditional lines such as flowers, fairies, religious themes and children – and, of course, original designs that we commission from designers. Le Suh has been a market leader but currently die cuts are very popular. Our marble card, holographic papers, angel wire, acetate, vellum, peel offs and accessories for decoupage crafting are also very popular. The feeling of pride and fulfilment at the finished result is extremely rewarding and that relies to a greater part on using quality products that don’t split, tear or look cheap.

Do you exhibit at any craft trade shows? If so, which ones do you attend and why?
The Hobby Habit Group exhibits at the UK craft show, ICHF, every year. This is a great way to meet customers, to thank them for their loyalty and to encourage new trade customers to be a part of the Hobby Habit team. ICHF is also important for seeing what new ideas and trends there are, introducing new ranges and seeing what the reaction is from consumers – it’s a great UK trade show that brings buyers from Europe and the USA.
How do you support your retailers?
We arrange for designers to go to retailers’ shops and premises to demonstrate a variety of crafts to excite the public. We also send out regular newsletters on new products and creative ideas. Furthermore, we are currently working on a brand new website that will deliver an online shop for retailers where they can buy a huge range of products effortlessly and quickly. The website will also carry interesting news and ideas on TV demonstrations and an insight into the life of a craft designer. We hope to be able to launch this in October 2008.

We use sales agents in all areas who have worked very hard to promote our new products. We also have a new sales manager on our team now who will make a big difference as he will be talking to our customers in the UK, Europe and the USA.

How are you being affected, if at all, by the current ‘credit crunch’ and are you taking any steps in order to minimise the impact to your business?
Turnover is down from this time last year. To address this, Hobby Habit is looking at products that have low margins and fast turn-round times. More investment is going into our own products. Fortunately, overheads are low and some corners have been trimmed so we are lucky to be able to weather the current economy and remain positive that the future will look brighter! That said, we have already looked to a positive future and welcomed to the team a marketing manager and a sales manager who knows the craft industry inside out. I believe it’s called ‘looking on the bright side of life’!

How do you plan to grow your existing retailer base?
We will naturally continue the good work, which involves offering the best quality products and the best quality service. I know we all say that but it has to be the basis of any business – looking after our customers from day one. We will also utilise the new website, which is due to launch in October, to encourage new customers to sign up for informative newsletters bringing them the latest on new products and trends as well as offering easy online buying from an exciting range of products. And we have the new team that I mentioned above.

How would you like to see the company to develop over the next few years?
The Hobby Habit Group has a five-year business plan. This includes steady expansion into the international market. The Hobby Habit Group already has distributors in Holland, Australia and will be moving into the USA and Germany. To manage this we have turned to professional designers who can bring on board in-house products and are negotiating for rights to more popular brands. It’s all about keeping a fresh stream of ideas coming through so our customers have something fresh to take to their consumers.

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a cut above

The art of building up 3D pictures from flat images attracts novice and experienced crafters alike. We take a look at the top products on the market...

At its most basic, decoupage is ideal for the first-time crafter. Die-cut, numbered image sheets, along with double-sided sticky foam pads are essentially the only two elements required. For the more advanced crafter, decoupage image sheets, a craft knife, cutting mat and silicone glue can create a much more polished piece of artwork with natural contours.

Closely associated with decoupage, stackers layer upwards. However, rather than having specific sections of the image layered up, the layering is kind of a pyramid effect so, from a birds eye view, the whole image can be seen, but from a side-on angle, only the different layers will be visible.

For the craft retailer, decoupage, and now stackers, are perfect for drawing in new custom, and entry-level projects can be demonstrated in minutes. We take a look at the leading suppliers of decoupage materials...

Crafter’s Companion
+44 (0)1388 663 328
www.crafterscompanion.co.uk

The craft CDs from Crafter’s Companion each contain a number of printable decoupage designs. There are numerous designs on each of their CDs, and new CDs are released several times a year.

Small Beauties
+44 (0)20 8445 7085
www.smallbeauties.com

Small Beauties sells a wide range of die-cut decoupage flowers, the sweet peas, pansies, lilies and pastel roses being the best sellers. These die-cuts retail at £1.25 and there are at least four designs on each sheet.

Also selling well is the seascapes decoupage. While not die-cut, these make very effective cards for men.

Another new range from Small Beauties is the Christmas die-cut decoupage, with some new Christmas flower arrangements.

Craft Creations Ltd
+44 (0)1992 781 900
www.craftcreations.co.uk

Craft Creations Ltd is a UK manufacturer of greetings card blanks, peel off stickers, 3D decoupage, creative papers and much more.

Following on from the great success of their step-by-step decoupage, the firm has launched six new decoupage packs. Each contains 20 assorted A4 sheets plus ideas for mounting. Each pack retails at £6.99 and the range includes three mixed occasions: a floral, cute & cuddly and Christmas pack.
The die-cut Flower Fairies sheets contain three pretty designs, for example, sheet 28 features The Cornflower Fairy, The Lavender Fairy and The Chicory Fairy, all in lovely shades of blue, purple and lavender. This retails at £1.25 while a normal decoupage sheet is priced at just 75p. There are many other Flower Fairies designs in the range.

La Fourmi
+32 2 769 69 80
www.lafourmi.eu

La Fourmi offers a wide choice of lovely decoupage papers, as well as paper napkins.

According to La Fourmi, the best type of decoupage paper is a rice paper specially designed not to rip. It is less fragile than paper napkins, and far softer than traditional decoupage papers, so much easier to apply to curved surfaces. Its porosity means that consumers don’t have to sandwich it between two layers of glue, they can simply apply it to their chosen surface, then paint over with the decoupage glue.

Decoupage rice paper comes in countless designs, modern and traditional, flowers, animals, oriental designs and more. It allows anyone to make lovely decorated objects from plain wood, cardboard, papier-mâché metal, plastic and other bases. It is even used in scrapbooking, cardmaking, canvas decorating and more.

The Crafthouse Press
+44 (0)1905 620 040
www.crafthousepress.co.uk

The Crafthouse Press launches new designs at least six times a year. The biggest launch is usually around February to coincide with ICHF at the NEC. The firm introduced their first die-cut decoupage in February of this year and have since launched a 2nd range which features Christmas characters. In all, The Crafthouse Press now offers 24 different decoupage sheets featuring over 50 characters in die-cut format.
B-C-E
+44 (0)1909 591 808
www.b-c-e.co.uk
B-C-E the makers of Stencillos shaped card templates and Kimsies Whimsies decoupage have launched a selection of new products for the 2008 autumn/Christmas season.

Kim Sutton has designed three new Stencillo templates for A5 shaped cards with a Christmas theme, in the shape of a fairy/angel, a snowman and a Santa Claus. Accompanying these stencils is a new selection of decoupage papers for the snowman and fairy. Stencils are priced at £6.99 rrp, while the decoupage papers are priced at 80p rrp.

Hobby Habit Ltd
+44 (0)1780 489 489
www.hobbyhabitltd.co.uk
Hobby Habit Ltd has a wide range of decoupage papers for all crafters. Best sellers include traditional lines such as flowers, fairies, religious themes and children, and original designs that the firm commissions from designers. To date, Le Suh has been a market leader. In addition, their die-cuts are very popular.

Twiddleys
+44 (0)800 043 0422
www.twiddleys.co.uk
Twiddleys offers a wonderful array of die-cut decoupage sheets, including their brand new “No Scissors Required” Christmas Decoupage. This features a variety of images, including cute teddy bears, robins with holly, and various traditional Christmas designs. Twiddleys also offer male-orientated ranges, including airplane, football and automotive themes, along with more feminine designs, including flowers and balloons.

Design House Papercrafts
+44 (0)1243 268 094
Design House Papercrafts has firmly established itself as a key supplier of craft papers and decoupage.

“Apart from die-cuts, one of the most popular lines in decoupage this year has to be one of the simplest,” says Denice Logan-Rose. “The twisted pyramid allows crafters to produce a three dimensional look without the pain and time consuming complicated twists and turns of scissor cuts. Crafters simply cut their ever decreasing squares and build up their layers by matching the picture.”

But for those crafters who prefer the more traditional form of decoupage, Design House Papercraft have focused on putting the tradition back into Christmas with an array of step-by-step decoupage papers featuring penguins, snowmen, christmas trees and santas, whilst accommodating some more contemporary tastes with jaunty girls and soft snowflakes and muted holly with their photographic Westies and kittens.”
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As we have no backing to our window the customers can see right through into our shop. I like to install bulky displays to prevent this happening but I am wondering whether this is the best course of action. This is a subject upon which I am often asked my opinion. An open-backed window will let more light into the shop and enable the interior to be viewed from the street. This is an advantage if the inside of your shop looks interesting and exciting but not so good if all you can see is the back of the till along with the cashier’s spare pair of comfy shoes and lunch box.

The downside of having an open-backed window is that there is no barrier to help construct a strong display layout, less security for the merchandise and little to prevent customers re-arranging your carefully crafted display, adding things like empty drink cans and sweet wrappers.

On balance, open-backed is more versatile than having an entirely enclosed window area as you can add temporary barriers more easily than you can dismantle a solid wall. The type of display that you install in your open-backed window is a matter of taste and the best that suits your type of business but, as I mentioned before, it is always good policy to vary the layout of your displays to maintain the interest of passers-by.

Your options are:
1) Your current method of building a wall of merchandise or using several back panels in order to prevent the view through to the interior. This is the right choice if the area behind your window is unattractive or you need to keep the display out of the reach of customers or, using piles of items, you wish to convey a “sale” image. But you lose the advantage of showing off your shop.

2) All items on display placed at a low level in order to maintain a clear view though to the store. This is probably the least effective solution. Although it gives an uninterrupted view of, hopefully, an interesting and busy interior the items displayed in the window will probably go more or less unnoticed.

3) High displays on each side with a view through to the shop in the centre. This is the most common solution that I see around but is usually not constructed particularly well in order to achieve the maximum impact. As a rule, the displays lack proper structure and where the focal point should be is where the gap has been left in the centre. A good way to handle this layout is to treat each side of the window area as a separate display having its own focal point and then constructed to taper off into the centre of the overall area. So the high points are situated in each of the back corners of the space. This can make good use of the side walls, if you have them, and is particularly effective if your customers approach from a shallow angle, perhaps because of a narrow pavement, as one of the two parts of the display is angled towards them and the interior is easily visible through the centre.

4) High display around the centre with a view through on either side. This is my top option and you need to place a slim panel, photo or length of fabric at the back of the window area roughly behind where you intend to place the focal point, or it can actually act as the focal point. This presents a visual barrier that divides the back of the display from the remainder of the shop but still allows a view of the interior on each side. It can be placed in the middle or off-centre depending on the type of balance you are using and, after installing the focal point, the display is constructed between the panel/fabric and the glass in the normal way.

Two essential reminders though when working with any open-backed window, firstly the back of the presentation will also need to look neat and tidy when viewed from inside the shop and secondly if the customers can see in from the street your whole shop becomes a display and should be well lit, well maintained and create interest and curiosity in order to tempt the passers-by inside.

Further information
To find out more, simply visit Alan’s website at www.alanspringall.co.uk
With so much discussion of a ‘credit crunch’ right now, is there genuinely a crunch, or is this a situation that has been exaggerated by the media?

There’s no doubt it’s now much harder for businesses to extend their lines of credit due to the banking “crisis” and some businesses are being asked by their bank to reduce their overdrafts and pay back loans, especially in sectors such as property or construction, where a bank is “over-borrowed”.

In addition, consumer businesses are starting to see some consumer belt tightening with the rise of food, petrol and energy prices reducing discretionary disposable income. For business to business trade, the squeeze is coming from a combination of rising raw material and energy inputs and a general reluctance to raise prices to match.

What other factors are behind the crunch in your opinion?

There are probably several structural factors behind the crunch in the UK. We have had a very low household savings rate and a very high level of mortgage debt.

The Government has been spending more than it has been saving despite the years of economic growth and the economy has a large financial sector.

When the banking crisis hit, these factors, together with rising food and energy prices, combined to magnify its effect, as seen in rapidly falling house prices due to a shortage of mortgage funds.

How much are the problems with the foreign economies, such as the sharp downfall in house prices in the USA, to blame? Are we paying the price for too much borrowing and irresponsible stock market trading? Is it a case of consumer irresponsibility or are banks and businesses pushing their services too aggressively?

There’s no doubt that the tipping point was the crash in U.S. house prices, where too much credit led to an over-supply. The problem, as we now all know, was the “securitisation” of such mortgage debt, where housing loans of various qualities were bundled up into tradable securities. When U.S. house prices started to fall, banks perceived a significant decline in the value of the collateral used by the banks when issuing loans based on holding these mortgage-backed securities and an increased perception of risk regarding the solvency of other banks.

Just how bad do you feel the current economic situation is in general? Where do you see things going?

We are not professional economic forecasters and can only reflect the current debate. There is a general consensus that the economy will show very low or no growth for the next year or so. There is some chance of a recession in newspaper headline terms of a decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for two or more consecutive quarters. A better definition for business is that a recession is when business activity has reached its peak and starts to fall until the time when business activity bottoms out. When business activity starts to rise again, this is an expansionary period and the average recession by this definition lasts about a year.

Business Link’s Top 10 Tips to protect your business against ‘the Crunch’.

According to the British Chambers of Commerce, 75 per cent of small businesses are concerned about the economy, but few have plans in place to protect their business. If you haven’t already started thinking about how you will get through the spending slump, get the ball rolling with Business Link’s top ten tips.

1. Mind your cashflow
 Issue invoices promptly and chase up debtors; don’t buy more stock than you need; negotiate longer credit terms with suppliers, shorter ones for customers; fill up gaps in your forward order book; and keep in touch with your bank.

In addition, you can impose late payment charges on any customer that does not pay on time. Legally, you are allowed to apply late payment charges eight per cent above the Bank of England base rate on unpaid bills.

2. Cut your costs
 Look for savings in every part of your business. Do you turn equipment off at night? Is every business journey necessary? Are you taking full advantage of your tax allowances?
You can also try and negotiate new terms and conditions with your suppliers. The credit crunch is affecting the majority of businesses and they may be willing to provide you with longer payment terms or a reduction in price, in order to keep your business.

3. Credit check new customers
It might only take one major customer to go bust to jeopardise your business. Protect yourself by conducting rigorous credit checks on new customers and agreeing clear credit terms up front. Using credit reference agencies will provide extra protection against bad debtors, although this must be balanced against the cost of using their services.

4. Focus on retaining customers
When finances are uncertain, consumers cut their discretionary spending – so do all you can to keep your customers coming through your doors. Loyalty schemes, small discounts and regular communication are just three ways of letting your customers know you value them.

As corporate social responsibility becomes an increasingly important issue for many consumers, this could provide a new way of attracting and retaining new customers. By taking steps, such as supporting local initiatives and becoming more environmentally friendly, you may be able to differentiate yourself from the competition.

5. Provide outstanding customer service
Consumers appreciate businesses that give them more for their money, especially when times are tough. Efficient service, fast delivery, flexible payment terms and so on, can persuade people to spend with you rather than a competitor.

6. Increase your marketing
When competing for a smaller pot of money, it becomes more important than ever to tell people why they should come to you. You don’t have to break the bank, but be sure to shout about your business. However, it is vital that this is done efficiently and effectively. Consider what method is best suited to your business, such as telemarketing; online advertising; trade magazines; mail shots; or radio/TV. Monitor any marketing you carry out, to measure its success.

7. Concentrate on products and services that sell
Don’t put your efforts into trying to sell things that are untried or that few people will buy; stick to profitable favourites. Don’t be tempted to slash prices either – if demand for your offer is not price sensitive, you will be giving your profits away.

8. Avoid borrowing
Bear in mind loans may be more difficult to obtain and more expensive in a slump. Alternatives include invoice financing, which releases up to 85 per cent of cash tied up in unpaid invoices. Better still, save money by cutting costs.

If you are forced to borrow money, ensure you have secured the best possible deal, by investigating a number of different options and negotiating the terms.

9. Streamline your operation
Consider moving to smaller premises, or even subletting some of your existing space. Sell off excess equipment and look at your staffing – are your people concentrated in the right areas? Will flexible working be more cost-efficient? If you are considering making staff redundant be sure you take into account the adverse impact this can have on the remaining staff and the time and cost involved in recruiting replacements when business picks up again.

10. Sell online
An online sales or marketing channel will expose you to a larger marketplace for minimal cost. Be sure to plan and resource online selling properly, including providing payment security, attracting visitors and meeting orders swiftly.

The credit crunch will lead to a difficult environment for all businesses, but by following our top tips, you will increase the chances of your business surviving.

Further Information
To find out how Business Link can help your business call +44 (0)8457 17 16 15 or visit www.businesslink.gov.uk/east
Beads have been used as items for financial exchange, adornment, and even prayer across cultures and centuries, which goes some way to explain why the craft of beading seems to have such staying power.

Although the popularity of beading may have experienced peaks and troughs, it cannot be denied that the activity has continued to have a place in the market due to the fact that it consistently finds its way into other projects. Crafts such as current consumer favourite, jewellery making, and ever-popular embroidery are just two areas of the industry that incorporate beading, highlighting the point that even when beads are not the focus of a craft, it still makes good business sense to add them to your stock offering.

One of the most common functions for beading is to add decoration to clothing, jewellery and other accessories, thus linking the craft to the fashion industry. This can provide a guide for retailers when sourcing and buying stock as well as a sense of direction for visual merchandising in store or marketing outside of the shop. By tapping into key seasonal trends an opportunity to gain new customers presents itself, as a combination of quirky, individual looks and the credit crunch means that people are searching for creative ways to achieve catwalk looks at a cut price. If publicised correctly this approach could open up a new stream of sales for many craft retailers, especially if staff are able to draw attention to the user friendly side of beading.

“The latest fashion is for those long chains with different styles of links mixed with beads, charms, tassels, chains, rings, ribbons and more. It’s actually really easy to put these together, so long as you have the right chain links”, comments Kathleen Cooper of La Fourmi. Even if retailers feel that this is not the main focus that they wish their product offering to have, the beauty of this stance is that it can be scaled down to just subtly address modish influences. “We find that if you have some lovely new styles that coordinate with existing stocks, then everything sells. After all, customers don’t have the same tastes, and regional demands can be quite different”, adds Kathleen.

In a more traditional sense, the craft of beading of course has trends of its own to consider. Many of the latest lines include wired metal beads twisted into interesting motifs and shapes with a smooth finish to add intricate detail to projects, whilst glass beads retain their popularity from last season, featuring a rainbow of original colour combinations that also find their way onto glamorous gem-like adornments. Furthermore, innovations in the design of thread and wire mean that beading materials are stronger and more flexible than ever, using stainless steel and nylon in a variety of finishes to adapt to projects and easy to use fixings. The market also happily continues to see the launch of comprehensive beading guides, kits and sets in order to attract new consumers to this all encompassing craft.
Beads

La Fourmi has a myriad of wonderful new wired metal beads, cleverly tapping into seasonal fashion whilst still catering to traditional tastes by providing top quality products. The Belgium based company also wisely offers chain by the meter, with links that can be easily opened and closed to adapt to fast-moving trends, as well as various other resilient links in many different materials, sizes and colours. Using these fun products crafters are able to assemble anything their heart desires with ease and efficiency. Access www.cordslafourmi.com to find out more.

Well-established company Burhouse Beads is one of the UK’s largest wholesalers of beading supplies, jewellery components, cut stones and associated products, operating for over 35 years via mail order, a comprehensive website, or cash and carry. This year has seen Burhouse Beads expanding many of its ranges including the company’s stocks of affordable beads and plated components in a variety of different finishes. Genuine wholesale discounts on the large stock offering are available and the vast range of products has to be seen to be believed. Call +44 (0) 1484 462 696 or visit www.burhousebeads.com for further details and to apply for a trade account.

An exciting new catalogue is now available from PJ Beads detailing the company’s full range of jewellery making supplies direct from the manufacturers. There are hundreds of new items included in the product offering, such as all types of beads, metal fittings and findings, gemstones, packaging and tools. The company has expanded its range of low cost bead mixes which have proved very popular in recent months, and other top sellers include more coveted Swarovski items and metal findings. The full PJ Beads range is also available on the website www.beads.co.uk.

Over 4000 quality lines are supplied to stores across the country by Creative Beadcraft, including fantastic beads and findings that are perfect for embroidery and jewellery making projects. Seed beads from the Czech Republic are available alongside glamorous Crystallized™ Swarovski elements, and the rest of the range features pearls, wood beads, fire-polished and pressed glass beads. All items are available loose or attractively packaged, and the company also supply a collection of tools, threads and accessories such as steel and antique look chain. Simply visit www.creativebeadcraft.co.uk to find out more, or telephone +44 (0) 1494 776 678.
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Contact Emma or Claire for a fully illustrated catalogue
Thread & Wire

**Beadalon** has been manufacturing bead stringing wire in the United States for more than 30 years. Not only is the innovative company the originator of many new bead string materials, but the firm also offers a complete selection of tools, findings and accessories. Beadalon’s newest products include Crinkle Wire, a wavy wire available in a variety of tones to add texture and drama to jewellery designs, and Quick Links, easy to assemble metal components that crafters can use to create custom chain designs in minutes. Visit [www.beadalon.com](http://www.beadalon.com) for more information.

Established in Camden in 1991, **The London Bead Co Ltd** specialised in beads until 1995 and soon added the embroidery side of the business known as Delicate Stitches, stocking and supplies special threads from different parts of the world. The company supply shops in the UK and overseas with Swarovski beads, pendants and stones, as well as Japanese delica, seed, hex and bugle beads. The London Bead Co is the distributor for specialised threads such as The Caron’s Collection, The Thread Gatherer and Threadworx. For further details access [www.londonbeadco.co.uk](http://www.londonbeadco.co.uk).

The unique Desire Memory Thread from **DMC Creative World Ltd** retains the form created by the crafter with no tools required, making it suitable for the rapid twisting, wrapping, and braiding needed for jewellery making. As a winning combination of beauty and structure the product features a satin soft texture and is available in a selection of 18 bright colours with beads and findings to match. In addition to this there are six fabulous new colours in the Desire range, and DMC have included some shining gold and silver thread to capture consumer’s imagination. To find out more visit [www.dmccreative.co.uk](http://www.dmccreative.co.uk).

US company **The Beadsmith** is a leading supplier of bead stringing materials, enjoying a solid reputation for quality and strong sales in the marketplace. The branded product range includes craft wire, jewellery making tools and pliers, glass and crystal beads, sterling silver beads and findings, and component storage systems. The company’s most recent product launch is Flex-rite Beading Wire, an affordable, professional quality range of Nylon coated micro wires. Flex-rite products are stainless steel and are available in a variety of finishes in up to seven different diameters, affording jewellery makers a stringing medium with excellent drape, flexibility, and durability. Email steven@helby.com for further information on the company and the Flex-rite range.
Kit & Caboodle

The brilliant Beads Unlimited Beginners Pack offers a great kick start for crafters exploring a new hobby and also makes the perfect gift for their beady friends. As well as a substantial range of stunning beads, findings, cords and thread, the product includes pliers, a bead mat, a guide to bead jewellery making and a 10% discount voucher for a future purchase, bringing repeat business to the retailer. The beginner’s pack comes in two sizes to suit consumer’s varying budgets, with the regular size containing all the materials needed to begin beading for just £25, whilst the large size is a beader’s dream, containing a huge selection for just £49.95. To find out more visit www.beadsunlimited.co.uk.

Efco Hobbyproducts offers an exciting range of beads including glass, plastic, metal, mille fiori and Indian beads in a variety of styles, sizes, colours and themes. The creative company’s latest offering is a range of felt beads in seven striking shades, which is already proving to be highly popular with consumers. The product is available in sets of 50 pieces, which include jewellery thread, fasteners and a needle, making it ideal for decorating clothes, bags, and cushions. For further information and a copy of the autumn/winter trends catalogue from Efco, simply telephone +44 (0)1737 245 450 or access www.sinotex.co.uk/efco.

Beads & Co. is an Italian company that has specialised in the production of silver jewellery components for 30 years, and has focused its attention on the craft and hobby world for five years, obtaining very positive feedback. All of the company’s products are in 925 hypoallergenic silver and are available in different finishes, such as natural 925 silver, rhodium, yellow, or red/gold plating. Beads & Co aim to fulfill customers’ expectations by supplying jewellery components at competitive prices, and all of the products can be seen and bought online. Access www.beadsandco.co.uk for further details.

Ornamental Knots for Beaded Jewellery by Suzen Millodot is the latest title from publisher Search Press. The paperback book features new decorative knots, inspirational projects and fresh designs created by accomplished artist Suzen Millodot, whose own jewellery incorporates unusual beads and knots from across the world and many periods of history. Detailed step-by-step colour photographs, helpful advice and accompanying diagrams guide crafters through this different approach to beading. The title is due to be published at the beginning of November with an RRP of £9.99, and more information can be found at www.searchpress.com.

Search Press

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Award-winning retailers, Karena and Stephen Wilson, founded their craft shop Days to Remember in 2004, originally intending to focus mainly on wedding stationery. Since then they have extended the remit and the business has been going from strength to strength. Karena charts the story so far…

**What are your respective backgrounds?**
I have a business studies degree, so before opening up our retail shop my background had always been accounting, marketing, economics and business related. However, having this sort of background is ideal for tackling the less attractive side of the business such as VAT returns and invoicing. My husband Stephen works full time in the computer industry but he helps out in the shop when he can and does a lot of work to keep our website up to date.

**Are you an avid crafter and how did your interest begin?**
I have always had an interest in crafting which is something that I have inherited from my mum. When I was young she taught me to knit, crochet and sew which I loved and then when I took up card making about five years ago the tables were turned and I taught my mum how to make her first card - of course now she is hooked!

**When and why did you decide to launch into retail?**
My family lived in England for about 10 years and in 2002 we decided to move back to Scotland, so I took this as an opportunity to try something new career wise. My first thought was that I no longer wanted to work for a large company and decided I wanted to work for myself. Initially I was going to stick to business management as this is what I knew best, but after seeing a friend at work had made her own wedding invitations I then decided that this was a growing market that I could explore. I originally planned to open the shop with a predominant focus on weddings, hence the name of the shop "Days to Remember". The idea was to sell products to assist customers in creating their own wedding stationery, favours, bridal accessories etc. However I knew we had to attract a wider range of crafters, which is why we started stocking products for general card making and scrapbooking, focusing on specific occasions and seasonal events.

**What was your personal brief when first starting out in terms of product lines, aims and objectives?**
Opening up a retail shop is a very steep learning curve that no one can prepare you for. It is difficult to get the balance right between what you
think you should stock and what you want to try out. It was very difficult to stay focused in the beginning as we had so many ideas for product lines. However we eventually decided to open the shop with the basics and then take it from there. Before we opened the shop we had a live website but after about six months of running the shop, we had to re-think the layout and content of the website as we were not prepared for the vast range of products we would sell on it.

**How and where do you source new products?**
Initially when we were in the process of setting up the business we had never even heard of the Craft, Hobby and Stitch trade show in Birmingham so we spent a lot of time contacting individual companies which was very time consuming and required a lot of chasing up. As we were still at the stage of setting up premises I don’t think back then that a lot of suppliers took us seriously. From what we were told at the time this was due to the high trend of eBay shops and I guess from a supplier’s point of view we were no different to anyone else until we had an actual shop. However perseverance paid off and we managed to source products from some of the best suppliers in the industry. We still continually search out new suppliers to make sure we are up to date for the vast range of products we would sell on it.

**What sort of relationship do you enjoy with your suppliers?**
We have a bit of a mixed relationship with our suppliers. Some of them are really good at keeping us up to date with what new products are coming out, whereas there are a few that seem to have the attitude of “you know where we are if you need us”. We try to avoid these suppliers unless they have something that is unique and is something that our customers want because we always think if they can’t put in the effort to retain our custom then we will not give them the effort back. There is also a lack of representation from many suppliers, which I know is something that affects most of the shops in Scotland. There are apparently reps for some of our suppliers out there but they have yet to introduce themselves to us after nearly four years.

**How can you compete with the larger multiples?**
Larger multiples are a problem to a certain extent in that they can get some great deals with suppliers that independent retailers cannot get. However this is easily balanced when you look at the staff who work in the larger stores and realise that they are not always crafters so therefore their product knowledge is limited. Also because we are a smaller shop we order our products in smaller amounts and therefore have a quick re-ordering loop – which is ideal for customers who are looking for something in particular as we can provide them with a more personal service.

**What are some of your best selling lines?**
Die-cut decoupage has been our best seller this year and more so with Christmas just around the corner. In terms of higher priced items the Cuttlebug is still as popular as ever and the recent release of embossing folders and dies were a hit with our customers. This is a product that we demonstrate regularly in the shop as it has so much potential.

**What yardstick do you use for measuring the potential of a product?**
We try to be practical when we order new products. It is too easy to be caught up with the look of something but we always try to take a step back and see if it is something that gives value for money and will appeal to a wide range of crafters.

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**Describe the style and presentation of your shop - how important is visual merchandising to you?**
We try to keep the shop as clean and clutter free as possible as we need to maximise the visibility of our products. We always keep an eye on the layout of the shop to see if products sell where they are, and if not we move them until we achieve the best results. We also have loads of card samples to demonstrate to our customers what you can do with a lot of our products.
Did you launch the workshops at the same time as the shop? Workshops and demonstrations are something that we have built up slowly within the shop and we probably did not hold our first workshop until the shop was open for about six months. We always try to plan them so that they tie in with a new product launch, or to fit in with a seasonal event such as Easter or Christmas.

How important are they to the success of the business? They are a great way of launching a new product range. When we order new products that we know will be a winner with our customers, it is important that we highlight this as it is too easy for new products to get lost on the shelf alongside all our other products. Workshops are also good for those products that may need a bit of explanation on how to use them and also a good way of sharing new ideas.

How important is customer service to you? We pride ourselves on having a great rapport with our customers, as we know customer service is a very important aspect of our business. There is a wide mix of customers that come through our door in terms of age and experience, each with different queries and requests. We always ensure all our customers are offered the best level of support and advice as everyone who works in the shop has a passion for crafting, so there is a good chance someone will have the answer!

How do you view the current state of the market? We always hear people saying that with the current economic climate it is always their hobby that suffers. We don’t feel that this is the case in the crafting world. Especially when everyone needs a break and there is nothing more relaxing after a hard day at work than going home to craft. It is also a hobby that some people can make a little money from, so that always gives them a boost and they head straight back into their favourite craft shop to spend again.

What are your top tips for retail survival in the current economic climate? Don’t become stagnant. Regardless of how difficult times may be you cannot allow your shop to remain unchanged. You still have to keep up to date with the latest products and demonstrate to your customers you are aware of all the latest trends. It is also important to review the shelf life of products more regularly. Crafters are fickle and what was last month’s latest craze may be old hat the following month. Customers want to see new products on your shelves not what they already have.

How important is your online presence for developing your business offering? Online presence is important for any business. For us it is important to make sure our website is not just about selling products. We use it effectively as a marketing tool so that we can inform our customers of what is happening in the shop on a regular basis in terms of demonstrations, new products, special offers etc.

What was your reaction to winning the Craft Hobby & Stitch Retailer of the Year for 2008? We were delighted to have won the Craft Hobby and Stitch International Award (Overall Craft Retailer of the Year) for 2008. It was a total surprise and as I have a lot of support from my family in the day to day running of the shop I feel it is an achievement that reflects all the effort and hard work we have all put in to making the shop a success. It also gives us a benchmark for next year and what we want to achieve.

Plans for the future? We are currently in the process of expanding the shop, which is already being overtaken with all our new Christmas stock. However we are hoping the extra space will allow us to introduce some new product lines that we have always wanted to stock, but never had the space.
NEW Christmas Toppers

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- Christmas: Vintage Post Box (x6)  |  Product Code: 130001CVPOST

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- Decorative Papers: Vintage Christmas (x24)  |  Product Code: 140000SVCPP
- Christmas: Vintage Lamppost (x10 - 2 designs)  |  Product Code: 150001VLAMP
- Christmas: Vintage Tags (x30)  |  Product Code: 150001VTAGS
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Creative Beadcraft, established in 1920, imports over 4,000 lines and supplies leading craft stores and bead shops all over the UK with quality beads and findings for jewellery making and embroidery.

The experienced company’s fabulous selection of Crystallized™ - Swarovski Elements includes crystal pendants, beads and pearls, flat backs and hot fix stones, whilst semi-precious stones, pewter, metal, bone and wood beads are also stocked. Other hot products include fire-polished and pressed glass beads, pearls and seed beads from Jablonex in the Czech Republic.

Creative Beadcraft’s impressive collection of findings, threads, tools and accessories includes a strong range of steel and antique look chain, and the company distribute over 60 inspirational project books from Bead&Button and BeadStyle.

All of Creative Beadcraft’s items are available loose and many also come attractively packaged. Their comprehensive Retail Pack contains full details of their products and their packaging and display systems which can be designed to suit individual requirements.

For further information on Creative Beadcraft and their products call +44 (0)1494 776 678 or email beads@creativebeadcraft.co.uk and mention Craft Focus to receive a free Retail Pack and samples.

WIN!

Exciting products from Creative Beadcraft!

Creative Beadcraft, established in 1920, imports over 4,000 lines and supplies leading craft stores and bead shops all over the UK with quality beads and findings for jewellery making and embroidery.

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THE PRIZE

Two lucky winners will each receive £250 worth of Creative Beadcraft goodies. The prizes will include Swarovski beads and pendants, an assortment of semi-precious stones, enamel ceramic beads, silver-lined glass and fire-polished beads and pewter beads and pendants. A selection of findings and tools will encompass everything needed for the consumer to make gorgeous jewellery.

To enter the competition, simply visit the website at www.craftfocus.com, fill in your details and answer the following question: “In what year was Creative Beadcraft established?”

The deadline for entries is 14th November 2008.

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Beth Scott outlines how you can minimise your exposure to credit card fraud

Risk Management
As a craft retailer, am I at any significant risk of fraud by accepting payments by credit card online? I don’t want to stop offering my products for sale online as it complements my bricks and mortar shop.

Beth Scott says: In a word, yes. Credit card fraud is a major, and growing, problem in the retail sector and “Cardholder not Present” (CNP) transactions have an obvious appeal to fraudsters, particularly for Internet transactions where it is much easier to be anonymous and avoid detection.

A handy resource for the retailer looking for advice in this area is Cardwatch, which can be found online at www.cardwatch.org.uk. According to them, “CNP fraud in the UK has grown rapidly over the past five years to the point where it now makes up the biggest category in plastic card crime in the UK. Internet transactions now represent the largest area of CNP fraud, but it also remains a sizeable issue for transactions made by phone or mail order.”

And remember, it’s the retailer and not the card company that is taking the risk. If the card was used fraudulently, even if the transaction was authorised, the full amount may be charged back to the retailer. Authorisation of a transaction only means that funds are available in the customer’s account at that point in time and that the card used has not been reported as lost or stolen. But if the card was used fraudulently, money can be reclaimed by your acquiring bank up to 120 days later, long after you’ve delivered the goods.

Reducing Your Risk
I’d like to continue accepting payments by credit card online, so how can I minimise my risk?

Beth Scott says: There are two main areas to minimising your risks;

Firstly, there are the steps you can take yourself. You need to be alert for things out of the ordinary and for anything that just feels wrong. For example, does the customer want a rush job with no regard to the cost? Is it an unusually large order? Are you being asked to ship the goods to a different address from that of the cardholder? Does the area code of the phone number correspond to the postcode supplied? Is the order placed from overseas, when most of your customers are UK-based?

Was it placed in the middle of the night, when most of your orders are placed during office hours? Did the email you sent for the order confirmation bounce? Is the email address given completely different from the cardholder’s name, for example, why would John Smith be using an email address of joeblogs@gmail.com?

These may all be legitimate transactions but they should be treated with greater caution. You might want to look up the customer’s details in the phone directory and then phone them, just to check. Or send a polite email querying their order and see if their response calms your concerns.

Secondly, there are the steps your payment processing service is taking the chargeback. If verification fails then you can still accept the transaction but you will be liable for any problems.

If, despite all your precautions, you are the victim of card fraud, talk to your payment processor who will investigate and perhaps recommend improvements to your security. If they are bearing the loss, they are responsible for reporting the fraud to the police. However, if you are bearing the loss, you may need to report it to the police for recording and further investigation.

To sum up, you need to be alert for unusual transactions and you should check that your payment processing service is taking the appropriate precautions.

Further information
We welcome readers’ questions for future issues. Please visit our web page at http://www.craft-fair.co.uk/craftfocus to see previous questions and answers or to ask further questions.

Loud-n-Clear.com Ltd have been making websites for over a decade, specialising in e-commerce sites for craft businesses. They created the Internet Craft Fair at www.craft-fair.co.uk to help UK-based crafters. Beth Scott from Loud-n-Clear.com answers your retail queries.
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Christmas really is the most wonderful time of the year, a sentiment which is especially true for crafters, and by association, craft retailers. Due to the creative and collaborative nature of the season many members of the general public enjoy some form of craft during the festive period, even if they do not practice the hobby throughout the rest of the calendar, with many families picking Christmas as their annual crafting event.

Even in the current economic climate, it is still possible for craft retailers to have good sales figures, as the credit crunch is influencing more consumers to make their own presents or decorations rather than simply buying them. So, how can retailers make the most of the festive period?

Deepta Mehta, Director of Paper Cellar Ltd, encourages store owners to stock a myriad of shining products to catch the eye of crafters. “The main thing this year is to have a variety of products that are easy to use and are cost effective, but also look fabulous! Glittery items always seem to work well, such as our Complements range, as they look really special during the festive period and look super expensive too. In addition, at Christmas time it is well worth stocking up on a few gift items, as it is the perfect time to cross sell.”

This emphasis on strong, in-store visual merchandising is echoed by Nick Midgley of Cleopatra’s Needle. “A great way to boost the visual appeal of a needlework kit display is to include a few samples of the finished products. Many designers and manufacturers are happy to offer free loans of ‘worked samples’ to retailers. Get in touch with them and find out how they can help!”

Kevin Shenton, Sales Manager of Marabu UK Ltd, supports this point as well as reminding retailers not to forget the valuable sales tool that is an imaginative window display. “I suggest a great window display that gets the attention of the passer by and gets them interested in the festive period. It’s a large billboard to the world. Our peel-able window paints can set the scene cheaply for a passer by to come in a look at your offering. They then peel away and could be used a year later.”

With so many enticing sales opportunities it would be easy to get carried away with seasonal buying. A top tip for managing costs comes from Meg Wratislaw, Marketing Executive at Crafters Companion Ltd. “Take advantage of suppliers’ Christmas special offers and pass these offers on to your customers. This way your customers are getting great offers that aren’t costing you any extra.”

Although Christmas is a season with specific traditions, fantastic new products are constantly being launched that can attract the attention of crafters. Read on for our pick of the best festive craft items about that are sure to get tills ringing...
Each of the cute kits from Cathie Shuttleworth includes fully illustrated, easy-to-follow instructions, character templates, tracing paper, and coloured paper, whilst final decorations and embellishments are left to the crafter’s imagination to provide scope for creative flair and originality. The talented designer’s gorgeous Christmas kits include templates of a lovable snowman, Santa, king, and angel that measure 135mm in height when completed. The products are best suited to crafters of an advanced level, and more information can be found at the website www.cathieshuttleworth.co.uk.

Well known UK craft manufacturer and distributor Paper Cellar has its own team of hard working in-house designers who ensure that every item the company bring to their customers is of the highest quality and meets retailers’ specific needs. This dedication is evident in Paper Cellar’s brand new Christmas 2008 range, featuring products such as two new pads of festively patterned papers, with each design full of detail and perfect for cardmaking or scrapbooking. The company has also launched even more glitters to add extra glitz to Christmas projects. For further details access www.papercellar.com.

B-C-E, the makers of Stencillos shaped card templates and Kimises Whimsies decoupage, has launched a selection of new products for the 2008 autumn and Christmas season. Kim Sutton has contributed to the range with three new Stencillo templates for A5 shaped cards in the shape of a fairy/angel, a snowman and a Santa Claus, all of which have an RRP of £6.99. Accompanying these stencils is a selection of decoupage papers for the snowman and fairy, the RRP of which is just 80 pence. Adding to Kim’s popular shop front Stencillo range is a new Gothic arched window with a selection of 10 Christmas themed decoupage papers, and the papers and stencils are also available as a kit. Three new templates have also been designed by Sandra Wright in the shape of hanging decorations similar to Christmas tree baubles, each of which has an RRP of £6.99 and includes a choice of apertures to use on each side. Visit the informative website at www.b-craft-e.co.uk to find out more.

Since winning a British Invention award in 2004 for its M&P Scoreboard, Coppernob Card Craft continues to produce innovative crafting goodies. The company and New Zealand born designer Ingrid McCracken have produced the universal patterns festive Fancy That! Couture and Bauble fancy-paper-folding collections with a view to nurture craft skills with a fresh spin on iris folding. Coppernob has also joined forces with graphic designer Dawn Newton, to produce a Dizzy Mare range of funky clear stamps, manufactured by Clarity Stamp to their superb quality standard. For further details access www.coppernobcardcraft.co.uk.
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Woodware Craft Collections began trading in the craft industry 15 years ago and since then the company has gone from strength to strength, now distributing almost 20 quality lines as well as their ever-increasing own brand range of products. The extensive autumn 2008 product offering includes Woodware’s fantastic range of Clear Magic rubber stamps, which feature seasonal and sophisticated designs such as Kings of the Orient. These smart products are a practical purchase for crafters as the clear acrylic blocks allow simple positioning of the stamps, which are available in five sizes for maximum control and comfortable grip. For further information visit the easy-to-navigate website at www.woodware.co.uk.

Elusive Images is well known for its artistic stamp designs which cover a variety of themes and occasions that appeal to many different levels of crafter. This season’s beautiful Christmas rubber stamp unmounted themeplates are particularly strong, such as the sweet and pretty Snow is Falling and the traditional Hearth & Home designs. The Artylicious Season’s Greetings CD-ROM is also available, and features stunning papers designed by Glenda Waterworth in four different layouts for crafters to print over and over again on their home computer. Access the website at www.elusiveimages.co.uk to find out more.

The fabulous new Cute Companions Christmas Collection stamp range from Crafter’s Companion comprises a total of six new theme plates, featuring the company’s ever-popular mice as well as some new characters, including two delightful bunnies. Each plate has been thoughtfully designed by Jayne Nestorenko and delicately hand-drawn so that all of the images work together, enabling crafters to create some beautiful masterpieces. Also available are the accompanying Cute Companions Christmas CD and project ideas DVD. To find out more visit www.crafterscompanion.co.uk.

Sharon Duncan has been trading for over two years, with the designer best known for her wonderful CDs. More recently, Sharon has converted some of her beloved creations into a growing collection of unmounted rubber stamp sheets, but has continued to develop fresh ideas for CDs. Due to overwhelming customer demand Sharon has spent a great deal of time and expertise putting together a new CD for the festive season, the result of which is the already successful Cute ‘N’ Colour Christmas. This bestselling product features adorable teddy bears and robins in traditional, heart warming settings, and is sure to be a hit with crafters of all ages. Visit the website at www.sharonduncan.co.uk for further details.
All new Cute Companions stamp range
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Ideal for Halloween and Christmas
Needlework kit designers and manufacturers **Cleopatra’s Needle** have launched their first products aimed specifically at the Christmas market. The ‘Magic Express’ range consists of four canvas work kits, all featuring Zweigart’s Magic Canvas and priced competitively at an RRP of £10. The cute kits are packaged in neat CD-type cases and contain bright, festive projects designed to be completed in a single evening to make cards, tree hangings or other decorative items. Also of interest to festive crafters is the already popular Advent Calendar Tapestry Kit, which features a traditional nativity scene and includes 24 brass rings to which sweets, toys and decorations can be attached. Visit [www.cleopatrasneedle.co.uk](http://www.cleopatrasneedle.co.uk) for further details.

**Marabu UK** is keen to add to its Fun of Halloween and Christmas ranges with new and improved Fun and Fancy Peelable Glass Paints. Ideal for peelable Christmas window and candle decorations, the Fun and Fancy Creative Set includes transparent film and paints to transform the home into a festive environment. There is currently a buy one get one free offer on all Fun and Fancy products, and Marabu is also offering the retailer a buy one get one free on all the range, including the counter display. In order for retailers to try the product the company will provide a free sample and customer magazine showing the benefits of this range. To find out more, simply visit [www.marabu.com](http://www.marabu.com).

**Petit Artisan** has launched its ingenious Merry-Mache product range. The fun, Frenchmade Merry-Mache range is a selection of lovely seasonal toys and decorations made with recycled newspapers that can be kept for years, allowing consumers to feel eco-friendly. Sold in kits with a quality brush and water-based paint pots or individually, the snowmen, reindeers, Father Christmas and other festive designs are produced in accordance with community trade principles in the Philippines. For more information access [www.petitartisan.com](http://www.petitartisan.com).

**Buttonbag** is a young, innovative company breathing new life into old crafts by updating them in a fresh, contemporary way. Since setting up in 2005, the company has gone from strength to strength. Its founders have concentrated on producing a small range of craft kits, sewing kits and children’s costumes made in the UK, all uniquely quirky and beautifully packaged. The Christmas Tree decoration sewing kit fits this description as a simple product that contains the patterns and felt necessary to make a pretty bell, star, angel, and stocking decoration. The kit also comes complete with threads, stuffing, sequins, glue and ribbons to attach the creations to the Christmas tree. Access the website [www.buttonbag.co.uk](http://www.buttonbag.co.uk) to view the full Buttonbag product selection.
Ellison has launched an exciting new range of Christmas-themed dies and accessories to add to its award winning Sizzix range of hand-operated, die-cutting equipment.

The new range of dies includes the ever popular Sizzlit dies, which are available in either packs of three or single dies and are perfect for card making and paper crafting projects, making use of either the Sizzix Sidekick or Big Shot machine.

The company has also launched a range of Original and Bigz dies for use with its Big Shot machine in the shape of a reindeer, santa and snowman. These steel rule dies are truly unique, allowing projects to be created that go far beyond mere paper and card, with the capability of cutting a vast range of different materials, from fabric to leather, cork to balsa and everything in between.

For more information, simply visit the website at www.sizzix.co.uk.

Following the successful launch of the Cosmic Shimmer range, Creative Expressions has introduced the new Festive Brights collection. The gorgeous new colour scheme is available as a set of six seasonal mica powders and a set of eight watercolour paints, with the brand co-ordinated across all of the company’s product groups and exclusively supplied by Creative Expressions to craft retailers nationwide. Also new is a fabulous set of 12 iridescent embossing powders, each containing beautiful festive shades. Some contain glitter, thereby offering crafters the ideal way to add a professional finish to their sparkling Christmas creations. Colours across the various Festive Brights product lines include regal purple, winter chestnut, soft gold, bright holly, Christmas red and seasonal silver. For further information on the new ranges, simply access www.creative-expressions.uk.com.

Club Green’s Christmas brochure is now available with a wealth of new and exciting products for the festive season and beyond. As market leaders in the range of organza tulles, and after a sell out season in 2007, this year is no exception with a versatile new range of fresh tulles on the roll, great wired ribbons and pretty pouches that are a must for all enthusiastic crafters.

New designs feature sparkling snowflakes, shimmering stars and sophisticated stripes for a contemporary look.

To request a brochure and more information, or to place an order, visit the handy website at www.clubgreen.com.
sickness costs

Running a business is a challenging task where recruiting and retaining the right people is vital. Protecting your business should not only be about insuring such things as your premises and stock - what about your employees as well? Peter Berry, Life and Income Protection Manager at T H March explains why it is important to have the relevant insurance in place for both employees and employers.

Long term sickness absence can be devastating for a business as well as the employee and it is essential that this sensitive subjective be carefully managed. In 2007, it is estimated that long-term sickness cost the workplace as much as £5.8bn *

Equally, as an employer and with the forthcoming Welfare Reform Act in mind, it is vitally important that you do everything you can to mitigate your risks associated with absence management, making it of great importance to have group income protection in place.

“Long term sickness absence can be devastating for a business as well as the employee and it is essential that this sensitive subjective be carefully managed.”

So how can businesses, particularly smaller enterprises, address these issues? One of the most flexible solutions provided by insurers is to consider a Dual Benefit Income Protection plan that can be tailored to meet all your business needs.

Key benefits include:

- Fifty per cent of employee’s salary payable up to a maximum of £10k per month for six months for as long as the employee remains employed.
- Access to rehabilitation specialists to speed up a return to work.
- Benefits may commence after only four weeks disablement.
- Attractive recruitment and retention tool.

Employee benefits such as this enhance your profile as a caring employer making it easier to recruit new staff and retain current staff.

EMployee BENEFITS

- Continued income when incapacitated. A monthly income benefit up to a maximum of 80 per cent salary (including any employee pension fund contributions).
- Benefits payable for up to five years.
- Potential extra lump sum of twice salary payable if unable to return to work. An automatic lump sum calculated at twice salary up to a maximum of £120,000 will be paid on the expiry of the income benefit period if the employee remains incapacitated from one of a number of serious illnesses described in the policy document.

This type of innovative new product not only provides a replacement income for the employee, but more importantly also provides a benefit to you, the employer. A package such as this, has been designed for smaller businesses that do not currently offer any form of occupational sick pay to their staff so, for example, you may wish to use the money to finance temporary replacement staff.

One thing is for sure; no-one is able to predict the future, making it essential to your long-term success that you have plans in place that will protect every aspect of your business operation, which for many includes employees as one of their biggest assets.

EMployer BENEFITS

To find out more information on how a Dual Benefit Income Protection plan could help your business, contact Peter Berry at T H March on 0207 405 0009 .

Further information

T H March is a well-established family business founded in 1887. With offices in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Sevenoaks and Yelverton, near Plymouth, the company also has departments covering household, motor, travel, commercial and scheme insurance. To find out more visit the website www.thmarch.co.uk.
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Sales Agents wanted
classroom to craft room

Helix has a heritage going back 121 years. Renowned for its iconic Oxford tinned maths set the company has grown to become a leading force in the craft world too.

Group marketing manager Jon Burke charts the company’s evolution from the classroom to the craft room...

Mention the name Helix and the Oxford tinned maths set, and the days of school and maths lessons may well spring to mind. People could therefore, be forgiven for not knowing that Helix is now rapidly making a name for itself as major force to be reckoned with in the craft industry.

Helix was founded in 1887 as a traditional British manufacturer producing wooden rules. The past 121 years have seen the company grow and adapt in line with the changing market to produce an array of stationery items to meet all school needs.

The renowned Oxford tinned maths set has sold over 100 million units worldwide. The company’s expertise is in innovation and quality, with many patents to its name; including the safety point compass, folding rule, the threadless compass ring and anti-tamper screw to name but a few. All of which have combined to establish the business as an industry leader.

So why the move into craft? Jon Burke, group marketing manager; Helix, said: “As a business, we wanted to expand outside of our traditional markets and into a new arena where we could bring our innovation and design expertise to bear and where we already had a certain level of brand recognition. The craft market, and its large, growing consumer base fitted that bill perfectly.”

Helix then took up the challenge of producing an exciting, innovative range of crafting tools for consumers. “Under the brand ‘Craft with Helix’ we worked very closely with craft expert Stephanie Weightman in developing a product that truly met card and paper crafters needs,” adds Jon.

Helix has a talented in-house design department with a wealth of experience to ensure that everything including materials, functionality, product and packaging design and manufacturing processes all came together to produce an innovative finished product and accessories.

The resulting range – based around the Craft Room workstation – has been met with widespread success in the UK and beyond. Jon comments: “We launched in the UK in November 2007 after 10 months of intense development and the product was very well received by crafters and retailers alike. In addition, we presented the Craft Room at the leading industry trade fair – CHA – in the US - where we won the overall innovation award for best product in show. The resulting interest in overseas markets has been phenomenal.”

The beauty of the Craft Room range is that you keep adding to it; so while the workstation is used for embossing and comes with a basic shapes board, there are a number of additional design boards – and techniques - that can be added in. The system is great for parchment craft, cutting and even stamping.

The promotion of the Craft Room range is supported by demonstration days, DVDs, advertising and promotions. “This is a long term investment for us, with further additions to the range planned. It’s a range that will appeal to many crafters and will always have a fresh look about it,” concludes Jon.

And with well over a century of heritage behind it, Craft with Helix is looking forward to a long future ahead.
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If you’ve enjoyed reading Craft Focus magazine, why not log onto our website at www.craftfocus.com? Containing up-to-the-minute news, events and special offers, the site is updated regularly with information to help you advance your business.

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Pazzles Inspiration is being exclusively distributed in the UK by Craftology.
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email: info@pazzles.co.uk - tel: 0141 882 8764 - www.pazzles.co.uk
Innovative company GCD Studios is leading the way stateside with its award-winning scrapbooking products, and is fast building an enviable reputation in the UK...

GCD Studios is a company on a mission. The team behind the California-based business believe that there is an artist inside of us all that is bursting to get out and, in the grand tradition of all American heroes, that they are just the institution to release it, as explains company CEO, Kent Chelsey: “At its core, GCD Studios has been empowering people to express their personal and professional creativity using our innovative products. GCD Studios enables the artists in all of us to come out and express themselves.”

With a sharp focus on design-led lines that have been created by an international team, the California-based company is also its own manufacturer, ensuring that the high quality stock can be brought to the market at a lower cost than their competitors can afford. This control over manufacturing means that the company is at liberty to decide what new technologies to use in the production process, and has wholeheartedly embraced this opportunity by selecting the most advanced methods available to create increasingly innovative products. Due to this fact, the majority of products from GCD Studios have revolutionised whatever market that they have entered into, redefining new products for existing craft techniques, such as the textured, shimmereed double sided paper and decorative metallic paper that have been so well received.

GCD Studios has the enviable quality of confidence, and sees itself as one of the premier companies in the world, with both the talent to build new markets in areas such as Continental Europe as well as the creative solutions to drive the evolution of the global craft market. The colossal US arts and craft market is reported to be worth approximately £1.6 billion, and papercrafts alone is thought to account for roughly a fifth of this enormous figure with an apparent population base of around 30 million consumers. Whilst focusing on the biggest areas of growth within this towering industry, including paper, stickers, embellishments, rubber stamping and creative tools, the company has also heard the cries from British shores, as Kent comments: “The UK market has a lot of thriving craft businesses that are in need of innovative designs and versatile products at a phenomenal price point. GCD Studios serves this up daily to the stockist.”

The inspirational range, which is distributed on home soil by Scrapbookingonline, has a wide appeal for consumers and retailers alike as it has been wisely designed to be fully coordinated and multifunctional, making it easy to merchandise whilst offering great value for money on both sides of the til. Recent product launches that have garnered respect and attention include industry firsts such as the epoxy stickers that can bend, twist and be generally manipulated and cut in any way the crafter desires, as well as an impressive 19 new premium designer collections. This, coupled with the fact that the company is constantly launching new products and has plans to continue in the same vein for the next three years, makes the GCD Studios range an attractive long term option as well as a prospective saviour of sales on the shelves.

Further Information
To find out more visit the website www.gcdstudios.com. Alternatively, access www.scrapbookingonline.co.uk.
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