

fig&me

MARKETING YOUR HANDMADE DOLLS

The Dollmaking Business Series



INTRO

Marketing your dolls really just means creating more awareness for your work. We can talk about this topic in a different million ways so I am going to try and give you simple avenues to focus your efforts so you don't end up spreading yourself too thin.

As always, I recommend you don't do everything at once. My advice as always is to focus on one platform or strategy, put all your energy into it and when you feel you have it under control, add another platform or implement a new strategy. That way you are always progressing, but you are building the successive layers over strong foundations.

HOW TO CREATE MORE AWARENESS FOR YOUR DOLLS

- 1 INSTAGRAM + FACEBOOK
- 2 PINTEREST + YOU TUBE + GOOGLE
- 3 WEBSITE + SEO
- 4 EMAIL MARKETING
- 5 FACEBOOK GROUPS
- 6 ADS
- 7 TIPS + RECOMMENDATIONS

Let's Start with:

SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Using Instagram as a Business Profile**
- **Opening a Business Page on Facebook**

We start with social media first because it's free, there are literally billions of people using both Instagram and Facebook on a daily basis for several hours per week. Some of those people can become your customers, raving fans and friends. Nowadays people expect you to have some sort of social media account, whether you have both or just one.

I am concentrating on these two because I think that is where most likely you will find best return for your efforts. I am also suggesting you open Business profiles to begin with for several reasons:

If you have a Business Profile on Instagram you get stats on who is interacting with your posts, stories, etc. Stats are not there to make you happy, stats are there for you to learn. If you are getting stats on your posts, you can see where these people live, their age ranges, etc. which can help you understand how and who with your content/work is resonating most with. You can even tell when your "audience" is mostly active so therefore you would want to schedule your time on this platform around that time, so you can interact better with them, in real time. If people interact right away with your posts, and you reply to them at the same time, the algorithm gives you better reach because it's "seeing" a lot of action on both ends, therefore it thinks this content is doing well and it shows it to more people. Such a simple thing. No hacks.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The reality is that our life is run online, more and more. This can either make us sad or make us happy. I choose to see it as an opportunity, because if I was trying to be a doll maker and subsist only from the patronage of local sales, I would have had to stop way too long ago. So yes, see this as an opportunity, an option, a chance and don't dwell. Investigate the best practices for the platform you are using, don't do anything shady, and dive right in.

If you have an Instagram business account you can also check the stats per post, called "insights". These tell you how many people have liked the post, how many times it has been shared, saved or how many comments it has. Use all these information not as a vanity metric, but as a tool to see what is it in this post/video/photo that is creating stronger awareness/action than another one. Then try to replicate some of that in your next one, and so forth, until you have a pretty good grasp of what works for you, your audience and your work.

Facebook is the same, more or less. Opening a Business page for your doll brand will allow you to see stats on your audience, boost posts for greater reach, etc.

The thing about social media is that it puts your work in front of people. It creates a "life" for your business. Your voice becomes the voice of your brand. You are one person and therefore it stands to reason that your voice as an artist, as a maker, will translate as the

voice behind your business. Social media creates that awareness for you and that is practically: priceless.

Also using hashtags will help you reach other people that are not currently in your audience or pool of followers, and this is how slowly but surely you start growing your audience.

Later on, when you are ready to tackle Instagram Ads or Facebook Ads, you will need to use the Facebook Ad Manager which is available only if you have a Business Facebook page.

Regarding hashtags on Instagram, they are a great way to broaden the scope of reach. I suggest to use both high volume hashtags (a lot of people use them) and low volume hashtags (there is less competition). I recommend you use first and foremost the hashtag for your business, ie: #mynewdollbusiness (mine is obviously #figandme). Please, as courtesy to other businesses/creators/dollmakers: do not use their business name hashtag in your doll posts just so their audience sees your work.

Some of the hashtags you can play with broadly are:
#clothdoll #naturalfiberartdoll #dollmaking #dollmaker
#makingdolls #dollphotography #handmadedoll
#dollsofinstagram #artdoll

Then you can add hashtags particular to the photo or video, for example:

- location
- season, month, day, etc
- popular hashtags for that day (#manicmonday #throwbackthursday, etc)
- type of photography (#moody, #bright, etc).

You can then also add hashtags that pertain to the content: #inmystudio #flatlay #closeup #behindthescenes

Once you have the hashtags that pertain to your business, your area of expertise (waldorf dolls, art dolls, cloth dolls, etc.) then you can add hashtags for the skills involved (sewing, knitting, embroidery, wig making, painting, needle felting, etc.) and then you need to find the hashtags that your ideal audience, your ideal customer is using.

Are they moms looking for toys for their kids? Follow instagram accounts like that, find what hashtags they are using and then try to create content that might fit into some of those hashtags. Are you shooting to reach more doll collectors? Same thing.

Or the other way around this is: follow accounts that inspire you to create. That make you a better person, business owner and dollmaker. See what hashtags these accounts use. See which of your content might fit into those, keep it in mind for the next time you have something similar to share. Think outside the box. If you only follow dollmakers, it might be possible everyone is using the same-old tired hashtags, your content might not pop as "unique" in there. Think of creative ways to bring your work to a different audience, one who can look at your photos and be immediately interested.

Step 1

SEARCH ENGINES



We are thinking of Google, DuckDuckGo, Bing, etc. as search engines, however Pinterest and YouTube fit the same bill because that is how people are using these platforms.

People go to the above and type in “things” which we already know are called “keywords”. Some keywords have loads of results so even though posts on your website, or your doll photos, might be titled “waldorf inspired doll”, chances are you are going to end up being on page umpteenhundredseventytwo. I am not trying to discourage you from showing on search engine results, it is just much harder and takes longer to play the SEO (Search Engine Optimization) game, though it has brilliant results for you.

If you are following my humble advice to create a website or online store for your business, then you will need to select keywords for your website, use them in your tags and categories, within your titles, in the alt-description or meta-data of your photos, etc. Slowly but surely you will start popping up in ye olde Google, depending on what people are searching for, and whether there is stuff on your website that pertains to that quest.

Now, Pinterest is much easier to use. People shop through Pinterest all the time and they actually create boards as some sort of shopping cart, from which they buy as they can.

Step 2

SEARCH ENGINES

It is obviously a great marketing tool for you. Again, we go in there creating a Business Account, that again, will give you stats regarding your audience and how your pins are performing. If you have a website, you can claim your domain (or you can claim your Etsy shop too) and that will give you the option to set Rich Pins which you decide what information they come with. You can promote your pins, push them through ads to reach more people, etc.

Pinterest is now also working with hashtags. So, people on Pinterest have different ways to find you: through Search within the app, through Discovery, through following you (you pop on their feed when you pin something) and through hashtags. Plenty of opportunity to master this tool and make it work for you.

Now YouTube is also a mass engine with tons of people using it daily, and while it can be brilliant to create awareness for your work and/or bring traffic to your website/shop it will also be the hardest/most difficult to use. I wanted to include it because I see a lot of value in it, but I want you to go in with open eyes.

Creating video content is not for the faint of heart, it is extremely time consuming and might be the one that takes the longest to build trust through. But as the world moves into more video, I highly recommend you start learning now how to shoot high-quality videos, edit them, etc.

Step 3

WEBSITE

The same way it makes sense to learn about photography, to invest in high quality materials for your dolls, it also makes sense to invest in a place where, as you grow, can grow with you. This is why I shall recommend, only once more (promise!) to have a website.


Your website becomes the HUB for all the other branches of your online presence:

- You make a little video showing how you dress your dolls, the video then redirects people to your website store.
- You post on Instagram about a doll, you then direct people to a blog post talking about the doll, or your "Order a Doll From Me" page.
- You create a Facebook group for your dolls and asks permission from your customers to display their photos on your website.
- You create a free tutorial on how to make doll socks, and in order for people to download it they need to submit their email address, which will help you obtain newsletter subscribers, and the form to sign up is in your website.
- You have a Gallery of your most beautiful work...on your website.
- You run Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads, Pinterest Ads...and they all lead to a landing page on your website.

You get the picture.

Step 4

EMAIL MARKETING



4. EMAIL

- LANDING PAGE
- WEEKLY, MONTHLY, ETC.
- GREAT WAY TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE ALREADY INTERESTED IN YOUR WORK.

This is like the secret weapon. I had no clue of how powerful email marketing can be and I think is other than social media, you land directly in the hands of people. But unlike social media, where you might be “pushed” to unsuspecting potential customers via hashtags or shared content by their friends, emails land directly in the hands of those that actually know of you and want more of you. They signed up, gave their consent, for you to talk to them. Great news!

But in order for them to sign up for your newsletter, you will need a way to capture their emails and for them to click on all the privacy settings of their choice. Most email marketing companies offer you a way to do this, but I recommend you have a dedicated sign-up page on your website, that way you can easily share it on social media, etc. For example: mynewbusiness.com/sign-up, etc.

You can choose how often you communicate with your subscribers and what type of content you send to them. It might be in the way of announcing to them before the dolls go up for sale, or which dolls you will be selling (like me), or maybe include extras only for newsletter subscribers: discount coupons, free shipping, a little gift, etc.

Step 5

FACEBOOK GROUPS

5. FACEBOOK GROUPS

- CREATE COMMUNITY
- SHOW YOUR WORK
- BE HELPFUL AND FRIENDLY

FIG & ME | MARKETING YOUR HANDMADE DOLLS

And now, the power of Facebook Groups. This is marketing, the sneaky way. I mean sneaky, because you are not actually “marketing” per-se, but you are making connections, friends and listening to the conversation regarding your market or craft.

In these groups you can share your work, you can learn from other dollmakers or business owners, you can listen directly to moms and their concerns regarding toys/dolls or listen to collectors and the things they like/gravitate to. It is a great way to understand how your work is perceived, and the temperature of the market. While we work, tucked away in the studio, we might become a little insulated to what the world out there is actually doing, so Facebook groups are a way to stay current, informed and on top of the ball.

All you need to do is search for the groups that apply to the market you are trying to reach, request to join, find the rules of posting and be nice. Easy. You can find some of the groups I belong to on Facebook on this post: <http://www.figandme.com/blog/doll-making-tips-how-to-connect-with-doll-makers>

Step 6

ADS

So now we reach the final realm of marketing, running ads for your business. You can run ads on:

- Instagram + Facebook
- Google + YouTube
- Pinterest
- Etsy

You can choose where you want to spend your budget for ads and what makes the most sense in the beginning. If you are going to run ads on Facebook/Instagram I will advise you to create a great landing page where all the traffic will go to, and for something that either you can sell more than once or at least capture email addresses so you can do a follow up with whoever landed there.

You can also choose to buy YouTube Ads or Google Ads so that your website/store or channel pops up in the search engine.

Then there is Pinterest, where you can Promote one of your pins and get it in front of more people. This pin can direct people to an actual store listing, or a custom doll order, etc.

Finally, if you went the Etsy route, you can buy ads to promote your listings and get them to the front of the page for your keywords.

Initially, when I started to sell my dolls, I would constantly buy “ads” (though in those days they were called differently) just to get my listings to the front of the page/category, because I needed visibility for my stuff.

Do your research, invest in learning how to create great visuals, start with one type of ad at a time and grow.

Extra ways in which you can market your dolls are through seasonal sales and coupons. If you pay attention inside those Facebook groups, you can see that people are in the mood to buy dolls at certain times of the year, so you need to be prepared for that. Create a beautiful collection for Easter or Christmas, or offer discount coupons for Back-to-school and End-of-year. I recently ran a 50% off sale on all my PDF patterns as celebration for my birthday. My advice is to choose something that is meaningful to you, so that you can translate to others the “why” and your very own excitement.

To begin with, you can start with just promoting your Etsy listings. Have a small budget per week (\$5) and pay it consistently for the first six months or until you sell-out your custom spots. Think of ways to get in front of more people, and do be patient because as they say: Rome wasn't built in a day.

Above all, while I run on ten cylinders and on many different fronts, I didn't start this way; please don't look at everything I am doing and try to do it yourself, all at once! I learned slowly and I took on one platform at a time. I recommend the same to you. Pick one channel for social media and invest yourself into it. Then pick another one, then another one, and so forth. My best advice: start with the website, open a newsletter and an Instagram or Facebook account. Little by little the numbers will grow, the traffic will be steady and your sales too.

And finally,

SOME TIPS

- **seasonal sales**
- **coupons**
- **ads budget**
- **focus on one strategy**
- **start small**