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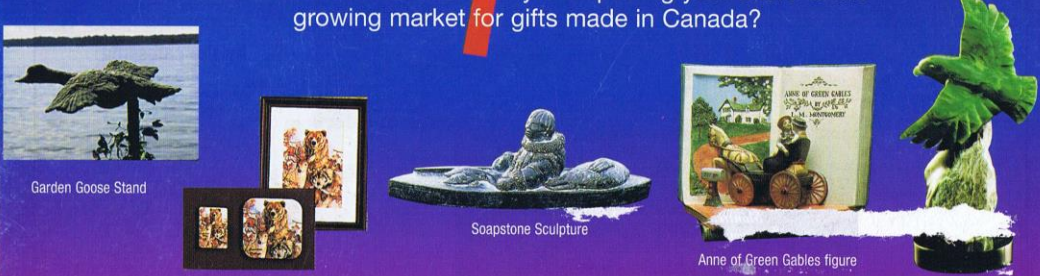
Insuring Your Store • Merchandising for Rave Reviews • Store Profile — The Leprechaun • Industry News

# GIFTS AND TABLEWARES

Selling Souvenirs  
Musically-themed Merchandise  
Licensing Update  
Catalogue Your Profit

## Made in Canada

Products that are made domestically, whether manufactured or handcrafted are in enormous demand. Are you capturing your share of the growing market for gifts made in Canada?



Garden Goose Stand

Wildlife Art Prints

Soapstone Sculpture

Anne of Green Gables figure

Jade Eagle

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# SELLING *Souvenirs*

Make your store a “sight to see,” and capture the attention—and business—of local residents as well as visitors.



BY LINDA MCKENDRY, VMPC

**QUESTION FROM READER:** I sell items to tourists as well as local people. Should I display the items that I buy as souvenirs in a different place and in a different way from my regular items?

**ANSWER FROM LINDA:** Sightseeing shouldn't be reserved for the Seven Wonders of the World when the world of exciting shopping is yours to create, every day of the week and any time of the year. Why are displays so important to souvenir sales? Because “seeing” sells. When a visitor is busy dealing with the challenge of a different language, culture and currency, or a local person hurries by your shop, he or she will only take a fleeting moment to glance at your store and determine whether it's a “sight” to try or to recommend.

You can't draw a line in the sand as to what is a souvenir and what isn't. If by souvenir you mean those items that are made specifically as a memento of an area by virtue of miniaturization or replication of a local attraction or tradition, then my answer is “yes” to displaying them separately from regular, everyday items. Display them on clean, sturdy, updated fixtures with good lighting in a themed environment that stimulates all the senses. This prevents typical souvenirs from appearing second rate. Everyone looks around for “some little thing” that they can take home to Aunt Bess who picked up their papers, Tommy who mowed their lawn and Martha, because she'll get mad if they get something for Aunt Bess and not for her. These items are best displayed in masses; stacked deep and high, or overflowing in bright baskets, easy to reach by all, and with clearly visible price tags.

Souvenir is French for come to mind or remember. The dictionary description is “something kept or serving as a reminder of a place, person, or occasion; keepsake; memento.” It stands to reason that if you make your shop a memorable place to visit, because of the displays, beginning from the outside and working to the back on the inside, then everything in your store can be suitable as a “souvenir.” If you add exceptional service, especially when you send customers out with goodies packaged in a unique way, locals will tell visiting family or friends, and tourists will tell fellow travelers.

We once had a textile representative from Atlanta, Georgia visiting us in Calgary, Alberta. Banff is less than an hour away and the mountains were clear. We decided to drive our guest there for a quick sunset sightseeing tour and dinner. He was so impressed that he wanted to have a souvenir to take home. We scoured every shop looking for something “Made in Banff.” He frowned at the fudge being made in a shop window as a souvenir because he wanted something that would last longer. We inspected hundreds of labels on various items in numerous shops looking for “Made in Alberta.” Even “Made in Canada” would have pleased our visitor. The sweat shirts showing an RCMP character were made in the USA. We really laughed at that! We finally found a selection of Inuit sculpture and works of Canadian Native art displayed in a gallery. They were a beautiful “sight to see” but were beyond his gift budget and ability to transport home. He settled for some pretty stones from the road side.

One of my clients faces this challenge all year-round. Judy Timler, who owns and manages the Heritage Gift Shop, a gift and collectibles shop in Picton, Ontario, says,

“There is constant crossover in purchasing by local people and tourists alike. Travelers come in looking specifically for a souvenir and end up purchasing something for themselves like a wedding gift. Local people come in all the time for a souvenir to send to friends and relatives overseas: Scotland, for example.”

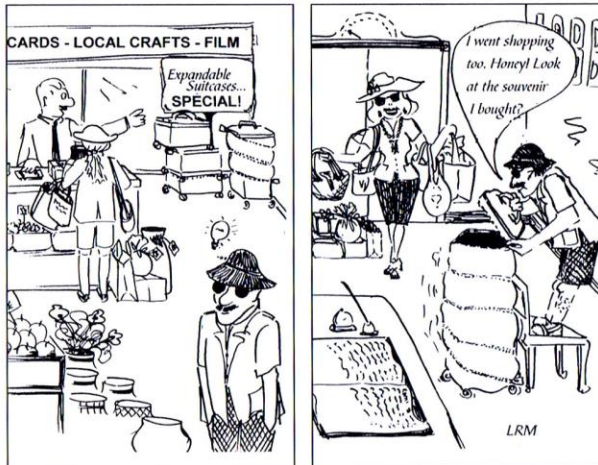
I asked Judy if she encounters a lot of people like our rep from the States looking specifically for something made in the area. She said that her handblown glassware is imported and one lady in particular was admiring it but wanted to know why she didn't carry any local handblown glass. Judy explained that she couldn't get any. “The local artisans have two problems selling to retail; first, they regard retail stores as competition and second, they believe they have to supply large quantities and varieties of product. Neither of which is the case.

“My stained glass pieces are made locally but the designs are exclusively for my shop. If a customer, from in or out of town, wants more selection, I can recommend that they visit the artisan's studio where I know the customer won't find the exact same item. This is a win-win situation for everyone. I am more than willing to provide a market for unique, one-of-a-kind items that many people want for souvenirs.” In her experience what won't sell in the artist's studio often does sell in the retail shop and vice versa. Judy would like to have more local artwork to display which is why she provides an outlet for a collection of hand-painted T-shirts featuring local beach scenes—popular in the summer—created as a hobby by her husband.

Tourists are collectors too, which is why spoons, cups and saucers, banners, caps, T-



(original ads replaced by illustrations suitable for topic)



shirts and the like can be displayed front and center and always sell. Judy knows vacationers who return year after year and have created a family tradition out of their annual souvenir purchase. "If I don't happen to have a pewter Christmas tree ornament handy in July for this one family, they act as though I really let them down," she says. "It's their annual custom to take home a new pewter tree ornament from their holiday each year. So, I'm going to make sure that I have a supply on hand this summer!" Knowing Judy, she'll tell other customers about this tradition, it will catch on, and increase traffic and sales.

Judy's shop, which I helped her arrange and display, is designed to please both locals and tourists alike. Everything has a place and is loosely "departmentalized." Products are separated, grouped and displayed based on gender preference and color, pattern, and style. Fixtures and products are moved enough to enhance sales and prevent frequent customers from getting bored or taking the Heritage Gift Shop for granted. Her customers, both local and tourists, want the same thing; a variety of good quality items with a broad price point mix complete with personal interest and service, all offered in an entertaining and memorable atmosphere.

Judy's shop both inside and out reinforces the image of the name, Heritage, which is why it is a place that people from in or out-of-town want to browse. They expect to see something that will make a great souvenir; a memento of a holiday or of living in such an historical area. Everything about the shop, starting with its old-fashioned wooden door with the beveled glass pane, invites passersby to take home an item that represents a piece of Picton.

Make everything relating to your shop, from your exterior display to your shopping bags, a "sight to see" year-round and travelers will flock to visit you, enthusiastically encouraged by all the local people you present to and please every day.

*If you have merchandising/display questions you would like help with write to Linda c/o Gifts and Tablewares, 1450 Don Mills Road, Don Mills, Ontario, M3B 2X7 or fax her at (416) 442-2213.*

Professional visual merchandising consultant Linda McKendry offers full, on-site consulting and instruction for retailers, wholesalers, distributors and manufacturers. (Hourly, daily or contract rates are available.) Linda is also available to speak at corporation conferences or association meetings. Topics include Visual Merchandising, Display and Visual Sales Techniques for merchandise displays at P.O.S. To book Linda's services call (905) 813-8725 or write to Linda at VMD, Visual Merchandising Presentation Consulting Ltd., 6309 Donway Drive, Mississauga, Ontario, L5V 1J6.



**Do you have tourists trickling through your store all day leisurely browsing? Or do you have a bus load all at once? Plan your layout and product displays to accommodate them efficiently.**

**Keep themed items together in the same space or fixture. (the items all have the same motif) This will increase sales when the motif is favored but variety of product, or price point is desired.**

**Place items for adults at higher eye-level than for children. Group and space to keep stuff organized and avoid visual clutter. Keep aisles extra clear and wide for travelers with back packs who shop as large groups.**

**Use appropriate portable, functional, and finished fixtures for the image of your store and what draws tourists to your area. (e.g. beach, rustic, urban)**

