



THE MARKET STALLHOLDERS REGISTER

Article : So you want to be a Stallholder?

Written by a Stallholder with many years of trading ...

So you are bored with those long lazy Sundays with nothing to do. Suddenly you have a great idea. I can buy or make these thingy's and sell them at a market, make heaps of money and retire to the Bahamas - well, we can all dream. But how do I go about it?

Where do I start?

Hopefully these few pointers will get you on the road to success - or the boat to the islands.

Find a Market that suits you and your product.

Once you have bought it, made it, baked it, grown it, knitted it or just nailed it together and painted it, look for a market close to you - not much point in travelling too far for your first market.

The market must also suit your product. Trash and Treasure markets are not the place to sell high quality craft items and vice versa.

Visit the market first and get a feel of the place. Look out for any stall with products the same or similar to yours. If there are too many people selling the same kind of product, this may not be the market for you. Much better, find a market where you are the only person selling that product.

If possible have a sample or photograph of your product to show the organiser.

Notice how other stallholders have their stalls presented. Get inspiration from them but do not copy them.

Approach any happy, smiling stallholder and ask their opinion of the market.

Expect the answer ...

"you should have been here last month, today it's too hot/cold, wet/windy, the dollar has crashed, it's the war, there's an election coming up" and my favourite, "having a great day, my dog got run over yesterday".

Look at the visitors, are there lots of them and are they carrying full shopping bags?

So you think "this is the place for me" Reach for the valium and try and find the organiser.

This strange breed of person is usually found in close proximity to the food stalls with a mobile phone glued to their ear.

Questions to ask the organiser :

- Is a stall available at the next market?
- How much is the Stall and do I have to pay in advance?
- Will you cover me for public liability insurance and at what extra cost?
- Which site can I have?
- What are the operating hours? What time do I have to be here?
- Can I have a copy of the rules and regulations?
- Is the stall fee cheaper if I become a "permanent"
- Does the market run "rain, hail or shine"
- If you would like to be under cover - ask
- How is the market promoted?

Getting Started - What do I need?

Now that you have a product to sell, you will need some way of displaying it.

Card tables are a good start but remember a nice clean piece of material to cover them. If the material reaches the ground it looks much more professional and also gives you somewhere to hide your packing boxes. Don't forget packing and bags for your customers to carry all of your goodies.

- To sell food, check with your local council for special rules and regulations. (see Food Labeling Article)
- If you want to use a shade cover, know how to put it up, Many a "newby" has been shocked by the reply when wondering aloud ... "where does this pole go?"

Other stallholders are busy with their own set-up and do not have the time to come and help you, so you should be able to set-up on your own.



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Remember that the shade cover also has to be fixed securely to the ground, The pegs supplied with these covers are generally useless, get decent pegs from a camping store or use plastic bottles filled with water, sand or concrete to secure your cover.

Practice the set up at home so that when you get to the market, you know what goes where. An hour before dawn in a cold, wet and windy paddock is NOT the place to practice.

A silly point but, remember that all of your display equipment and product has to fit into or onto your vehicle and still leave enough room for you to be able to drive safely.

Some change is usually helpful, and of course a flask of coffee or tea.

It is always a good idea to have business cards or at least something with your name and number on it so people can find you again.

Appropriate clothing, whatever the weather, you are going to be out in it for a long time so dress accordingly. In the winter, thermal underwear, warm socks and boots have to be considered.

Pricing your product

This, of course, depends on the product. I have friends who have a retail outlet in a fairly exclusive tourist town. Their attitude is to think of a price, double it and add on a bit for luck. This just won't work at a market. The price has to be fair and seen as reasonable to the shopper. The price should give you enough room to offer discounts for quantity or to close the sale. In my experience discounts to other stallholders is always greatly appreciated, especially applicable to food stalls.

Know your product

A simple question like "how does it work?" should be able to be answered.

A blank stare at the sky does not inspire confidence. If you are buying in your product, make sure it is all above board and legal. Carry the suppliers receipt with you. I have witnessed the Federal Police raiding a market stall looking for, and finding, counterfeit goods, believe me, they don't muck around.

Special Events

I will never forget our first special event, a fund-raiser for the local fire brigade. Some ageing old rockers provided entertainment. The venue was really great, surrounded by tall trees on a hot summers day. Entry cost was around \$20 for a family. The cost of the stall was \$25 and the days' takings amounted to \$12.00.

Generally speaking, people who pay to get into an event go for a specific reason and want to be fed and entertained. The market stalls may only be of secondary importance.

So choose your event carefully, if your product has no relevance to the theme of the event, usually it will be a waste of your time, but we have all done it, haven't we?

Selling your product / Presentation

I always chuckle at stallholders who hide behind their stall, reading the newspaper. These are invariably the ones who always have a bad day. If they can't show any interest in their products, why should anyone else? Stand up behind your display, give a welcoming smile to your visitors, be happy, share a joke and smile even more as you take the customers money. Make them want to come back. If you take an order, ask for a deposit, name and a phone number. Phone before the next market to remind the customer to collect their goods.

After your first Market

You are back home, unpacked the car and have counted your takings. The boots are off, feet up, a drink in your hand and you ask yourself "was it worth it?" Hopefully the answer will be yes, even if you haven't sold a thing. It was worth it because you learned how to improve your stall, how better to display your product, you will have met customers and other stallholders who may become good, if not lifelong, friends.

You learned that you want to do it all again next month, but do it better.

So, when's the next market?

Welcome stallholder