

A  
PRACTICAL  
GUIDE  
TO  
HOME-BASED  
ROSETTE MAKING

Invest in the best equipment your budget will allow. Very few basic tools are needed, and good tools will speed up your work and help maintain quality.

## SCISSORS

The most basic tool you require and will use constantly. Buy a good pair of dressmaking scissors and a cheaper set for cutting paper etc. Try to only use your best scissors for fabric cutting.

## GLUE GUN

Hot melt glue guns sold for hobby purposes often have heater elements of around 40 watt capacity. This type of gun is generally only designed to produce a small quantity of glue at a time, it then has adequate time to reheat and melt the glue for the next job.

Rosettes are made in batches, therefore an almost continuous supply of glue is required when you are in full production. A hobby gun will be too slow and extremely frustrating. Time = money = profit. A commercial gun will have at least 120 watt heating capacity and will be capable of producing a continuous bead of glue with very little hand pressure. The commercial gun will also use 12mm glue sticks which are very much cheaper than the small thin hobby variety.

A commercial glue gun is an important addition to your tool kit.

## SEWING MACHINE

If you decide to sew your rosettes, there is very little advantage in having an industrial sewing machine unless you are a skilled machinist. The speed of operation of the industrial model makes it difficult to control when you are sewing in a circle.

Since no fancy stitching is required, a straight stitch electric machine is all that's required. £15-20 second-hand from the newspaper or car boot sale. A machine like this will last for several years before you wear it out.

Rosette ribbons are not subjected to undue strain, so there is little point in using expensive button strength thread. A light thread is adequate, and because you can wind much more onto the bottom bobbin, it will also save a lot of time.

## HOT FOIL PRINTERS

There is no 'ideal' printing machine for the rosette maker. All have strengths and weaknesses.

There are two basic types available:

1. Upright machines where the handle is pulled downwards and the printing medium, either type or metal block, rises and falls onto the item to be printed as you pull and release the handle.
2. Platen action machines, which in terms of looks, often seem antiquated when compared to the 'bells, whistles and go-faster stripes' of the Taiwanese versions of upright models.

Platen action machines are of immensely strong construction and are designed as work horses. Not pretty, but effective. In the platen action, the printing medium remains static, and the item to be printed moves up towards it on a hinged table or 'platen'. Because the work moves to the type, the platen machine has the disadvantage, where longer lengths of tail or sash ribbon is being printed, of creating movement in the work piece. This can lead to misaligned printing and rejects. This shortcoming can be overcome with the help of a couple of rubber bands to keep the work in place. The great advantage of the platen action for the rosette maker is that the type stays still, therefore it does not need to be 'locked up' (tightened) into the machine as securely as it does with a rise and fall action where the type is literally hanging upside down. This is an enormous time saver, and far outweighs the disadvantage of movement in ribbons.

In our experience, the platen action is best for the rosette manufacturer.

Our preferred machines are manufactured by 'Magmark' and 'J.T. Marshall'

How you market your rosettes will vary greatly depending on your circumstances. If you have lots of personal contacts this is ideal and you can get off to a cracking start. For most people, there will only be a very small group of people who can be relied on to give orders, and to build a viable business it will be necessary to look further afield.

It is probably best not to rely too heavily on promises made before you start your enterprise. Plan a marketing campaign from the start.

The First Rule of Marketing

**"MAKE IT EASY FOR YOUR CUSTOMER TO BUY FROM YOU"**

This may sound strange, but look at some rosette price lists, and you soon start to wonder how to work out the final price after adding this and extras for that. A Philadelphia Lawyer would struggle with the complexities of some lists.

Make your pricing crystal clear. Ask a friend to work out the cost of a fictitious order and see if they come up with the same price as you.

Make your price list as professional as possible. It is best not to go into print immediately, as your list will probably change a few times in the early months as you add things and get to a market price. Use good quality originals, well laid out, and photocopy them.

Use the best quality cover you can afford. Glossy if your budget will stretch to it. If your prices are being considered, the chances are the show secretary will have a few price lists on their desk as well as yours, make sure yours is the one that stands out and gets the order.

Sticky backed photographs of the type estate agents use on property particulars are a good cheap way of getting colour into your brochure.

Be prepared for the phone to ring. Warn the kids and tell them what to say if they answer the phone and get an enquiry.

## ADVERTISING

Advertising is expensive, and a complete waste of time unless you can do it consistently. People often look at an advert several times over a period of a few months before they respond.

Unless you have a reasonable budget which will allow you to place regular advertisements, don't do it in the early stages of your business set up. More effective marketing is available.

Your aim in telling the world that you make rosettes, is to get them to beat a path to your door, cheque books in hand. Just saying 'Jenny Smith now makes beautiful rosettes' will have little impact. You must make the person reading your literature want to use your product. You must therefore stress the advantages and give them reasons to buy from you.

At this stage a trip to your local library and reading some books on market for the small business will give you an enormous amount of help, and reinforce what is being said here.

Let's look at the negative side first. The biggest hurdle you have to jump is the fear the show secretary will have in placing an order with an unknown supplier. If you let them down, there is a dreadful mess. A show with no rosettes. The show secretary looks incompetent.

Next problem is quality. Will your delivery on the Friday night before the show be as good as the sample you were so proud of, or will you collapse under pressure and produce a load of old garbage.

Your letter must address these problems head on, but not in a way that just raises the doubts before the secretary has time to think of them.

The best marketing edge you have when you start up is that you will happily take on short notice jobs, and small orders are no problem. You will even do small short notice jobs without charging the earth!

Most show secretaries will be in need of rosettes quickly at some point. They may even be willing to accept late entries for a show, knowing that they can order another of class of rosettes locally, and get them very quickly.

Your strengths:

1. You are a local business, serving your county and beyond.
2. As the owner you are personally accountable to the person ordering. They know who to contact in the very unlikely event of something being less than correct.
3. You welcome smaller orders.
4. Where possible you will personally deliver the rosettes.

Start the first draft of your sales letter. The first example is how not to do it.

Dear Show Secretary,

I am writing to introduce a new service available locally, and hope you will be interested.

I have recently started making rosettes at home and am sure you will like them. Please be assured that Bill (my long suffering husband) and I will do our very best to produce an excellent range of rosettes at the cheapest possible price.

The enclosed sample gives you some idea of the quality of our range.

Please use the enclosed order form.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L.H.V. Williams.

encl./ price list and sample.

This is how *not* to do it. This letter is impersonal, and raises doubts in the reader's mind. They will stick with their normal supplier and you have thrown away the cost of your literature as well as the selling opportunity.

*Mrs P. Johnston,*  
*Hon. Secretary, Yourtown Pony Club,* (Write the person's name & address by hand)  
*23 Acacia Avenue,*  
*OURTOWN*

#### NEW RANGE OF ROSETTES FOR 2000

*Dear Mrs Johnston,* (Write the person's surname by hand, or, as a minimum 'Dear Secretary' by hand if you don't know the person's name)

Our new season price list is now available, and there are special prices available for early ordering. Be among the first to see our new range of locally made high quality rosettes.

Extensive range of box and knife pleated rosettes  
Sashes of Honour  
Show sundries and printing  
Quality control under the personal supervision of the owner  
We will always try to accomodate late orders  
No surcharge for late orders  
Small quantities welcome  
Please ring Jean Williams on 1234 45678 for prompt personal attention. I am normally available in the evenings up to 8.30pm.

Please ask for a sample rosette and our list. You will not be disappointed.

Kind regards,

*Jean Williams* (sign each letter with a first and surname)  
Jean Williams

You have your letter for distribution, now you have to decide who to send it to.

From your local library get a list of clubs and societies, look in Yellow Pages for equestrian centres, riding schools etc., watch the magazines for announcements of forthcoming shows and get the secretary's address. Ask around.

Try to get at least 4 lists with around 30 names on each, a mixture of local and slightly further afield. This is the basis of your marketing mailing list.

If you can afford it, send out the first introductory letter to each person on all four lists. Then start a follow up with your mailing lists from month 2 as detailed below.

Otherwise, send a letter to each name on the first list over a monthly period, 7 or 8 letters a week. The next month move on to your second list, and so on until list four is completed.

On the fifth month you will be back to your first list. This then starts your follow up letters.

Each name on your lists will get 3 letters a year from you.

This system works. Sooner or later your letter will arrive at around the point the secretary needs rosettes, or the wearing down process will make them respond.

Persistence pays. Readers Digest don't give up do they?

Its the repetition that makes it work. The quality of your product gets orders, the service gets repeat orders.

As you get a response, move that name off your ordinary lists onto a 'customer' list.

ASK questions of anyone who responds. When do they order? How many do they normally use? Who do they buy off at the moment?

This information allows you to target your customer list exactly. If the shows are in Spring and Autumn, you can time your reminders and phone calls to best advantage.

Aim your lists to get a spread of business. Horses, Dogs, Birds, etc