

The following ideas are tailored mostly for higher priced, larger items. They may not be applicable to small lower priced items that can be shipped in a small envelope.

Ideas for Improving Internet Sales of Artwork

Get Personal: Selling in person at the FFA Show is easy: customers see you, they talk to you, they see and touch your products, and develop trust. Selling on the internet is completely impersonal and much more difficult to pull off. Since you cannot really meet the customer in person, make up for it with **Up-front details** and **extra email communication** along the way. Internet customers greatly appreciate personal touches.

Upfront Details

Photos are Everything: If the customer cannot pick up or touch your item, you must convey it very well in photos and accurate descriptive text. Make sure you hide nothing. If your object has different looking sides, show every side, top and bottom, etc. Do not just show the best image. Show the worst view as well so the customer clearly knows what they are getting. Most 3 dimensional objects need at least 3 photos, maybe 5. However, many objects only have one side, so these need fewer photos. On jewelry and such fewer photos are necessary since every side is identical.

Show Comparative size in photographs if necessary. Sometimes it is better to include a ruler in the photo, a quarter to show approximate size, etc. Keep photos about the handcrafted work, not artsy stuff like fruit and such. Remember, the photos here are not for art purposes, they are only to accurately represent the product clearly to a potential customer. Avoid filling bowls with plastic or real fruit, it just hides the real product from view. If you show four photos, you can show one in use, with flowers, fruit, or with the object in some use, but make most of the photos just about the item for sale.

Make Descriptions Sparkle. Enumerate uses and functions; Since the show is not in person, here is the only chance to communicate product qualities and performance. Discuss the uses and value of your product, finish, construction materials, etc. Do not exaggerate in any way.

Pack Well: Use packing paper, bubble wrap, or any secure packing to make sure it gets there in one piece. Avoid loose items or rattles. They scare people. Expect your package will be bounced a few times along the way.

Consider Hand Delivery to the USPS, rather than leaving a package in the mailbox for USPS pickup. There is increased risk of loss or just loss of time here. I have lost items and had 6 day periods where a package was picked up and not scanned or processed at that time? Maybe it

was left under the seat of the truck? If you hand deliver you package to the PO, it gets there quicker, and you walk out with a scanned receipt knowing it is safely on the way.

Local Shipping: For shipping close to home. use Flat rate boxes only for very heavy items. Do not use them for light weight boxes or especially for local distances. For low weight local shipping, use any regular box and pay regional rates rather than flat rate “Anywhere USA” rates.

Long Distance Shipping: Even if not very heavy, use USPS Flat Rate Boxes where possible. If shipping more than several hundred miles from home, It usually results in lower shipping.

Use Signature Required: I do on everything above \$30. This covers potential mail theft after USPO delivery. It is the only proof of delivery you have! It stops the Post Office from leaving a package unattended on a porch somewhere to be stolen by porch pirates. Without *Signature Required*, you will not be covered by insurance for losses from porch theft, or mis-delivery to a wrong address.

Insurance?? I use insurance on all items over \$50.00. This is a call here for local deliveries. If you use signature required, you only know if they got it. They may get it, but if it is damaged, only package insurance covers it.

Extra Email Communications Along the Way

1. Send them an email when the customer makes the purchase and *thank* them for their purchase.
2. Send an email when you ship it. **Give them tracking** info so they can follow progress. I often combine these first two functions in one.
3. **Follow tracking yourself.** When the customer gets the package, send them an email that says something like this....

Greetings “your customer”;

USPS Tracking shows the package was delivered. Did everything arrive in perfect condition and to your complete satisfaction?

Best wishes, “your name”

This email **hand-holding** method avoids surprises. Do not wait to let them tell you something was wrong. Ask them up front, they really appreciate it.