Starting a Sublimation Business: Taking the Leap

It comes as no surprise that many people who read our articles are currently sublimating. A majority of the time they are just looking for some tips or even insight on how to do something differently. However, there are some people who read the articles who are still thinking about getting into sublimation, but the whole idea makes them nervous. What markets do I sell to? Which products are best? What machine do I get?

These are all common questions that many sublimation beginners think about. In this article, we will address these concerns and hopefully provide the answers you need. And if you currently sublimate, maybe you can gain a few things as well.

MARKETS

The first question we typically address is about markets. What markets are you looking to sell into? There are many markets out there that can be tapped into to create great revenue opportunities. Some of the biggest that we see are schools, clubs and associations. These not only provide a lot of business, but if the customer is satisfied, can provide orders for years to come. Do you have access to a similar market currently? Are you a part of an organization or do you have kids or grandkids that are currently in a sport or club? Tapping into a market that you already know has a need or has access to someone that does could greatly influence your decision and make starting a lot easier.

Establishing the initial customer base is an important decision because with that, you have a platform to start from. However, it may not be the same after a few years as sometimes your focus changes. You may find success in a market that you didn’t even think of at first. But having a plan going into it will increase the likelihood of your success.

PRODUCTS

All of the vendors you will come across have their own ideas of what order things should be done, as it’s all an opinion, but the next step we usually suggest when starting out in sublimation is defining a group of products to offer.

Of the hundreds of items available for sublimation, choosing the right ones is a big step in the process of starting a new sublimation business.
there are hundreds and hundreds of product options to choose from. What will be popular in the market or markets that you choose? For example, let’s say you decide to get into a market that could service your child’s sports club. Your next thought would be, what types of things can I get that would benefit them? What would they like?

When going into this type of market especially, think of things that would benefit not only the participants, but the parents and club in general. Parents love to buy different things with their child’s image or even team apparel that is decorated. Parents also tend to pay more for something that is personalized.

In pitching to the club itself, look for different end-of-year awards or similar items. For the clubs, it’s always nice to find something different or unique to give the players in addition to the end-of-year participant trophy or medal.

If you look back at just that one idea of the sports club, you are able to branch out into three smaller sub-market ideas (participants, parents and clubs themselves). That alone could get you a nice start into the sublimation world. The options are out there, it just takes a little research and an open mind.

MACHINES
AFTER MARKET AND PRODUCT IDEAS ARE THOUGHT THROUGH AND RESEARCHED, THE NEXT DECISION YOU NEED TO MAKE IS THE SIZE OF EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED. THIS DECISION IS A LITTLE BROADER IN THAT, AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, YOUR MARKET MAY OR MAY NOT CHANGE. YOU HAVE TO DECIDE IF YOU CAN STAY WITHIN A CERTAIN SIZE WITH ANY MARKET OR PRODUCT SELECTION YOU CHOOSE.
What we mean by that is if you decide to only do cell phone cases and can get a smaller legal size sublimation printer, will you need anything larger if you want to do a larger plaque or something else like that? Does another possible market require a larger printer? These are things that you need to spend a little time thinking about.

On the flip side of that is that some shops will get that same machine and make enough off it quickly, then get the larger one down the road. They then have both machines and use them depending on the size of transfer needed.

Choosing the machine you need is hard, but there are three different sized machines available that provide excellent output at their respective sizes, which makes the decision easier. There is the Sawgrass SG400 (8.5 by 14 inches), the SG800 (11 by 17 inches), and the new Virtuoso VJ628 that will print up to 24.4 inches. All of these are excellent options and provide amazing results with the new HD inks.

CONCLUSION

Sublimation is easier to get into now more than ever. Sure, there are several difficult decisions to make, but there are also suppliers out there that are around to help you with questions and provide tips to make you successful and guide you in the right direction. When you buy your machine, that dealer won’t leave you in the dark.

We and many other suppliers have talked to people about sublimation whether it’s on the phone or at shows. We have a lot of background and knowledge and want you to become successful. Now is as good a time as ever to start your sublimation journey. Start thinking of your markets and products, and let’s go from there.

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