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FROM YOUR HOBBY

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“I am a very lucky man. I am living my life with
my hobby as my profession.”

–Jim Sullivan

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what it would be like if you could earn money from doing your hobby? If you really think about it from a financial aspect, it makes good sense.

You likely already have all the tools it takes to enjoy your hobby and you probably want to sharpen your skills and get better and better at your hobby. And more likely than not, you're willing to invest additional money into whatever tools are necessary and the time it takes to practice your cherished activity. *Right?*

Getting paid is just the icing on the cake. Not to mention anything you spend on tools will be tax deductible. Making money from your hobby is a pretty smart thing to do. After all, when you love to do something, you'll want to do it all the time.

If you want to earn money from your hobby, there are some strategies to use to achieve this goal. Selecting the hobby that provides the best chance to earn money, starting small, saving receipts for tax purposes, and developing your skills to perform the hobby are integral strategies to take to make money from your hobby.

Let your creativity run wild and consider the following strategies to make money from your hobby...

Choose The Hobby That's Right For You To Develop An Income Stream

To earn money from a hobby, you've got to find the hobby that fits you. Consider your answers to the following questions to help you pinpoint which of your hobbies you want to cultivate in order to make money.

1. **What do you like to do in your spare time?** Think about all the hobbies you enjoy. Feel free to list them out. They might be as wide-ranging as jewelry-making to wood-working and building websites. The important thing here is that you recognize what it is you love that you can make money doing.
2. **Are you willing to take a class?** Consider the activities you truly thirst to learn more about. If you strive to discover more about a hobby, it just might be the one to help you make money.
 - ▶ Some people have begun practicing hobbies on their own with little to no formal instruction. If you love doing your hobby and want to make money at it, hopefully you'll think it's a good idea to further your skills with some expert instruction.
 - ▶ However, your decision whether to gain more information about your activity will be affected by the level of skill and know-how you already possess and your internal drive to further explore the activity.
3. **Are you able to create something that you can sell?** Many hobbies involve making an item that is then usable. For example, if knitting is the leisurely activity you enjoy, you'll be creating wearable and other assorted items like scarves, sweaters and purses to sell.

4. **If not, will you be selling your skills instead?** If you love to paint scenery on walls, you'll be creating beautiful land and seascapes in people's homes. You'll be selling your time, paint supplies and efforts yet leave people with a lovely finished product. Other hobbies where you'd be selling your skills are planting gardens for people and organizing closets.
5. **Is your favorite hobby online or offline?** With the advent and widespread popularity of the internet, even more types of hobbies are available for people to develop online.
 - ▶ One such example is building websites. Even though some people are trained to do this type of work, others have learned to build websites by actually completing the process on a do-it-yourself web-building site. Some have even taken on building websites for their friends and family.
 - ▶ So, when you're considering which of your hobbies to convert into an income stream, ensure you explore your online activities as well.
6. **Keep your mind wide open.** Remember that many activities you love to do can be considered a hobby to use to make money.
 - ▶ Ponder this: a person who loves to organize her shelves, closets and garage helps all her friends and family organize their homes. Why not consider organizing homes a hobby that she can do to make money?
 - ▶ As you review your hobbies, think about those activities that bring you feelings of joy and completeness. When you identify one or two, examine those hobbies from the position, *"Will someone pay me to do this job or make this item for them?"*

Selecting the activity that will pay off most likely will be pretty easy to do. If you consider the above points, you'll narrow your choices to the one that you believe will bring in the most bucks.

"I do what I did as a hobby as a kid, you know, and make a living at it.
And I just feel like I'm one of the luckiest guys in the world
'cuz I get paid to make toys and play with them."

–Rick Baker

Hobbies To Consider

A wide range of hobbies can be utilized to develop another income stream. If you're lucky enough to enjoy several hobbies, you'll be deliberating which hobby would be wisest to select as your money-maker.

OUTDOOR HOBBY EXAMPLES

1. **Boating.** Become a tour guide by taking visitors to your community out on the water. Start by charging less than the bigger boats and more established companies.
2. **Fishing.** If you love to fish and you own a boat, establish a business of taking people out on your boat to fish. Provide them with fishing poles and bait and charge them by the hour.
3. **Decorative Painting.** People that have a knack for doing special paint applications and design on patio floors, driveways and stucco walls will definitely make extra money with these talents.

CRAFT HOBBY EXAMPLES

1. **Woodworking.** Those individuals who've been making their own furniture since completing Shop class in high school are in a position to truly embrace their love of producing furniture. Design your own pieces and sell them. Create customized pieces that your customers request.
2. **Knitting and Crocheting.** Yarn-related hobbies have been popular for eons. Even beginning knitters knit lovely scarves, baby blankets and purses that sell. Develop your own particular "brand" by producing purses with curly knitted cords affixed at the clasp or two-toned baby blankets. Use your personal design sense to make extra cash with yarn-related hobbies.
3. **Jewelry-Making.** Men and women alike have enjoyed the fine craft of making adornments for people of all ages. Whether you like working with beads or doing detailed metal work, selling the jewelry you make, such as rings, earrings, bracelets, chokers, and necklaces has been known to bring in some very big bucks.

ONLINE HOBBY EXAMPLES

1. **Creating websites.** Hobbyists who have this know-how or have learned by doing will really enjoy themselves and earn money by helping others to produce the websites of their dreams.
2. **Art design.** Believe it or not, experimenting with computer art software can eventually help you develop a nice income stream in the area of graphic arts. If you love toying with such programs and can create some dynamic art, you might be able to sell it online.

3. **Photography.** With today's user-friendly digital cameras, practically anybody can take good photos. But if you take great photos and have an eye for the unusual shot, you can definitely make money online with this talent.

Check out the various websites that allow you to post and sell your photos. Some will require you to pay a few cents to post photos while others are free to post and will take a percentage of your profits when a snapshot sells.

Whether you choose an outdoor hobby, a craft hobby or an online hobby to establish your small hobby business, you'll enjoy the adventure of endeavoring to make money by practicing your hobby.

"It was just a hobby. I didn't expect it to turn into a business."

–Phil Katz

Start Small

As you begin to prepare yourself to earn money with your hobby, the following points will be helpful.

1. **Recognize you're starting a small business.** Converting a hobby into a money-maker is the same as beginning a small business.
2. **Limit spending.** Whenever you start a small business, it's important to keep the lid on upfront expenditures. Since the whole idea is to bring in cash, you'll want to refrain from getting too elaborate with spending in the initial stages of your hobby business.

3. **Examine your tools and knowledge base.** Think about whether you can start your hobby business with the tools and knowledge you already have. Of course, this would be the best and lowest cost method to earn money from your hobby.
4. **Focus on doing what you do well.** Spend some time performing and/or making the items that you do really well. Make an effort to stay focused on what you know and what you do best when you're first turning your hobby into an income stream. Your confidence will soar as you see the demand for what you do is growing.
5. **Give it a year.** After you see how your hobby business fares in the first year or so, examine whether it would be financially feasible to expand your repertoire.
 - ▶ If consumer demand for your service, skill or products grows over the year and people have asked for a wider range of services, skills or products, you'll be more confident about investing your dollars to broaden your horizons and make more money.

Start small with your hobby business by recognizing it's an actual small business, limiting spending and taking a look at the tools and knowledge you already have. Then, concentrate on what you know and do well and allow your hobby business one year before making any major investments into it.

"It feels important to go to school; not necessarily to further my education, but more like a hobby."

—Mandy Moore

Save Your Receipts And Keep Records

One of the great things about turning a hobby into income is that any costs you incur to perform the hobby is tax deductible. It's pretty exciting when you think about claiming all your hobby-related expenses on your taxes every year. Also, keep accurate records of all your costs and income. Doing so will make things much easier, come tax time.

Here's a short list of some of the items you can claim:

- ▶ **New equipment costs.** Any equipment or tools required to make or perform your hobby is deductible.
- ▶ **Supplies costs.** Whether it's yarn, wood, textiles, or whatever, if you need it for your hobby business, it can be claimed.
- ▶ **Travel costs.** If you travel to display and sell your goods and services, present at seminars or teach classes, those costs are considered business-related expenses.
- ▶ **Printing costs.** Any marketing materials you require, such as business cards and other related flyers are deductible.
- ▶ **Office supplies and postage costs.** In the event you use these items to contact prospective or past customers, claim the costs on your tax return.
- ▶ **Monthly internet connection costs.** If your business is online-based, paper-clip these bills together to claim on next year's return.

Get a spiral notebook or some files to keep all your business records together. Write down what you sell and the money you earned. Make helpful notes as you go along so you won't forget something important. If you start out keeping what few records you'll have, it will get easier.

Because making money from your hobby constitutes a small business, save every receipt related to it. Document your mileage and other costs associated with your hobby. And keep records of every item that sells and the amount you earned. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the money you'll save at tax time if you save your receipts and keep accurate records.

Develop Your Skills

Because you want to excel at your hobby in order to make more money, you'll hopefully be willing to focus on developing your skills further. Taking responsibility to increase your expertise is an important element in the process.

Explore the wealth of information that's out there about your chosen hobby. Read, watch videos, join a group, and discuss the hobby with other aficionados of the skill. Make it your number one goal to develop all the skills required to do your hobby flawlessly.

1. **Read about your hobby.** For nearly every hobby, you'll find reading material to educate and introduce you to new elements and facets of the activity.
2. **Watch videos online.** Since anything and everything can be found on the internet, look for videos of people practicing and discussing your hobby of choice. Soak up as much information as you can about what you love to do.

3. **Join an interest group.** If you're not already a member of a group that shares interest and time in your hobby, join one now. You'll be exposed to the work of others. You'll begin to establish relationships with others who do the same work. You might even gain additional knowledge from other group members about how they've made money.
4. **Talk to others who do the hobby.** In the event a group isn't available for you to join, find a mentor who has practiced the hobby for years. Perhaps you'll meet someone who you think has better skill and knowledge than anyone else.

Developing your hobby skills is an important aspect to earning as much money as you can from the hobby. Reading, watching videos, joining groups, and communicating with others who do the hobby will help you gain knowledge and know-how about the hobby and develop your skills even more.

"I took up a sort of a hobby of just hanging around the local library. I'd pick out an author and I would read all their books."

–Tom T. Hall

Tap into Your Creativity

Turning your hobby into an income stream requires you to "go deep" when it comes to creating your product or practicing your hobby skill. One of the unique aspects of making an item to sell to others is showing your own individual creativity.

For example, if you make furniture, create your own signature scroll to include in all your furniture pieces. Allow your creativity to flow.

To show a personal sense of originality when performing a service, consider doing something special to highlight your work. For example, provide customers with a snapshot of your results at their home and sign the photo. Leave a “thank you for your business” card after you’ve finished.

Show off your abilities and efforts to make your product or skill interesting and even fun for your customers. Make a concerted effort to tap in to your creativity to accentuate your hobby talents and impress your customers.

“I have an expensive hobby; buying homes, redoing them, tearing them down and building them up the way they want to be built.

I want to be an architect.”

–**Sandra Bullock**

Perfect Your Skills

If you want to successfully make money doing your hobby, hone your skills. Practice, become known as the expert in your area, present at seminars, and instruct others on how to do the hobby. All of these efforts will help you fine-tune your skills and excel at what you do.

1. **Practice.** As they say, “Practice makes perfect,” so it’s recommended you spend many hours performing your hobby if you plan to build your income stream.

- ▶ If your chosen interest is wood-working, make as many shelves, chests and tables as you can. The more you do, the better you'll become. You'll learn to cover up errors, correct mistakes and make your pieces even more attractive.
2. **Become the resident expert.** Although reading was mentioned earlier, if you want to truly perfect your skills, get your hands on all reading material related to your hobby.
- ▶ Make the decision to strive to know everything there is to know about your special activity. Establish a goal to become a “walking encyclopedia” for your chosen craft.
3. **Present at hobby seminars.** In your hometown and the surrounding areas, you might find opportunities to present to people eager to learn more about your hobby. Even if you don't get paid to present at first, it's still a wise decision financially.
- ▶ If the invite is local, it won't cost you anything to get to the place to present. Once you're there, you're going to meet many people interested in your hobby. This means you can cultivate new customers. (See “Market Your Skills” section).
4. **Teach others.** If given the chance, instruct others about how to do your craft. In so doing, you'll develop your reputation as an expert in the field.

Hone your hobby skills by engaging in the above activities. Your hard work will pay off in dollars.

“We’ve been doing this for 10 years and it’s been a hobby
for a lot longer than it’s been a job.”

–John Campbell

Set Your Prices

Hopefully, this strategy won’t be too difficult. Take a look at how others price similar goods or services. Consider how much time you’ll expend to do the labor to produce the product or complete the service. Be judicious in your record-keeping. List out your services or goods you’ll plan to make and sell, placing your charges for each item.

Keep in mind that when first starting your business, you might get more business if you keep your prices low. Of course, you can always adjust them later, doing so in small increments until you reach the price level you desire.

Market Your Skills

Selling your hobby wares or skills happens whenever potential customers “see” you and your work. In order to gain exposure, it’s necessary to develop a plan to market your skills. Take a look at these marketing ideas to see how they’ll fit in to your new small business.

1. **Develop simple marketing materials.** Think business cards and maybe one flyer. If possible, make them yourself on your own computer to save money. If you’re unable to produce marketing materials yourself, go to your local office supply store (like Office Depot, Staples and Office Max),

and inquire about costs to have 500 business cards printed.

- At the very least, get business cards. You'll find them helpful to leave at various businesses or to give out to prospective customers. Your customers need to know how to reach you and business cards conveniently and cheaply provide that information.
2. **Use the internet.** If you're willing to travel to perform your hobby skills for others or your finished products can be easily shipped, it's recommended you have a web presence. You stand to put your face, product and skills in front of millions of potential customers when you use the internet. Consider making a website to market your skills and wares.
 3. **Establish a presence in your community.** If you want to earn money through practicing your hobby, make yourself known in your local community. Appear at street festivals. Set up a table at the local health fair. Whenever your community gets together, be there. Your best place to find loyal customers is in your local community.
 4. **Join the Chamber of Commerce.** Although you might not be sure you want to take this step, you'll be surprised at how many other small business owners you meet. Chamber members are incredibly supportive of one another and often even call each other to do business. Plus, they refer customers to one another.
 - ▶ Depending on the type of hobby business you start, joining the Chamber of Commerce will help you make money from your craft.
 5. **Display at trade shows.** If you want to make some cash from performing your hobby, take every opportunity to get your face and product out there where it can be seen. Trade shows make this possible. When you take

part in local trade shows, you might be able to share displays with other local small businesses. Doing so means you will also share display costs.

6. **Network.** For any small business to be lucrative and successful, it's necessary to network. Getting to know as many other people in the same business or related ones widens your own financial opportunities.
 - ▶ Use your contact with one business owner to pave the way to establish other connections. Show your social side to market your hobby business to increase your income.
7. **Make media contacts.** Send out letters to local radio and television shows that you're interested in being interviewed to discuss your hobby and/or products. Keep in mind that such media usually want topics to be discussed and will not be interested in simply helping you sell your goods and services.
 - ▶ However, approach media representatives with the idea of educating the public about your hobby and sharing your expertise. Media representatives will usually give your business a "plug" at the beginning or end of the program you present.
8. **Get to know other small businesses.** You've probably deduced by now the importance of knowing what other small businesses are sprouting and flourishing in your community. Ask to display your wares or at least your business cards and flyers at their businesses. Be willing to display their cards as well whenever you're setting up to market and sell your own stuff.
9. **Stay in touch.** No matter where you're displaying goods or advertising services, have a sign-up sheet for prospective customers to list their names, addresses and e-mail addresses.

- ▶ To simplify further, just ask for names and e-mails if you plan to avoid making contact using the U.S. Mail. If you have a diversity of products and services, make a column on the sign-up sheet for customers to note their specific interests in your products.
- ▶ Then, follow up by mailings or e-mails to periodically “remind” them of your hobby services or products.

Take part in local business conventions and seminars of all types. Any time you can display what you’re selling, you might make a contact. And remember, that any costs you incur to put up a display table can be claimed on your income tax as an expense.

“Making money is a hobby that will complement any other hobbies you have, beautifully.”

–**Scott Alexander**

Know Your Community

Be savvy about your community and what it offers. Get familiar with any businesses that already exist that relate to your hobby in any way. Also, become acquainted with as many individuals as you can where you live and “work” with your hobby.

Approach business owners and ask if you can leave some of your business cards in their shops to be displayed and distributed. Depending on the type of business, you might even be able to place some of your products there to

be sold on consignment.

Again using knitting as your hobby, let's say you find out about a new business that sells yarns. Wouldn't it be wise to make contact with that business? Think about how your hobby pursuits might relate to other businesses already established in the community. You can help each other if you take the time and make the effort to know your local bailiwick.

Getting acquainted with your community's inhabitants will allow you to create products or perform hobby skills that will sell locally to keep your dollars flowing in. So, get to know the people as well as the businesses where you live. Stay educated about your community.

"Life's a hobby."
—*Joshua Lederberg*

Provide Excellent Customer Service

To grow your hobby business, it's necessary to give your customers exactly what they want. Review these quick tips on some important elements of customer service.

1. **Be approachable.** Prospective customers are drawn to business owners who're smiling, friendly and easy to talk to. Make eye contact, be open and demonstrate an ease with yourself and your product or service.
2. **Listen.** People who're shopping at your display table or walking by will provide you with the information you need to make your business successful. What questions do they ask you? What do they want from

your hobby product or service? What are their comments about your work product as they walk away from you?

3. **Apply knowledge you gained from customers.** Figure out ways to give your customers what they want. If a hobby item you're making is selling well, make more of them. If customers say, "I wish this one came in blue," take their phone numbers and call them back after going right home and making some blue ones.
4. **Return calls and e-mails promptly.** Nothing will kill a new business quicker than ignoring or delaying contact with a potential customer. Call or e-mail people back a.s.a.p. Show you care about your hobby and your business.
5. **Guarantee your hobby goods and services.** Keep in mind that you want happy customers for a number of reasons—they'll keep coming back for more and they'll tell everyone they know about your wonderful products, services and work ethic. You'll receive your customers' honest feedback if you're respectful of their wants and needs.

"Golf isn't just my business, it's my hobby."

–Lee Trevino

Summary

Planning to make money from your hobby is a realistic goal. If you have a great time practicing your hobby and friends and family have taken positive notice of your skills and products, maybe it's time to establish a small hobby business.

If you select the right hobby for you, start small, develop your skills, and tap into your creativity, you'll be well on your way to developing an additional income stream from your hobby. If you perfect and market your skills, know your community, and provide the best customer service, you'll be successful in making money from your hobby.

Discover all the joys and financial benefits of making money from your cherished hobby.

“Today is life-the only life you are sure of. Make the most of today.
Get interested in something. Shake yourself awake.

Develop a hobby. Let the winds of enthusiasm sweep through you.
Live today with gusto.”

–Dale Carnegie

