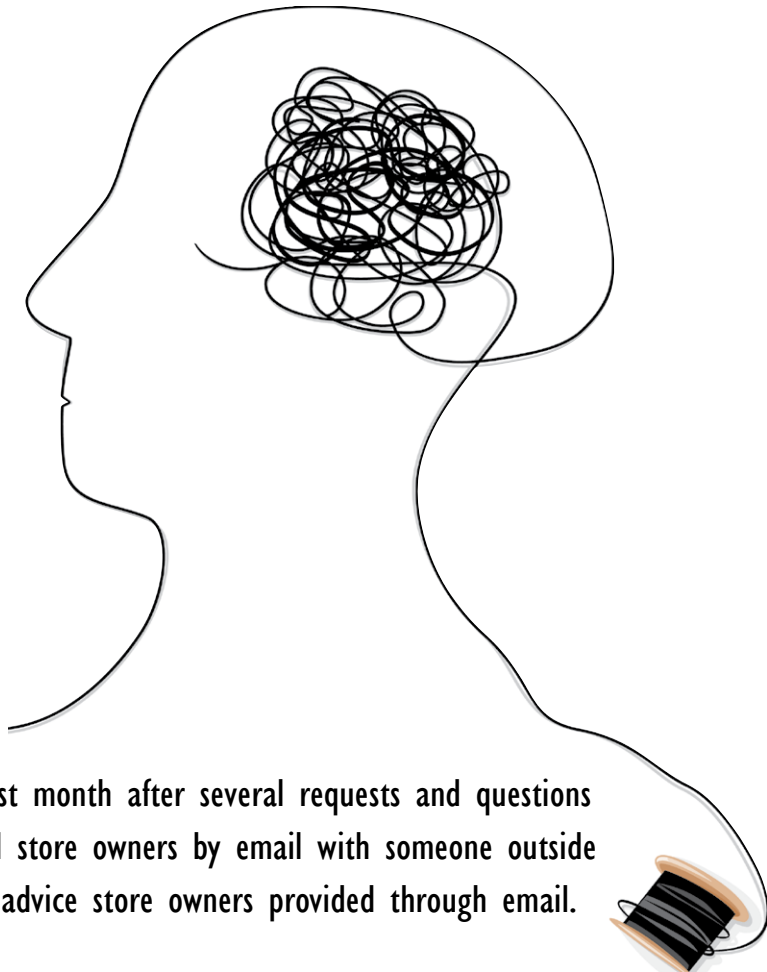


WISE AND ESTABLISHED  
STORE OWNERS SHARE THEIR  
NEEDLEWORK KNOWLEDGE  
WITH ASPIRING BUSINESS  
ENTREPRENEURS



# Mentoring

Needlework Retailer started a mentoring program last month after several requests and questions from potential needlework store owners. We matched store owners by email with someone outside their time zone. Here are some of the answers and advice store owners provided through email.

Chris,

I am sorry that I didn't get the questions to you yesterday. It was very busy here at work. So here they are today:

1. What type of research did you do ahead of time to determine if the business was viable?
2. How did you pick location and square footage?
3. Were you involved in local clubs/associations (needlework/cross stitch) before you started?
4. How did you handle financing? (Self, individuals, banks)
5. Do you have a customer work area?
6. Should classes be provided from the beginning? Should they be group or private or both?
7. How do you attract younger stitchers? Parties?
8. Do you provide "ghost stitching"?

Those are what I have for now. Again thanks for your help.  
Ellen

Ellen,

My name is Chris and I own/operate a needlework store. I will try to intelligently answer your questions but no promises!

1. **What type of research did you do ahead of time to determine if the business was viable?** There was little research done on my part as I purchased an existing needlework store that I felt had potential. It was something that just felt right. There were a few needlework shops in my area but nothing located within 30 miles.

2. **How did you pick location and square footage?** The location of the shop was in a little shopping center with free standing buildings. It was

quaint so I did not mind staying in this location. The building itself was approximately 700 sq ft. and jammed packed. So I did a lot of house cleaning and rearranging. When my client base starting climbing from 700 to about 1000 in just a couple of months I started looking at a building just across from myself that was 1700 sq ft. Within a two month period I grew very fast and moved into the larger building. All the while adding new lines of threads and fabrics. I have been in this building now for four years and love every minute of it.

3. **Were you involved in local clubs/associations before you started?** Not really. Occasionally I would go to a Saturday Stitch-in at the shop. But mostly just stitched on my own.

4. **How did you handle financing? (Self, indi-**

**viduals, banks)** I initially applied for a SBA loan. I got a not so good loan officer. That is another story. I went to my local bank and got a line of credit. Very easy to apply for. And invested some of my own money to build up the inventory.

5. **Do you have a customer work area?** Yes, I have two large tables put up for stitch-ins. We have several stitch-ins a month, very good for business. Every Tuesday night we have a wine and cheese night and everyone has a great time.

6. **Should classes be provided from the beginning? Should they be group or private or both?** Classes are important at some shops but have never done well here. We have never figured out why. But we keep trying.

*Counted thread designs to make your house a home*



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7. **How do you attract younger stitchers? Parties?** I have not dealt with that, sorry.

8. **Do you provide “ghost stitching”?** We get requests occasionally and I try to provide a customer with someone who is willing to stitch for them. It can become costly to the customer as the going price for a ghost stitcher is about \$2-\$3 a square inch.

I hope I have been able to answer some of your questions. It is important to have all your ducks in a row and have the capital to start with. Get your licensing (tax), dba and etc. Check locations where the rent is not going to kill you. Quaint is a better look than glass and brick. Talk to other shop owners in your area and listen to what they have to say about their business. Take a good look around their store, especially if they are complaining about business being bad. Is the shop clean? How do they present their product? How is the lighting? And the most important, how is the atmosphere. Is the owner/clerk pleasant to talk to? Are they helpful, friendly and courteous? Customer Service with a smile is extremely important.

Chris

**Kendra,**  
How do you find out what your potential customers want/need? We'd hate to open with all the wrong stuff! Though we are asking questions of all who express interest, the feedback is nebulous at best.

We've found it difficult to track down some of the wholesalers. For example we've seen a wholesaler mentioned at several shop sites but cannot track down the company.

Do you have contact information for distributors? Some of them have websites but allow no access for contact information.

We are members of TNNA and have been going through the show directory from the Long Beach. Because we are currently running a business, we're spending late nights/early mornings on the internet trying to establish contacts and track down products—any suggestions?

Thank You~Michele

Dear Michele,  
My name is Kendra and I have owned my counted cross stitch shop for 12 years. I will be happy to help you any way I can.

To determine what I first put in my shop, I visited other shops in my area to see what they carried. I can give you a few suggestions on what sells well in my shop and I will be happy to give you contacts for all the companies.

It is sometimes difficult to get accounts. There are some companies that have opening minimums or minimum requirements.

I highly recommend Norden Crafts as a distributor ~ very pleasant and helpful to work with and speedy delivery. [www.nordencrafts.com](http://www.nordencrafts.com)

I use Wichelt imports for fabric and they allow

you to order Prairie Schooler cards by 1's instead of having to buy a pack of 12. They also carry Mill Hill and we carry their beads and button and kits. [www.wichelt.com](http://www.wichelt.com)

Hoffman Distributing I use for patterns but only order once a month to save on postage unless you can order \$300 and then it is free. On Friday's I check their website and see what is new for the week. They have a great catalog and you can search for patterns by subject or designer. [www.hoffmandis.com](http://www.hoffmandis.com)

I love Nordic Needle! My sales rep is Ruth and she is so great to work with! I don't buy a lot from them but this is the great thing...your stitcher will need things that you don't carry. For example, if you needed to order this one item you might have to buy 6 to get one and they have a \$50 minimum requirement ~ Nordic Needle will allow you to purchase it at retail when you only need one. You can add .25 to the price if you want. It keeps my stitchers happy and I don't have to carry everything or tell them I can't get it.

This is just a start. Please feel free to call me or e-mail me back. I can't wait to help! I would be willing to borrow you a few models to help you start out too!

Kendra

**If you are a new store owner, or will soon be opening a store; email Needlework Retailer to be put in touch with your own mentor. If you are a store owner and would like to offer your advice to someone just starting out, please send us an email: [info@needleworkretailer.com](mailto:info@needleworkretailer.com)**

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