

Models Sell Product!

Models make bigger sales and provide a valuable service to stitchers.

Ask shopowners and they will tell you that models are marvelous tools for selling projects, patterns, canvases and threads. They demonstrate to the stitcher in so many different ways. Perhaps they show off an interesting finishing idea. Maybe they showcase a new thread or technique. They spark ideas for other projects in stitchers' minds. Or they take what might be an unassuming canvas and make it magic.

By sprinkling your shop with models you will sell more product, make bigger sales and provide a valuable service to stitchers.

Sometimes, as is the case with many three dimensional designs, the canvas looks odd. Or maybe it's in several pieces which need to be stitched together. By stitching one of the design and having it

on display, the concept immediately becomes clear.

Or perhaps the canvas is made to show off many different kinds of stitches. Just this morning I noticed a wonderful Christmas tree by Susan Treglown from Canvas of the Month at The Artful Needle in Petaluma, CA. This piece is designed to be done in many different stitches and has delightful resin ornaments to decorate the tree. The canvas comes with all the ornaments and a detailed stitch guide. But the stitched and finished canvas is magnificent, and just by having it hanging in the shop, it has sold several canvases.

Many different kinds of models are important. Linda Botts-Brennan, owner of The Artful Needle, says "One of the keys to models is not to have all the models in the same style." A variety of

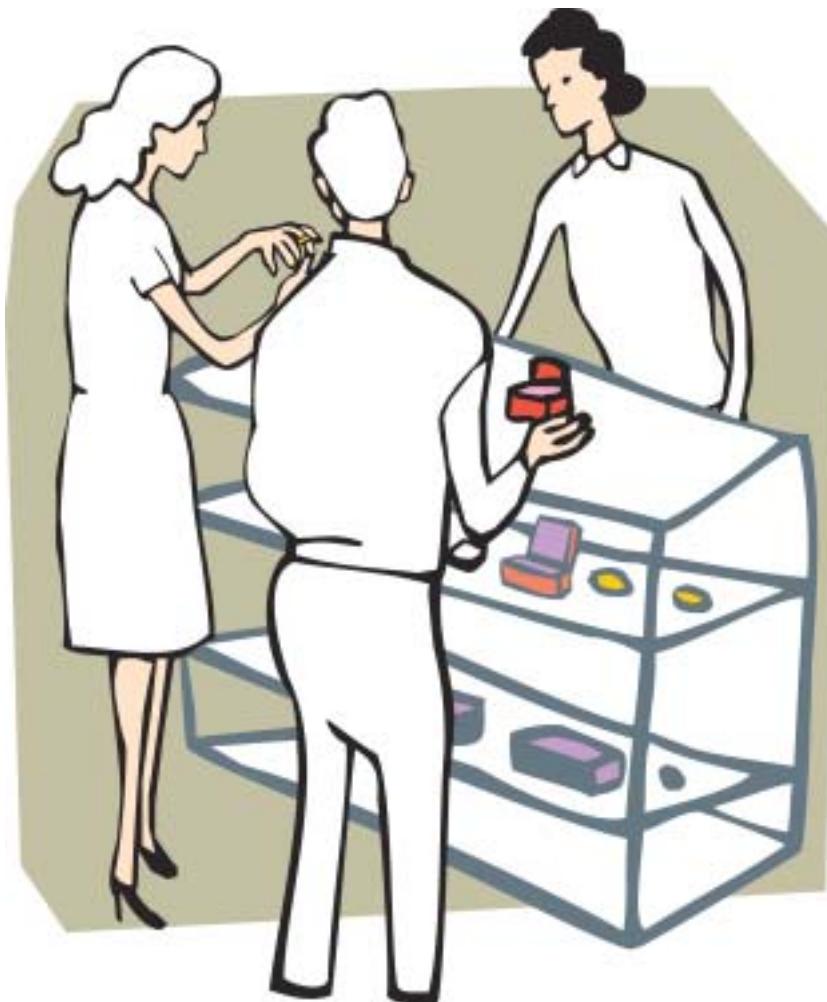
models allows the shopowner to appeal to a variety of tastes. Models importantly give the shop additional credibility and shows stitchers what can be done. On pieces which are especially large or daunting , it shows the stitcher a way to break it down.

Cathe Ray, owner of Needle in a Haystack in Alameda, CA points to a small bunny canvas as a demonstration of the power of models to sell threads. The bunny is charming and the model is stitched in a variety of furry threads. Cathe had told me that they never sell the canvas without the threads because the model has such power. People just love it. On a recent visit another customer was buying the canvas, but once she saw the model she bought all the threads as well.

In showing threads, the models don't even have to be a large piece, it can be just a sample. Small sections of needlepoint can help introduce a new thread, and new way of using a thread or a thread which is not selling as well.

Designers also see models as an effective selling tool. Alice Vantrease, owner of Designing Dogs, noticed that her needlepoint dog collar canvases were not selling well at her shop, Twiggs of Savannah. She explains, "Sales were flat until I began making lots of collars for my dogs. Now that I have the models on stuffed dogs in the store, they initiate enthusiasm from customers and tourists for a 'pick up' item." She has the collars, both stitched and unstitched on dogs of all sizes, including a stuffed Lab people often mistake for a live dog.

But models don't always sell just the canvas they display. They also increase sales of other designs. Although I may not like the design inside the cell phone case, I love the idea and the finishing. So I buy a different canvas to stitch and finish the same way. Or perhaps I'm considering a canvas, but don't have an idea for a background stitch. A lovely model on display might have just the stitch I want.



Displaying Models

Displaying your models is also important. Put many finished ornaments on a tree to show off a wealth of models. Take a stitched magnet and put it on your cash register or a display stand. Get a mannequin or dressform and dress it in needlepoint belts, hats and a purse. Put some shoes on a table. Have needlebooks to store needles, keep a stitched pincushion on the cutting table.

And yes, make sure the models are pinned down, so they don't disappear. Put your customers' pieces up high where they show off their beauty and don't provide temptation. Attach models to their displays with pins or chains. Put small pieces in a locked glass display case. Since stitchers stand there as the sale is rung up, they see and get ideas and often stop and buy that too.

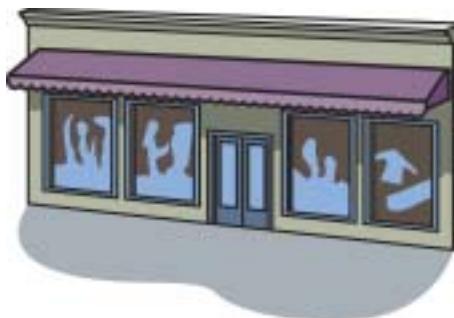
Models should always be placed in a shop so that they draw people into the store. Even if a person comes into the store to buy a skein of floss, the presence of model will attract attention and have them stay in the shop longer. They can also be used by store employees to show a technique or an idea without looking as if a canvas is being sold.

Never display a model which is no longer available. If the canvas has been discontinued, it should not be a model. There is nothing so frustrating to a customer than to fall in love with a model only to find that the canvas went out of production five years ago.

And if the cost of finishing is a problem, consider some of the wonderful items stitchers can finish themselves. Put a small design inside a tiny box, use Stitch 'n Tuck Pillows to show off a display of designs. Look at small ceramic boxes, leather good made with inserts for needlework and the wide variety of acrylic items available as places to show stitching. Shops specializing in cross stitch should consider items made to include cross stitch like table topper, hand towels or bobs as quick models.

I have made many quick gifts using Treasure Boxes from Romancing the Past and using magnet designs from Raymond Crawford. They are so perfect for gifts. Where did I get the idea? From a stitched

model sitting on a table at Gale Lawrence Studio in St. Helena, CA. I haven't bought the model design yet. But wherever I go, I'm on the lookout for more small canvases for these gifts.



If you are making models to be framed, stitch so that the piece can either be matted or framed to a standard frame size. Then you can easily buy ready-made mats and frames and finish the model yourself.

Finding Models -- Some Ideas

But stitching models takes time, often time stolen from an already full schedule. So how do you find models?

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Ask your customers. Often when a piece comes back from finishing, the stitcher doesn't need it right away and can loan it to you for display. An instant, if only temporary, model. Ask the people who have stitched the most magnificent Christmas stockings if they can be shown off after the holidays. Devote a shelf in your shop to a changing display of finished items.

Stitch yourself. Or if your employees stitch, use those items in the shop. Like most stitchers I have boxes of stitched but unfinished needlepoint. It makes me much happier when the piece I am stitching turns around and becomes a shop model.

Your customers might also be interested in stitching models. Do they usually work on large pieces, but need something small to take on a cruise? Why not ask them to do a model for you? Give them the project and all threads, let them keep the extra stash and give them a discount. There are lots of things I have always wanted to stitch, but haven't, so stitching models lets me try them out.

For thread samples, also look to your customers. You probably have one or two who are thread junkies. Offer them a sample skein of a thread if they will stitch a small sample for the store. Models are an inspiration to stitchers, a lovely way to decorate your shop and will increase your sales. How many other things in life give so much for so little?
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