the total package

AN ONLINE SHOP OWNER'S GUIDE TO DELIGHTING YOUR CUSTOMERS AND AMPLIFYING YOUR BRAND THROUGH CREATIVE PACKAGING

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When you open an online shop, your main focus is on simply getting orders. Who has the time to plan out your order packaging? But packaging is so important and can really take your brand to the next level.

In this guide, I'm sharing the basics of online order packaging, as well as some ways that you can take things up a notch and really wow your customers (increasing the likelihood that they'll purchase from you again in the future).

Sounds great, right? Okay let's do this.

THE BASICS

1. Inner Packaging

This is the more "pretty" packaging for your items. If your item was being sold in a brick and mortar store, this is the packaging that it would be shown in. The purpose of this is first of all to make the item look nice and professional, and secondly to protect it a bit as it's sliding around inside of the outer packaging / shipping materials.

Inner Packaging Ideas...

    Prints / Stationery / Flat Paper Items: clear sleeves (I get these ones)
    Jewelry / Accessories: jewelry boxes or small stamped bags
    Stamps / Other Small Items: stamped muslin bags, tissue paper with washi tape or a sticker

2. Extra Protection

This is the stuff that has no "pretty" factor at all - it's purpose is simply to protect your items.

Extra Protection Ideas...

    Prints / Stationery / Flat Paper Items: Cardboard sheets to keep the item from bending (I get <u>these ones</u>)
    Fragile Items: Bubble wrap, inflatable protective stuff, recycled paper, kraft paper, newspaper, etc.

3. Shipping Materials

This is the outer protection for your package, and what will be arriving at your customers' doors. Depending on the size and shape of what you sell, this might be either a box or a flat mailer. Shipping materials also might include a shipping label printer (I use this one), sticky labels, and the invoice for your order. Rather than including an invoice with prices, I always just include a gift receipt. I get a lot of requests to not include prices in the packaging so since I already send a full receipt via email, I don't include the prices in any of my orders. This is your personal preference.

Shipping Material Ideas...

- Flat mailers (I get <u>these ones</u>)
- Bubble / padded mailers
- Boxes (I like <u>these</u>)
- <u>USPS flat rate boxes and mailers</u> (note: this can be a great option depending on the weight of your items. I recommend weighing the cost of shipping flat rate vs. using your own box or mailer and seeing what works for you.)
- Shipping Label Printer and Sticky Labels (<u>this is the one that I use</u>)
- "DO NOT BEND" self-inking stamp - this is a MUST for those of you who sell flat items that cannot be bent. I designed my own and have them made at <u>rubberstamps.net</u>

My Favorite Places to Buy Packaging Materials:

- <u>Clearbags</u> (Protective sleeves)

- <u>The Boxery</u> (Protective Cardboard Sheets, Boxes, and Mailers)

- <u>USPS</u> (Flat Rate Mailers)

- <u>Amazon</u> (Dymo Labels)

- <u>Moo</u> (business cards

TAKE IT UP A NOTCH

Packaging Inserts (Promotional / Branding Materials)

This usually includes some type of card that portrays your brand and provides links and other information to keep your customer coming back and/or subscribing to your social media. It also might include a logo stamp or stickers for the outside of your packages. I design my own and have them printed by my printing company that I use for all of my shop items but there are lots of places online that can print these types of items for you, or you can contact a local printing company in your area.

I attribute a lot of my initial success on Etsy to my use of packaging inserts. In the beginning, I took the time to actually hand write each customer's name on their insert. As my shop grew, I came up with solutions that were a little more efficient, but I made sure to keep the personal aspect that had become so important to me and my customers.

If you are not including packaging inserts in your orders, I highly recommend it, especially if you're a new seller.

Why are packaging inserts so important?

1. They're cheap! Of all of the marketing efforts available, the cost of printing little cards to put in your orders is minimal. They can even be business card-sized or you can print them yourself in the beginning to keep the cost really low. I recommend ordering your cards from moo.com.

2. They make the customer feel special. As I mentioned above, we all know the value of that extra-special-something in an online order.

3. They increase customer loyalty. You can utilize the space on your packaging inserts to motivate people to come back (more info below) and to share their story.

4. Target marketing! Since you can already see what the person bought, you can tailor your packaging inserts for that specific type of customer, if need be.

Some packaging insert ideas:

1. Coupon Codes
This is a great way to turn a customer into a repeat customer, which is huge for your business. Some ideas: free shipping on your next order, 15% off for you and a friend (2 coupon codes), $10 towards your next order.

2. Personal Note
As I mentioned above, I really attribute a lot of my early success to my use of a handwritten note. If you have the time, it definitely makes customers feel special and it adds that personal touch that so many businesses do not have. It doesn't cost you anything extra except your time!

3. Social Media Share Request
Encourage customers to share a photo of their product on Instagram with a certain hashtag, and let them know that you post your favorites! It's a win-win because Instagram users who are trying to grow their accounts get their name out to a bigger audience, and you get your product out to a bigger audience. Not only that, but when people see an item being posted on social media, it builds social proof, which is super important in the online shopping world.

4. A Little Somethin' Extra
Depending on what you sell, there may be an opportunity to include a low-cost item in the package along with their order. This introduces them to something else from your shop that they may not have seen otherwise.

5. Personalize It!
Take the opportunity to include a personal aspect of your shop. Maybe a photo of you, a photo of your studio, info about your geographic location (especially if you live in an interesting place or a place that adds to your brand story), or your signature.

More Packaging Insert / Branding Ideas…

    Business cards
    Larger cards that tell your story / show photos
   Stickers
    Stamps
    Custom tissue paper
   Custom packing tape

LET'S PLAN YOUR ORDER PACKAGING!

Okay, now that you know what you need, and are full of inspiration and ideas, let's brainstorm what your unique branding needs are and get a plan. Fill out the worksheet on the following page, and use that as a guide for ordering your packaging materials.
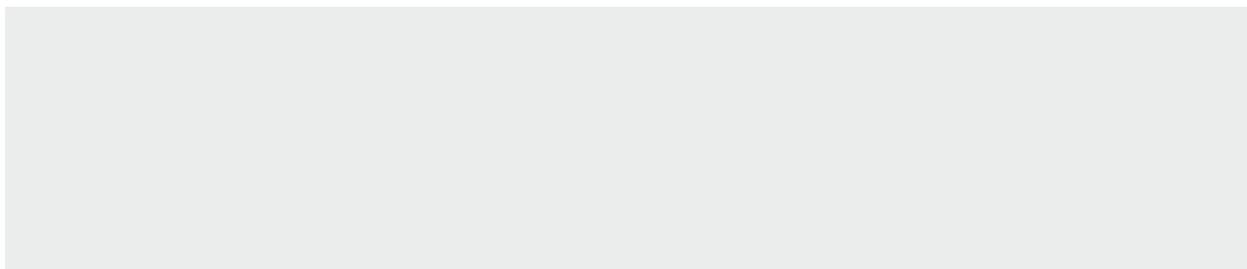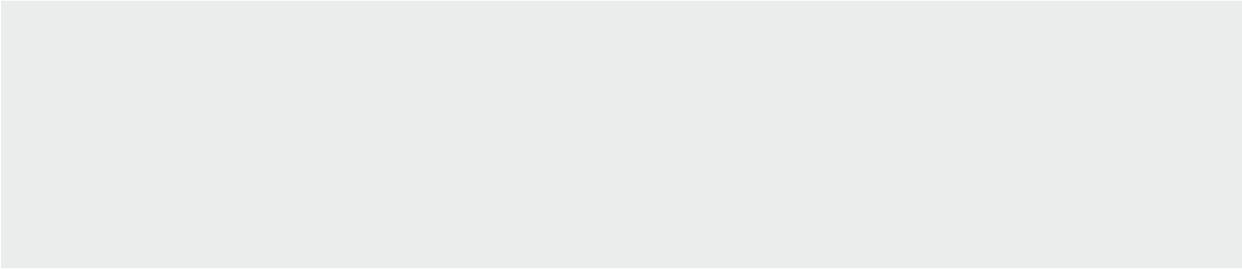
1. Who is your typical or ideal customer?
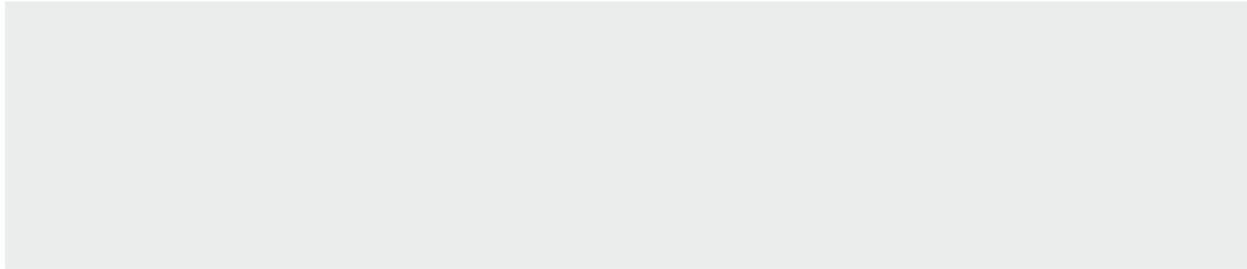
2. What are some words that describe your brand?
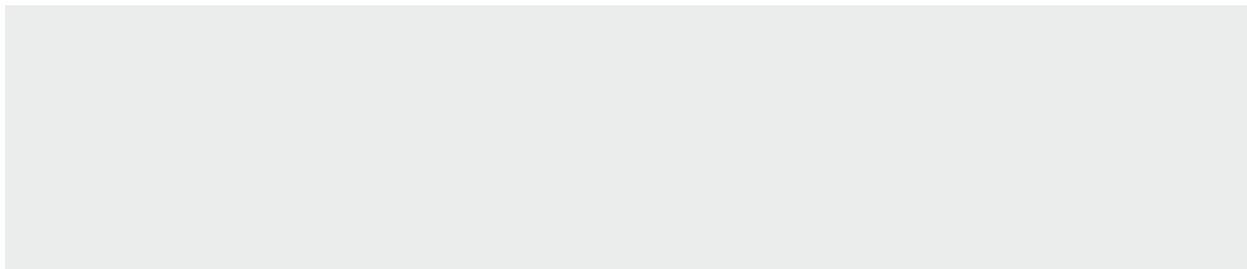
3. How do you want your customer to feel when they receive their order in the mail?

4. Make a Pinterest board with inspiration for your packaging materials. What similarities do you see between the photos? Are there any common colors and materials that stand out?

5. Take some time to think about what "extras" you want your packaging to include. A handwritten note for each customer? A discount code for your customer's next purchase? Think realistically about your time and budget when planning this out. Write your ideas below.
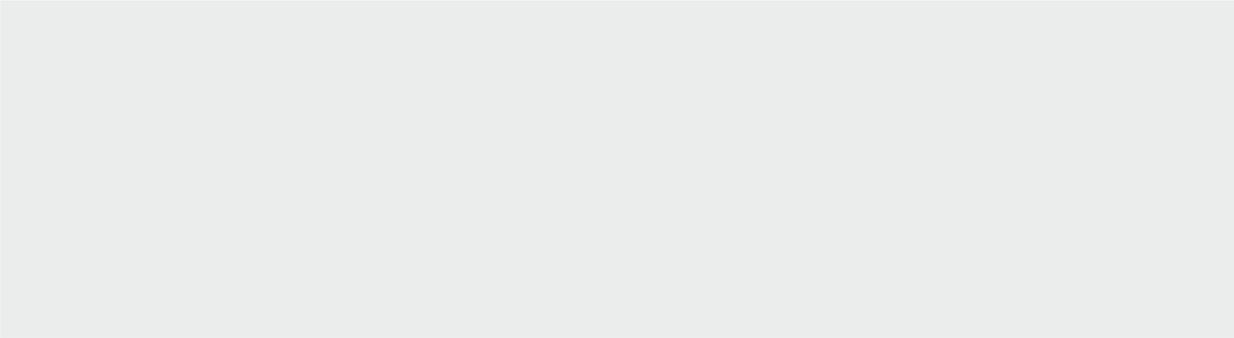
6. Sketch it out! Use the space on the next page of this guide to sketch out your planned order packaging. Don't worry if you're not good at drawing! Seeing it sketched out will help you to get the ideas out of your head and visualize your plan in a more realistic way.

…sketch it out!

7. What do you need to buy? Make a list here of all of the materials that you will need to order for your packaging, their prices, and the URLs of where you plan to get them. You can come back to this in the future when you need to reorder.