

Business Strategies for Craft Wildlife Wood Products Businesses July 11, 2013

Concept-a small wood shop can use air dried and kiln dried lumber and plywood materials to create wood products that support the improvement of wildlife habitat. There are a large number of households that actively support wildlife habitat with feeding, nesting and other supporting products. A small wood shop has many market segments that can be the focus of providing wood products and supporting services that can develop into a part time or full time craft business.

Products and Services Options

1. Can focus on specific wood products like feeders and nesting boxes.
2. Can offer supporting services like developing wildlife improvement plans, installing feeders and nesting boxes, etc. Households often are lacking in knowledge of how to support the wildlife in their backyards and want the advice of a wildlife expert who can offer products and plans that improve their support of wildlife. Offering a written plan can show professionalism not likely available from other sources of wildlife products, like catalogs.
3. Can perform market research online and from catalogs for prices, styles, materials, etc.
4. Can focus on a wide range of designs that vary in function and style.
5. Can utilize a wide variety of lumber and plywood materials.
6. Can offer specific products for specific bird, squirrel and other wildlife species.
7. Can market at farmers markets, craft shows, to retail stores, online, as a fundraiser product for schools, churches and civic groups, etc.
8. Can sell complimentary small sized landscape plants like butterfly bush, seed and nut shrubs and trees as additional revenue sources as well as offer planting and planning services.
9. Can offer backyard wildlife support packages of a combination of design + products + plants + installation at affordable prices, such as the \$99, \$249 and \$499 price points.
10. Should develop a design notebook with photos from magazine and the Internet of good wildlife habitat designs that customers may consider. This notebook can support the package program where products and services are grouped for affordability.
11. Should create designs that are well suited to the best utilization of lumber and plywood materials and use common dimensions over all the products that creates standard dimensions where better utilization of materials can occur.

Business Planning

1. Want to develop multiple products and make in short runs to gain an economy of scale.
2. Can set prices based on material costs, time to produce and market value.
3. Easy to price on a multiplier of material costs, such as 3x or 4x, etc.
4. Want to offer a variety of styles, functionally and focus on specific wildlife species.
5. Want to develop a marketing strategy that makes lots of contacts with households-shows, farmers markets, community bulletin boards, birdwatcher groups, environmental groups, civic and church groups, etc.
6. Should develop a design and engineering system where designs are sketched and stored in a filing system. Should create a parts list and costing method that is kept in a product item's file.
7. Should develop a business plan where sales and profitability estimates are developed based on material and labor costs, sales projections and other factors related to costs and sales.
8. One selling point for the business that combines products and services is the relatively low cost to the household for the improvements to wildlife habitat at their homes as well as the quick installation time. The goal is to make a profit on all the elements of the package = design time, wood products, plants and installation.

Marketing Research Sources

1. Libraries and the Internet-are good sources of product designs and information about the needs of specific wildlife species of birds, butterflies and squirrels.
2. Craft shows and farmers markets-are good places to see what is available on the market, what products are being offered and prices and talk to buyers.
3. Catalogs-offers information on styles, materials used and prices.
4. Wildlife groups-offers information on recommendations for supporting wildlife habitat.

Shop Setup

1. Should attempt to limit \$ needed for equipment and workshop space by making small runs of each item.
2. Should think of an efficient layout and design of the shop to properly utilize labor. The flow of work should be with minimal travel distance of materials and labor.
3. Should incorporate safety and dust collection to create a good working environment.
4. Should incorporate natural lighting into the shop via windows and skylights.
5. Should use affordable lumber and plywood materials that can help to control product costs. May want to visit local sawmills and pallet operations that use utility grade lumber that can be more affordable than buying lumber at building and home centers.