

TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS



The product range

You can see our products in the picture above. What we sell is pictures and while we do carry original oils, and limited editions, most of our big pictures are Crystex and most of our little pictures are fine-art posters framed exquisitely. Crystex is a new technique, which makes a lithograph look like an oil painting. There is no glass and these pictures have the texture and vibrant colors of an oil painting.

In addition we have unique Home Décor Items on our tables.

Picture Lady is the Home of the Five Dollar Fun table. It is on this table that our customers will find our main seasonal items. Black Art for Black History, [Red Hearts for Valentines](#), Trees, Lakes, Animals and Farms for Earth Day. Then we have Latino Pictures for Cinco de Mayo. Our Mother & Father's Day poems, are touching and very well received.

On the **\$5.00** fun table buy three items
and then get one *free*

We specialize in Christmas and Thanksgiving table centerpieces but these are more expensive.

Picture Lady is sensitive to the pattern of agreements and the existing rules at each different location. If there is anything we do (inadvertently) which displeases you, please talk to us about it, and we will make it right.

A Vendor program vs. Craft Shows and Boutiques

A Craft Show and/or Boutique is a lot of fun. You get some unusual products, which you won't see in the routine. These are the plus points.

On the negative side, boutiques are a lot of work, I mean a lot of work. The reason is that you will be trying to co-ordinate ten or twelve vendors, mostly amateurs. Some will have sloppy booths, some will have breakable products, some will show up late and some will not show at all. The overall event will look like a swap-meet.

Our recommendation is that you do only one craft show a year and select your vendors mainly from employees who do a craft on the side. Be selective and re-evaluate your vendors each year on product, presentation, dependability, and professionalism. Keep a score card so that the new Ways and Means for the next year has something to go on.

The Four Publics

These are Management, the Employees, the Doctors and the Auxiliary members. It is not often that the hospital CEO visit's a gallery, but when they do we are much honored. On the other hand some of our better customers are from middle management. We are also very aware of the CEO's influence over what we do. Here are some management concerns which influence the way we do business.

Management is sensitive to the image of the hospital. A DVS at a hospital in Los Angeles tells a story about having a leather sale in the front lobby of a hospital. A CEO arrived at the hospital with the Mayor of the City and this is what he should have seen.

It is an older hospital, recently renovated. Four mottled marble pillars define the space An ebony semi-circular front desk dominates the entrance. A light reddish burgundy carpet contrasts with the dark black tones. One whole wall is glass so the room is light. There are lots of plants. It is a beautiful room!

This is what the CEO and the mayor saw that day:

There was a vendor sale in the lobby. Right in front were two shabby six-foot tables The vendor had not bothered cover these with tablecloths. Four or five large cardboard boxes were stacked haphazardly behind the tables. The merchandise was scattered around the lobby and in disarray. The vendor was sitting with his feet up on the table, reading a newspaper. Oh my goodness!

For two years there was no vending at that hospital! There is a lesson in this. What management wants more than anything else is that your program will not degrade the hospital in any way.



So your first Rule is to choose your Vendor carefully

A vendor program's success is wholly dependent on the selection of the vendor.

I have seen several vendor programs discontinued. There was nothing wrong with the program. There was everything wrong with the selection of the vendors.

Starting up a program:

When you start a vendor program the problem is how to limit it. There are thousands of “wannabe” vendors out there, and it seems and they all want to come to you. When you know the tricks, there are easy ways to qualify your vendors.

Qualifying tricks:

- Ask the vendor if they carry million-dollar liability insurance. This will disqualify 90% of those vendors who are calling you. I will level with you, in the twelve years I have done business I have never had one accident. So why the insistence on the insurance? What you are trying to do here is to separate the men from the boys. What you are looking for is a serious vendor who conducts business in a professional manner, and such a vendor will always carry the insurance. Furthermore what you are trying to do is to set up a program that is stable and will last. This means you are trying to please management as your very first priority. This is even more important than your selection of product, although that is also important. Management is responsible for the security of the facility. They like the million dollars insurance. They like their hospital to look good. These are PR points.
- Invite the new vendor in to show you the product. You can only get an idea of the price and quality of the product by actually looking at the product. You want customers to thank you for bringing a vendor to them. Headaches come from bad products.
- Ask a vendor for his refund/exchange policy. If he doesn't have one, go cautiously.
- Ask about customer service. How can the customer reach the vendor when the vendor is not at the hospital. Picture Lady can always be reached via our web site.
- Get referrals.
- If you really like the product but are not sure of the professionalism, first try the vendor at the annual craft show.

Your second Rule for success is to go lightly on your Volunteers

The most precious commodity in a volunteer program is the willingness of the volunteers. Volunteers do not like to get up early. They also do not prefer long hours. And they like to go off traveling. On the other hand a successful vendor event runs from 7:00a.m. through 4:00 p.m. This is to catch the changing shifts at 7:00 and 4:00. So here again it is vital to choose your vendor well. You want your volunteers to show up for coffee and/or lunch so they can socialize together. On the other hand you want your vendor to turn up and set up promptly. The show should be in full swing no later than 7:30 a.m. If you do not trust the vendor with the money before the volunteers show up, here is a good tip on how to easily control him.

Post a sign at the cashier table which says: **“If you do not get a receipt, the merchandise is free”** Then until you are confident you can trust the vendor insist he turns in sequentially numbered receipts. In this way the customers police the vendor.

It is not a good idea to schedule too many shows:

If you have one a week, and one hospital schedules a show every day you will lower the standards of your vendor activity. The reason is the better vendors will stay away and you will end up with a swap meet or a yard sale. No unique products and no high-end products of quality.

Most hospitals do one show a month. If you are confident about a vendor you should schedule him twice. You can stretch to more than one day a year only if you have proven vendors.

These are the shows usually scheduled by most hospitals

- **Uniforms (Scrubs)**
- **High-end Jewelry**
- **Costume Jewelry**

- **Low-end Jewelry (\$6.00)**
- **The Art Gallery (Home Décor)**
- **A Book Fair**
- **A Leather Sale**

I have seen volunteers try other products, but soon discontinue them. These are the proven ones.

We strongly advise against anything that smacks of swap meet or Dollar Days or the 99c store. It is a sure way to get your program canceled even if the numbers seem promising.

Your third Rule is to ensure that the employees appreciate you

One hospital has a tree with copper leaves up on the wall near the gift store. Whenever they do something for the hospital they make sure the hospital hears about it and it is advertised on the copper tree. For example: A bus with ramp for transporting patients in wheelchairs was donated and is recorded on a leaf. The new coffee machine for the doctors – a little thing but considerate was donated. It is also recorded on a leaf.

A few hospitals keep a newsletter and if your volunteers find this onerous this is a [service](#) we can do for you.

Your fourth rule is to always thank your employees for their support

One hospital never schedules a show in October for this is the month when they hold their ice-cream thank-you party for all the employees. At this party the President tells amusing stories about volunteer achievements over the past year. An information package is also given out to disseminate the volunteer good works. At this hospital the events are held in an auditorium which is a distance away, usually a no-no. The events are always well attended. Your employees will go out of their way to support you if they know you appreciate them and if they think you are doing a good job. And a thank you goes a long, long way.

Reaching all your Publics

A vendor show is largely dependent on getting the word out effectively. Picture Lady is somewhat different from other vendor shows in that early advertising really, really pays off. This is because a customer can plan ahead. For example at Kaiser Walnut Creek Angela Cordoba bought a picture by Segura Torres a year ago and really loved it. She wanted more artwork by this artist. On receiving her early advertising she went to the web site and selected the pictures she wanted. We were able to duplicate the frame of her first picture. Now she has five Seguras in her house and we had a sale of over \$300.00. If we are able to get three or four big spenders like this, the numbers go way up! People who have new houses and empty walls is the target with the early advertising.

One hospital introduced us to the idea of quarter flyers. These are for stuffing in the packets at the gift store. We have found that these reach the visitors.

The bulk of the sales at one hospital come from the outlying doctor's offices. The Ways and Means took the trouble to put together an email list for office managers. "It is so easy", she says. "I now send email advertising out. All I have to do is press one button and out it all goes!" We helped by providing the email advertising, which can be printed at the other end. We admire volunteers who are creative with the advertising. We are happy to do the work if you come up with your bright ideas.

Creating an Event to Remember is a Team Effort.