EXPANDING YOUR BRAND

through merchandise and promotional items

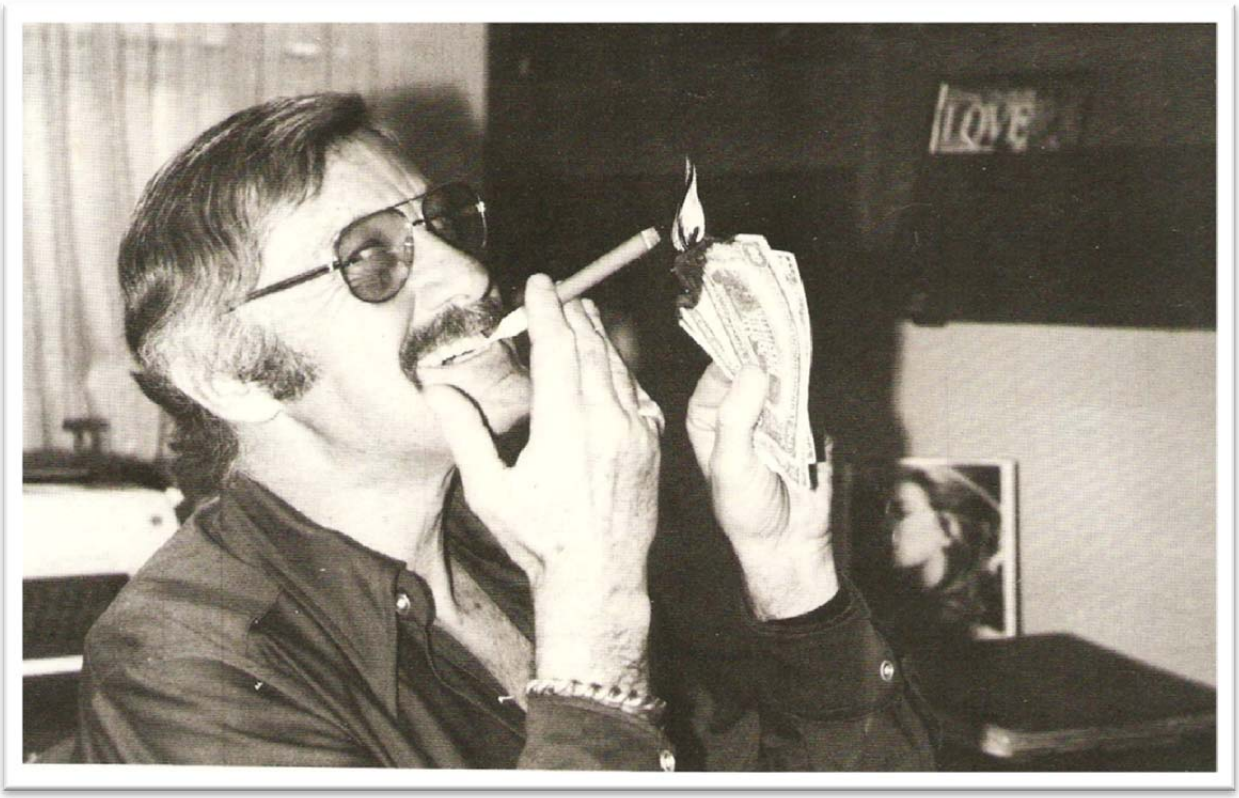
Question: Why should you sell merchandise?
Answer: To make money and promote yourself or your organization.

Question: Why should you give away promotional items?
Answer: To promote yourself or your organization, therefore making more money.

Now that that's settled…

Introduction

This could be you.



Design It!

Graphics 101

Raster Images vs. Vector Images

A **raster image** is made up of individual pixels, each a different color, arranged to display an image. Raster images cannot be made larger without sacrificing quality. When a raster image is enlarged, each block of information (pixel) is simply made bigger, often resulting in an image that is grainy or "pixelated".

- Raster images are created in programs like **Adobe Photoshop**.
- Common raster file extensions are **.BMP**, **.GIF**, and **.JPEG**.

A **vector image** is made up of points and paths. Mathematical formulas (vectors) are used to determine how the paths are shaped and what color(s) the paths are bordered with or filled by. The visual information is contained in the relationship between the points, not the points themselves, so the image can be expanded to an infinite size without sacrificing quality.

- Vector images are created in programs like **Adobe Illustrator**.
- Common vector file extensions are **.AI** and **.EPS**.

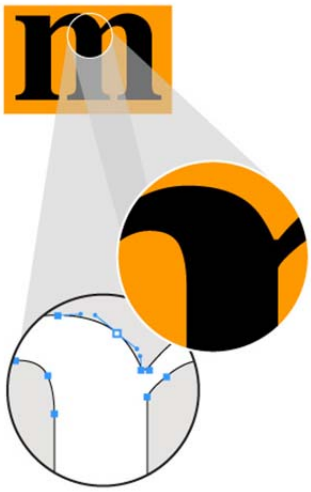
Raster Image	Vector Image
	

Image Resolution

Image resolution is directly related to the amount of detail a raster image holds. Resolution is measured by the number of dots or pixels contained within each inch of the image. The terms dots per inch (DPI) and pixels per inch (PPI) can be used interchangeably, but technically reference the intended end medium of the file.

- The industry standard resolution for **printed** images is **300 DPI** (dots per inch).
- The industry standard resolution for **digital** images is **72 PPI** (pixels per inch).

When a low resolution image is used for print projects, the final product may come out looking grainy or pixelated.

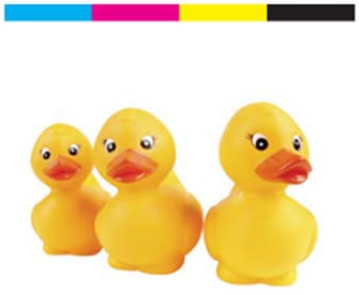
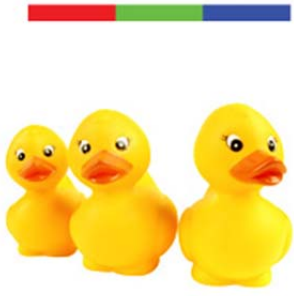
1 x 1	2 x 2	5 x 5	10 x 10	20 x 20	50 x 50	100 x 100

CMYK vs. RGB

CMYK and RGB are color models, named for the colors used in the final product.

- **CMYK** (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Key [Black]) refers to the four colors of ink used for printing.
- **RGB** (Red, Green, Blue) refers to the three colors of visual light used to display computer graphics.

When RGB artwork is used for print projects, the color mode must be converted for compatibility with the CMYK print process. Sometimes the conversion from RGB to CMYK works without any problems arising, and a printout will look identical to what shows up on the computer. In other cases, there will be noticeable differences between the shades of color.

CMYK	RGB
	

Bleed and Trim

The offset printing process involves artwork being printed on a surface larger than the final product (usually multiple copies on one sheet) and trimmed afterwards to the final desired dimensions. Artwork files used for this type of printing contain a "**bleed**" area, or an extension of the artwork that will be trimmed off in the final product. This extension of the artwork gives the printer a small amount of space to account for movement of the paper during the trimming process, resulting in a final product without unprinted or blank edges.

Shifting of paper during the printing process can also affect the artwork directly inside the final print dimensions. Artwork files should also account for this, ensuring that all vital elements are placed within the "**safe zone**" or "**live area**" of the file.

Many print businesses will offer file templates in multiple formats for download. These templates will include guides to represent the bleed, trim line, and live areas.

- The **inner-most** guide is the **safe zone** or **live area**. All vital elements (text, major graphics) should fall within this guide.
- The **middle** guide represents the **trim line**, where the surface will be cut to produce the final product.
- The **outer-most** guide is the **bleed area**. If the artwork does not extend to this line and the printing surface shift position in the cutting process, your finished product may have an unprinted edge.

If a file template is not available, you can create your own by adding the printer's required bleed to the final dimensions of your document. The print industry standard is 1/8 (0.125) of an inch.

Full Artwork File	Final Product

Suggested Reading

10 Words Your Graphic Designer Wishes You Knew	(http://www.istockphoto.com/article_view.php?ID=1602)
How To Use Illustrator Templates	(http://www.busybeaver.net/pdfs/Illustrator_Handbook.pdf)
How To Use Photoshop Templates	(http://www.busybeaver.net/pdfs/Photoshop_Handbook2.pdf)

Branding

- **Hire a professional to design your logo.**
  It is well worth the time and money involved to invest in a professionally created logo. Image quality and file format are important aspects of the printing process and starting with the right source material will eliminate hassles down the road. If you don't have an existing contact for design support, try using a competitive or crowd-source based service for fast and inexpensive logo design.

Crowd-Source Design Resources
www.99designs.com
www.crowdspring.com
www.designcrowd.com
www.logomyway.com

- **Have a non-professional logo converted into commonly supported file types.**
  If you already have a logo, but do not have it in the appropriate file format for printing, find a resource for editing or converting the file. If you don't have an existing contact for design support, try using an artwork editing or file conversion service.

File Conversion Resources
www.vectorizemylogo.com
www.vectorfactory.biz
www.artfixers.com

- Develop a brand identity using logo alternatives.
  - *Use a font or combination of fonts as a logo.*

  - *Use a symbol or modified symbol as a logo.*

  - *Use your signature as a logo.*

Siren's Suggestions

Ask your designer to provide your logo in several different formats. Consider the following variations:

- File Format Variations:
  - vector version
  - raster version
- Resolution Variations:
  - high resolution version *(for print)*
  - low resolution version (*for web)*
- Background/Layer Variations:
  - flattened, background included
  - layered, transparent background
- Color Variations:
  - full-color version
  - one-color version
  - black and white version
- Other Variations:
  - for print on light backgrounds
  - for print on dark backgrounds
  - with website
  - without website
  - logo as repeated pattern

Some examples of potential variations are shown below.

Since you will be unable to open some file types without the accompanying graphic design software, request that a small jpg is provided to offer a preview of each file. With a preview file, you will be able to more easily identify the file needed for print production or other purposes.

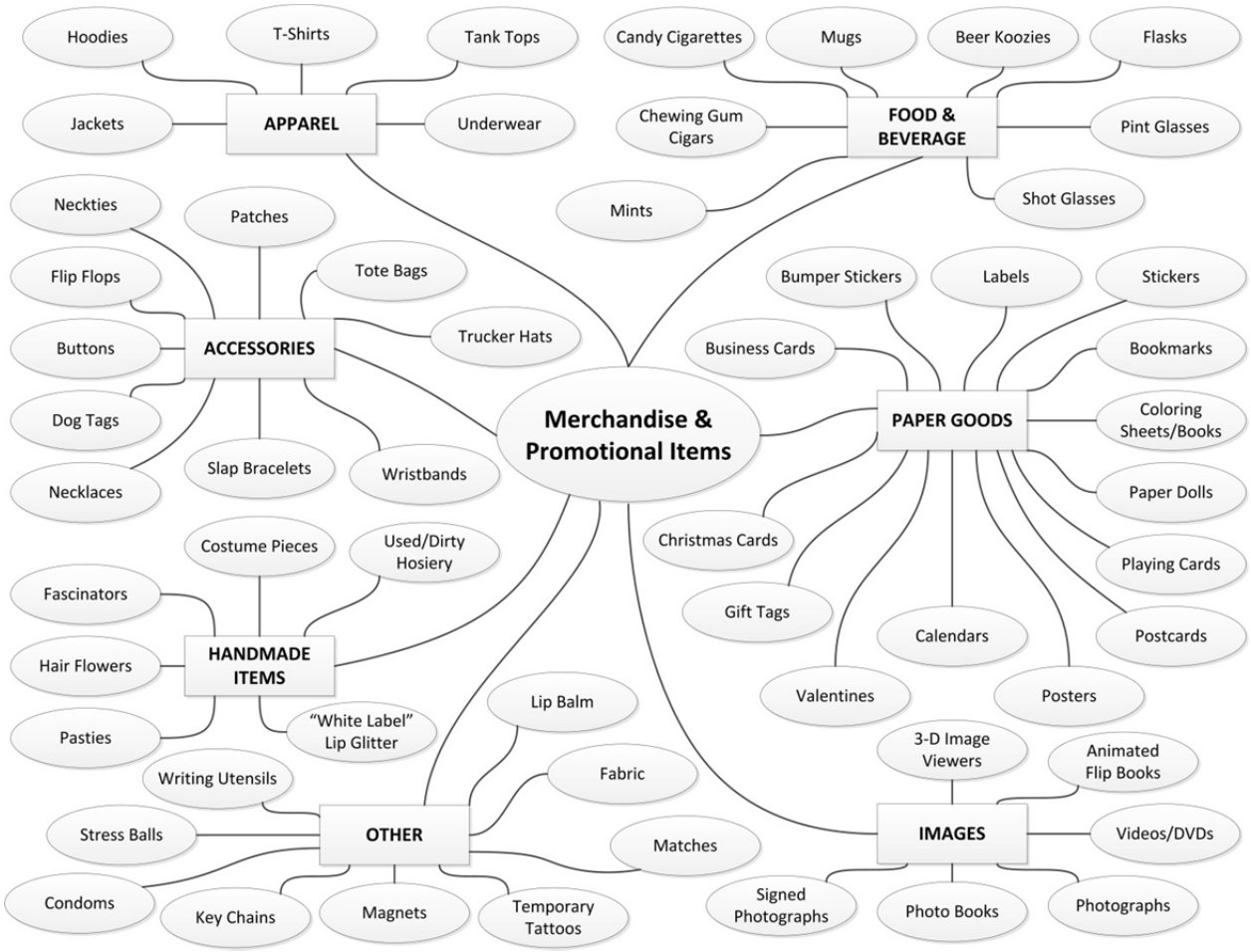
You shouldn't have to ask a professional, but just to be safe… ensure that all text is converted to outlines or applicable font files are included.

Make It!

Choosing Products

Branding Brainstorm

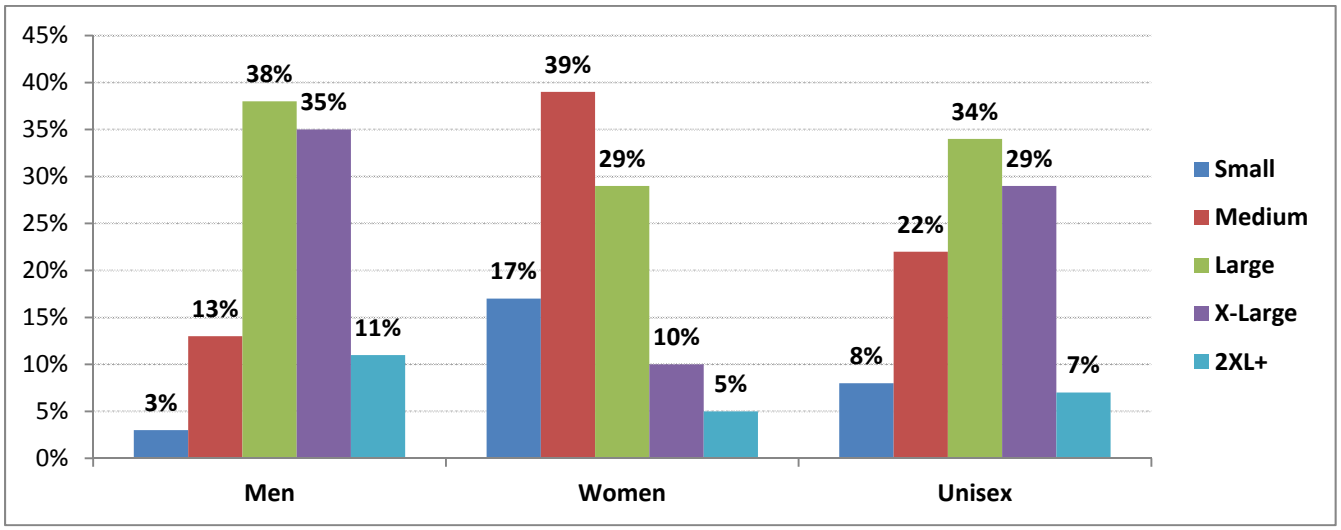
These days you can slap a logo on just about anything. Use the brainstorm below to get your creative juices flowing and form a “short list” of items you think you might want to sell or distribute as promotional tools. Consider items you would have created by a third party as well as things you might make yourself.



Things to Consider

- **Which items will sell?**
  - *Survey your audience via social media to see which items they are interested in buying.*
  - *Visit other performers' merch tables and websites to see what items they are selling.*
  - *Consider which items you would buy or have bought from your favorite performer(s).*
- **Where can you get the items made?**
  - *Research vendors locally and online.*
  - *Request sample packs and/or sample items from potential vendors, if available.*
  - *Ask other performers for vendor suggestions based on their experience.*
- **What will the items cost to make?**
  - *Consider multiple variables when pricing merch production. "Base" pricing can be misleading. Be sure to account for quantity, number of ink colors, and number of print locations as you shop. Make adjustments as needed to find the item that fits your budget.*
  - *Research additional fees and include them in your totals before making a decision. Common additional fees include: artwork setup fees, screen setup fees, and shipping fees. A vendor that charges more per-item, but includes artwork setup or shipping free of charge may turn out to be a better choice.*
  - *Ask about vendor discounts and sponsorship. Some print companies will deduct a portion of the cost of your order in exchange for inclusion of their logo on your product as well.*
- **How many do you need?**
  - *Order large quantities of commonly requested items like T-shirts, stickers, and buttons.*
  - *Seek out "short-run" or "print-on-demand" vendors for the production of higher-cost specialty items and place orders in small quantities.*
  - *Survey your audience via social media to gauge size popularity for apparel orders.*

The chart below outlines the most common size-distribution of custom T-shirt orders, according to a survey of national screen-printing companies.



Ordering Products

- **Read your selected vendors' specifications and ensure you understand their artwork needs prior to placing your order.** *If you don't understand the technical jargon, look for a "Frequently Asked Questions" document or artwork templates section to help you translate. Call in your graphic designer for reinforcement when needed.*
- **Double and triple check your design prior to submission.** *Many vendors print based on the artwork uploaded through their website, without generating a proof or seeking a secondary approval of the final product. It is your responsibility to ensure that everything is spelled and placed correctly. It is better to be safe than sorry. If you're nervous or overly cautious, ask a friend to review your document as well.*
- **Ensure that all aspects of order fulfillment are considered when timing your order.** *Allow enough time for artwork setup, print production and shipment prior to your event. If your vendor requires sign-off on a proof, production will not begin on your order until the proof is reviewed and responded to. Monitor you inbox and provide a timely response to avoid production delays.*

Making Products

You don't necessarily have to go to the printer to get merch. You (most likely) have two hands. Put them to work! Follow the lead of other entrepreneurial burlesque performers and craft yourself some extra rhinestone funds. Selling your wares to other performers in the community is a great way to network as well. Iva Handfull with her "*Haute Under the Collar*" tie collection and Magdalena Fox with her "*Booty and the Geek*" booty shorts and playsuits are both great examples of burlesque businesses specializing in hand-crafted goods.

- **Pasties.** Pasties are one of the top-selling merch items at any burlesque show. Every lady (and some lady boys) want to re-create what they saw on the stage. Slap together some basic pasties and facilitate their experimentation. For bonus bucks, offer pasties accessories like flash tape, spare tassels, and storage options.
- **Hair Flowers and Fascinators.** "Hair Diddies" (Siren Santina's official term for anything you stick on your head) are easy to make and look great on everyone. This is a fast and easy addition to your merchandise offerings.
- **White Label Items.** If you aren't crafty, simply buy a ready-made product and add your branding to it. Slap a label with your logo on a pot of glitter or tube of lip balm and you have your own cosmetics line!

General Suggestions

- Aim for consistent style across all items offered.
- Put your website on everything you sell.
- Select a narrow range of products for face-to-face merch sales.
- Offer additional items for purchase online using an integrated print-on-demand service.
- Seek sponsorship. Find a local business that will split the cost of producing an item for inclusion of their logo or website as well.

Sell It!

Preparation

Pricing

- Use the chart below to make a quick, industry standard estimate of what you should be charging for each item you sell.

Wholesale Price	Materials + Labor + Overhead
Retail Price	Wholesale Price x2

- **Round prices up or down to the nearest paper-currency-based increment ($1, $5, $10, $20).**
  This reduces the amount of cash you will need on hand for making change and completely eliminates the need for coins.

- **Adjust you pricing based on event and location.**
  You may be able to charge more outside of you home town or in larger metropolitan areas. Never place a price tag directly on an item. Rely on variable signage or a color-coded system to enable on-the-fly re-pricing.

Organization

- **Create professional looking tags, inserts, and/or packaging for handmade items.**
  Not only will this help keep inventory organized and clean, but it will also increase the stock's perceived value. A professional presentation magically transforms objects from "arts and crafts" to "artisan and hand-crafted".
    - Print a branded, repeated pattern onto thick card stock and cut to size as needed for backers, inserts, and tags.
    - Use clear containers (pillow boxes, poly baggies) with branded paper materials to create custom packaging.

Packaging Resources
www.containerstore.com
www.papermart.com
www.storesupply.com
www.uline.com

- **Document everything. Forms are your friends.**
  Ensure that all inventory levels, sales, payments, and change supplies are documented. This can be tracked as part of the payment process using a smart-phone or tablet application such as Square Register. Forms (either paper or electronic) will do the trick for the less-technologically inclined. A written record is an absolute must for reconciliation and reporting purposes, and (when tracked appropriately) will also help identify "run-rates" and inventory re-ordering needs.

- **Put care and consideration into the storage and organization of your merchandise items.**
  Use these tips to keep everything in un-cluttered and easy to find.
  - *Roll T-shirts and wrap them with a rubber band or masking tape. Indicate size on the outside.*
  - *Keep small items in individual bags or packages.*
  - *Use containers within containers to keep items separate.*
  - *Label all containers so volunteers know what is inside and where to put things back.*
  - *Take a picture or make a map outlining where things go and how to re-pack.*

Operation

Set-up and Display

- **Choose the right location.**
  Find a high-traffic spot that can be seen by everyone. Try to avoid blocking doors and lines to the bathroom and bar.
- **Ensure base display is clean, attractive, and well lit.**
  Use a pretty piece of fabric or tablecloth to cover the display space and ensure there is plenty of lighting available so that items and prices can be clearly seen.
- **Don't offer too many items at once.**
  Limit in-person merch sales to a select number of consistently branded items. Offer an extended selection online via print-on-demand services.
- **Create a display board or case containing one of each item for sale.**
  Setup is a cinch when all you need to do is pull out one board or case and set it on a table. Actual sale items can be kept in a separate container and don't necessarily have to be seen by the customers.
- **Be creative. Look for unconventional containers and objects for display construction.**
  Pinterest is a great place to find display inspiration. Look to jewelers, artists, and other crafters for display ideas.

Checklist

The list below outlines common items/needs associated with the operation of a merch booth. Use this list, or a modified version of this list, to ensure a successful vending experience.

☐ Table	☐ Money Bag	☐ Price Signage/Listing
☐ Table Cloth/Fabric	☐ Change	☐ Display Items
☐ Banner/Signage	☐ Credit Card Reader	☐ Stock Items
☐ Lighting	☐ Sales Log	☐ Shopping/Gift Bags

Increasing Business

General Suggestions

- **Accept Credit and Debit card payments.**
  66 percent of all point-of-sale (POS) transactions are done with plastic – credit, debit, or gift cards. Only 27 percent of purchases are made with cash, and cash sales are estimated to drop to only 23% by 2017. Accepting card payments is essential to doing business in today's economy.

Payment Resources
www.payments.intuit.com
www.paypal.com/webapps/mpp/credit-card-reader
www.squareup.com

- **Group items together in "packages" or "combos".**
  - *If you a selling items with multiple designs, offer them individually as well as in "collector packs" containing all available versions.*
  - *Offer a discount when combining items, the same way movie theatres offer discounts for purchasing popcorn and candy combos. Number or name combinations and pre-package items for easy distribution.*

- **Offer "exclusive" or "limited edition" items unique to a particular event.**
  Items that are "special" have a higher perceived value. You can charge a higher price for a limited edition item that "regular" item. If limited edition items are offered regularly (by show, season, performer, etc.) they can become a collection, which will encourage some audience members to make a purchase each time a new edition becomes available.

Promotion Ideas

- Offer merchandise as prizes for in-show games or raffles. As the prize(s) is/are being awarded, the emcee can mention that identical items are available for purchase and direct the audience toward the merch table/area.
- Include a "Home Shopping" segment in your show. Cast members or staff can demonstrate or model merchandise items for the audience, and direct them to the merch table/area for purchase.
- Provide a mobile merch experience. Outfit a volunteer as a "cigarette girl" and send them through the audience with a tray of T-shirts, stickers, and buttons. Alternate versions of this tactic include a "stewardess" experience (with a rolling cart of merch items) and/or a "peanut guy"/"baseball game barker" experience. *Get ya' T-shirts here! Hot, Fresh T-shirts here!*
- Sell them the shirt off your back. Dress a willing volunteer in an apparel item and offer audience members the opportunity to buy it right off of the model (perhaps even at an increased price).
- Make arrangements with the venue to offer drink specials that include the purchase of a branded shot glass or other glassware item. Allow the bar staff to hustle on your behalf. The increased drink sales will benefit the bar, while the increased merch sales will benefit you.
- End the show curtain call will a cast parade to the merch table/area. Audience members will follow.
- Conduct online promotions, asking fans to post photographs of themselves modeling your t-shirts or showing off their buttons or stickers. People will do crazy things to be featured on a website or for the public glory of winning an online contest. Crazy things like… buying your merch!
  Choose a winner (based on online votes, to encourage promotion of your website by contestants) and offer them free tickets to a show. Free tickets to a show?! Why would I want to give away something for free when I'm trying to sling T-shirts for cash over here? Well, imaginary person I am now randomly addressing for no reason, I'm glad you asked. That leads me to my next point…

Giving It Away!

Giving things away seems counter-intuitive to the money making process, but it really is a form a purchased advertising that will provide a return on your investment – be it in the form of new audience members or additional merchandise purchasers. Every time a person wears that shirt you gave them, or posts that picture from your show, they are giving an endorsement of your production. With social media users have an average of 338 Facebook friends and 208 Twitter followers, being seen in/with a branded product or at a well branded/advertised event can open the doors to a gigantic stream of potential future clients.

Electronic Giveaways

Giving things away online is a cheap and easy way to promote yourself and your performances. Since there is no tangible object involved, no physical contact with the recipient is required. The entire public can enjoy your gratuity, virgins and veterans alike! Go viral and expand your audience!

Examples of Electronic Giveaways include:

- Photo Booth Gallery
  Shoot pictures on a "Step and Repeat" background, or add your logo and website to the image before posting. When subjects download and share, they advertise your name and website!
- Printable Coloring Sheets
  Everyone loves to color. I don't care who or how old they are. Ask fans to download, color, and post their entries into an online coloring contest for more viral marketing!
- Printable Valentines
  You love your fans. Your fans love you. Just spread that romance around to everyone else, why don't ya?
- Printable Holiday Gift Tags
  No gift is every complete without a topless picture of you (branded with your website) attached.
- Downloadable Music or Video Files
  Get your multi-media on. Record a song parody. Host an interview. Let interested parties download and share your performance reel or promotional video. You might be surprised how easily "tech savviness" translates into "professional credibility". You ain't no amateur.

Tangible Giveaways

- Donate a prize package to a charitable organization.
  They can sell or auction off the package to raise funds for their organization, promoting you while doing so.
- Host a raffle or auction, with branded-merchandise as the featured prize.
  You will make back the cost of the give-away in raffle ticket sales, and non-winning entrants may be tempted to buy their own copies of the featured prize from your merch booth.
- Give away branded-merchandise as prizes during audience participation games or events.
- Give away branded-merchandise as souvenirs on VIP-table or as part of VIP-package.
- Donate goodies to festival gift-bags and advertise yourself to your peers.