



Top Tips for Online Markets by Sinead Koehler, Crafty Fox Market

Sinead Koehler is the founder and director of Crafty Fox Market. Since 2010, Crafty Fox have been at the heart of London's maker scene, hosting events to help designer-makers and artists to sell their work by connecting them directly with shoppers through markets and an online directory called 'Shopping With Soul'. Sinead is a passionate advocate for the craft sector and an experienced presenter and educator.

[Crafty Fox Market](#) have been hosting markets in a variety of locations around London since 2010 and remain at the very heart of the Capital's vibrant maker scene. So what is an 'online market' and how exactly do they work? An online market is a time-limited, virtual gathering of makers and celebration of maker culture.

Online markets have provided a great way for artists and makers to remain visible during 2020 when many in-person events have been cancelled. These virtual events have become a life-line for many makers, helping them to make those all important sales and maintain contact with the maker community.

There are many different formats of online markets – some are hosted primarily through Instagram or Facebook while others take place on bespoke websites. It is important to be clear on the format of the event you are taking part in so that you can plan your participation appropriately.

Here are some top tips to help you make the most of the opportunity:

1. Great quality, seasonal photography

Online selling relies heavily on great quality photography – you have a very short time to catch your potential customer's attention. If you are creating your own photography, think about how you can style your products using props and backgrounds to suit your aesthetic. You may change your props depending on the season – for example, festive shots styled with pine cones, decorations and fairy lights will look out of place in mid-summer so you would need to re-shoot.

Consistent lighting is also crucial and can be tricky to get right at darker times of the year when natural light is in short supply. Think about whether you need to create a lightbox – there are lots of online tutorials which will show you how to do this. It is also worthwhile spending time getting to know the various settings on your camera or phone.



Festive imagery: [L.B. Illustration](#) and [Here Be Monsters](#)

2. Work out the mechanics

Think about how the customer will actually make a purchase and make sure it is as easy as possible for them. If you don't have a website, no problem! It is possible to make sales directly from Instagram pictures by requesting payment through direct messaging and a Paypal account. However, this system is only suitable for a small number of products and it is easy to make mistakes. If you have a website, make sure it is easy to navigate, that your product listings contain all the necessary details and that postage charges are clear. You may wish to add a FAQ section to your website with information on postage and returns if you don't already have one. Put yourself in the customer's shoes and make sure there are no barriers to the sale.

3. Promote early

When taking part in an online market, you share the responsibility for event promotion with the organiser. The event will be a lot more successful if it is viewed as a team effort. You can let your audience know you are taking part in the event through your social media and email newsletter (if you have one!). If you are just starting out and don't have either of those things, you could start by simply reaching out to your friends and family. They will love to support you!

4. Work out a plan for how to take part

Create a plan for your social media in the lead up to the event as well as during and after the event. Decide how you will spend the day itself – where possible, setting time aside to reply to messages and comments as well as interacting with other makers taking part. You may also wish to set up a 'home stall' and create a video tour. [Here](#) is an example of a home stall tour from 20seventhletter. If you tag the market organisers in your promotion, they may share your work, helping you reach a wider audience.



[Melissa Donne Studio](#) home stall

5. To discount or not?

Many online markets have become centred around discounting as a mechanism to draw in shoppers. At Crafty Fox Market, we encourage our makers instead to think about providing 'value' to customers in other ways. Pricing is often very carefully considered for maker businesses and many don't have the available margins to offer a discount for every event so we don't require this for our events. Here are a variety of mechanisms you could consider as a way to add value for your customers: gift wrapping, free postage, bundle offers, free gift with first 5 purchases, exclusive market-only products. If you do decide to offer a discount, think about how long you want it to run for and make it clear to your customers that it is linked to your participation in the market.

6. Tell your story

People buy from people and your challenge is to successfully tell your story digitally to potential customers. The fact that there is an individual with a talent and a passion behind the products is what makes the experience of supporting a small business different to shopping in a department store. You should ideally include a photo or video of yourself on your website and in your social media in the lead up to the event. It's also useful to give some insight in how and where you make your products and perhaps your journey to becoming a maker. If you are comfortable in front of the camera, consider using Instagram stories or lives to talk directly to customers about your work.



[Nina Paloma](#) and [Hello Sunshine](#)

7. Create community

There is a lot to be gained from creating a meaningful connection with the other makers taking part. Having a support network around you is invaluable as many makers work alone. A market provides the ideal excuse to reach out to other makers and say hello. When you are promoting the event, it's always useful to also share other makers who are taking part – your audience will be more likely to 'attend' the event if they know there is lots to see! You may find that other makers will also promote you in return which can be a useful way to grow your audience. Perhaps you could team up with another maker to host a giveaway, create joint product photography or even host a live with a fellow maker during the event using Instagram.



Joint product photography: [Detola & Geek](#) (lampshades) and [Tipperley Hill](#) (prints)

8. Do the follow-up work

After the event, say thank you to your audience for the support. Hopefully you will have lots of lovely orders to pack and send. This is a good opportunity to share pictures of your packaging. If you chose to run a discount or offer, you may wish to extend the offer by a few days. If you have gained lots of new followers, you could use it as an excuse to share another post introducing yourself and your work.



Example post from [Hello Terry](#)



You will find Crafty Fox Market on Instagram [@craftyfoxmarket](#) and online at [craftyfoxmarket.co.uk](#). If you are interested in becoming a trader, please sign up to the mailing list for information.