



Another leading light of the gift-wrap world is Jane Means, who conducted a series of very well attended seminars at this year's Autumn Fair. GT's new editorial assistant, Jo Cooper, went along for some tips.

ALL WRAPPED UP AND READY TO GO

If there's one woman who can give you the low-down on what's hot in the world of gift wrap and gift decoration, it's Britain's very own Jane Means. From her home in Lincolnshire, Jane runs courses to help others learn some tricks of the trade and maximise their profits. She took to that stage at this year's Autumn Fair to share her ideas of inexpensive yet effective gift wrapping in one of the exhibitions seminar sessions.

"Gift wrap is big business and should not be underestimated," Jane told the packed audience. "In most cases, the wrapping is as important as the gift itself". Selling wrap and offering a gift wrapping service has the potential to increase your sales dramatically if used it to its best effect."

"It is particularly in the run up to the festive period that you should think about introducing Gift Wrap to your service." Jane goes on to say that for an initial £40 cost you can buy everything you need to start up a basic service, saying. "With each wrap costing as little as 30 pence in materials, there's a great profit to be made on a £3 gift wrap charge."

Jane advises prospective wrappers to have a clear budget in mind, explaining that a basic set-up should include double-sided tape, ribbons, wrap and tissue paper and a glue gun, although a counter roll dispenser is advisable for high volumes of wrapping for speed and ease, particularly over busy periods.

"Try and save as much initial cost as possible where you can," she says, "florist wholesalers do good quality papers and tissue and keep all off-cuts of ribbon to one side to add to decoration and make bows. Also, I've found eBay to be a good source of bargains in terms of supplies, you'd be surprised what you can find on there."

In addition to watching the costs, Jane warned of being careful about pricing. "Try and keep any gift wrap charge under the £3

mark where possible. If you do opt for different price points depending on the service, make sure you keep this clear and simple and keep it easy for the customer throughout the whole process."

However, watching the cost doesn't mean missing out on the trends. "Anything Eco-Friendly, natural looking, organic and/or fair trade is huge at the moment," she told the audience, "and is also relatively cheap. Even using brown parcel paper as a base and then decorating with co-ordinating ribbons and branches is highly effective. Also, current trends of 'Shabby Chic' and more luxurious styles with velvet and rich colours are still very popular going forward - two big trends from almost the two opposite ends of the market."

The key is to be visual - what looks good will sell well. Complementing colours and patterns, implementing basic colour schemes will give a much more co-ordinated look. "It's common sense really - a bold ribbon needs plain paper, and vice versa. It's all about the visual appeal, that's why I suggest window displays as a great way to sell gift wrapping services."

The festive rush should not restrain any gift wrap services available, even with high volumes of trade. "A lot of people say to me they are just too busy to be offering gift wrap at busy times. However, a bit of forethought allows you to handle the high volume. Try using pop-up boxes, wrap them leaving one end open, and stuff with tissue. If prepared in advance, the point of sale just requires placing the gift in the box and finishing the last end - a huge timesaver."

Also gift-bags don't necessarily have to be the 'lazy option'. Using a basic bag and decorating with ribbon ends, buttons, feathers raffia is effective. "Even if you can't offer a gift wrapping service all year-round, key seasonal dates such as Christmas, Mothers Day and Valentines Day and Easter can really make the effort worthwhile."

