

HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL SEWING & ALTERATIONS
BUSINESS FROM HOME

The \$100 Startup for Superhero Sewists

by

Phyllis Smith

Alterations by Phyllis

Stillwater, MN, USA

<https://www.alterationsbyphyllis.com>

The Total Package

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Revised

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DEDICATION

For all those who read these pages to the end
and then go find the magic mirror in front of which
all their own newfound clients will beam at themselves
in perfectly fitted clothing with grand approval.



Read these pages

Become inspired

Call for a free 30-minute consultation **612-741-8765**

Don't hesitate – I'd love to speak with you about your hopes
and dreams



Explore the extensive alterations video programs located here:



DID YOU KNOW – THIS AUTHOR WRITES & ILLUSTRATES
CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS!



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INTRODUCTION

Start your own home-based sewing and alterations business on \$100 USD or less – even during post COVID-19 challenges - with this mini-course outlining step by step exactly WHAT to do and HOW to do it, by offering alterations as the solid foundation service which gets tons of people in your studio door, and then offering them your diverse line of products and other services as well.

You're going to need to go broad as well as deep into sewing mastery to become successful at a home-based business going forward after global pandemic issues. Let that be the most exciting thought that ever entered your imagination rather than allowing even more dread and fear than years 2020-22 dished out. Go forward. There are plenty of avenues to travel. Get ready to explore them all right here, right now.

The abundant information offered here provides quick yet steady results and comes in two parts: (1) All the information in these pages, and (2) all the 100+ alterations techniques training videos here that can be found on my robust YouTube channel – *Alterations by Phyllis*. There is a ton of info in this book about handling your foundational alterations business, yet stick with me, because we will explore how to diversify plentifully in later pages.

Now, the info in this book cost you \$20-30 USD, and we are going to subtract \$20 from the \$100 right out of the gate. As we go along we will subtract several more items to reach zero. So, since the basic alterations technique YouTube videos (playlist) are free and the 100+ pages of this book cost very little, you are off to a great start posi-

tioning yourself in a sweet little home-based sewing and alterations business.

Let's get started with what I have entitled: *The Total Package!* Here's how to create a successful home-based sewing and alterations business that fulfills your dream, expands your creativity, gathers a devoted following, and pays you your worth.

What if your sewing and alterations business attracted droves of enthusiastic customers, increased your income like crazy great, and gave you the satisfaction of creativity, socializing and doing what you really love? Here's a secret. When you have in your possession *The Total Package* information on these pages and on my YouTube channel to guide and support you, step by step, IT CAN!

You could finally:

INCREASE YOUR INCOME	THRILL CUSTOMERS WITH PERFECT FIT	BUILD A ROCKING BUSINESS
Because you have the tool that shows you how to bring in the revenue you need, when you need it.	Because you know exactly how customers want to feel when they see their image in your magic mirror.	Because you know how to connect people with the solution to their garment fitting problems.



Why is *The Total Package* the Key to building your successful alterations business? I've got your answer.

Let's start at the beginning. As you know, the service of alterations involves spot-fixing as many areas as necessary in a ready-made garment to make it better fitting.

No matter who you are, sooner or later you're going to "fall apart at the seams" and need to spot fix garments yourself or have them fixed or toss them aside for lack of knowing (or caring) what to do with them next.

Your business – with its excellent community outreach – is necessary to persuade customers to responsibly alter their clothing as a very "green" gesture.

Your business is meant to advocate a SEW AWAY solution and dispense with the THROW AWAY mindset.

Who needs you? Formal wear customers need you. Business attire customers need you. Outer wear customers need you. And unique problems customers need you.

**A home-based sewing and alterations business is a small business,
but that doesn't mean you can't get big results!**

You need a guidance system that teaches you how to prevail alongside the competition. Why am I so sure?

As the owner of an in-demand alterations service and fast-growing YouTube channel featuring over 100 videos, I'm continually learning new techniques in all aspects of this business – from sewing tricks to interpersonal tips – every year I take stock of customer trends and assess all the current stuff you need to know for your own business.

Without exception, people experience a unique love affair with clothing unlike other possessions, and you need to be informed about how to conduct business with people and the subject of perfecting the fit of their clothing. *The Total Package* is that guidance system you need to prevail.

How much money can you earn when you work at home sewing for your local community? Let's look at that. Say you work part time and you live close to a metro area, you could easily potentially make up to \$1,000 USD a month.

Likely your goal is more than that, which usually means full time, and if you live near or inside a metro area, you could potentially make up to \$2-3,000 and even \$4,000 a month, especially when combined with custom sewing or craft products, perhaps an Etsy shop, availing yourself to dress shops, and any other types of skill set combos you can imagine.

You are the creator here – you can work backwards from the monthly income you desire and estimate just how much sewing that's going to require, and I show you how to do that in these pages.

Once you establish a client base, and start experiencing the joy of repeat customers who clamor for your service, that's when the income potential begins to climb.

When you provide your customer with a kind of retreat or getaway experience in an inviting studio ambience, build the anticipation of perfect clothing fit, then provide an exquisite outcome – that’s when income potential flourishes.

So, learning how to create an irresistible alterations business is one of the best investments of your time.

Want to grow an alterations business over the next 3-4 months? Concentrate on tasks which provide the biggest return on your time and attention. A business that's irresistible to its customers can result in countless return visits from clients who refer you to others. And when you learn how to create that demand, you benefit for years to come.

YouTube sewing & alterations training channel



Exclusive and affordable sewing & alterations training website



Companion Workbook



The Three Big Secrets Behind A Successful Alterations Business

Secret #1 - A persuasive website and thoughtful marketing materials help customers make the decision to call without fear. The customer needs to feel like s/he's in safe hands.

Before s/he can commit to calling or coming in, s/he wants to know that you're reliable and trustworthy.

You can convey reliability and trustworthiness with a clean and simple website, friendly voicemail/answering system, well designed business cards/brochures, and - best of all - your self confidence in person which conveys, "I'm going to take care of you!"

Secret #2 - The client needs to feel that you're skillful. That's separate from reliable and trustworthy. A person can be totally reliable and trustworthy, but not necessarily skillful enough for a particular job.

Customers need to feel like you know what you're doing - even if they don't have any idea what you're going to be doing. For best results, you must convey your skillfulness and be honest when a task is beyond you.

Secret #3 - The client needs to feel that you're available. That means listening to what they want and translating it into reality.

Most customers show up totally aware of what they want done. It's up to the alterations specialist to convert that need into the desired outcome, at the same time giving great advice, explaining practical outcomes, and sensitively offering attractive alternatives.

Here's Why I Wrote *the Total Package For You*

I wrote it so that you don't have to figure this stuff out on your own anymore. As an alterations specialist and consultant, I'm your teacher throughout these pages including interpersonal stories so varied and interesting such that my experiences will help you discern how to handle customers in any situation, as well as quick-as-a-bunny business setup steps with career follow-through.

If you can say "Yes" to any of these questions, you are the perfect fit for running a successful alterations and sewing service business from home!

Question #1

Are you looking to start or grow your home-based alterations and sewing business and want to skip the painful trial and error?

Question #2

Are you already altering people's clothing for them in some manner?

Question #3

Do you find that you're much better at doing alterations for people casually than presenting yourself as a master sewist business person who commands his/her worth in payment?

If so, I think you're really going to like what you find here in these pages.

Here's why. It's back to "everybody falls apart at the seams" sooner or later and then you, the alterations specialist, are needed. That's the easy part. But to figure out how to take that skill and get it to support you either fully or partially takes some planning even for a small home business.

Most sewists are more comfortable creating than selling. That's what's so sweet about us. In these pages, I'll lay the building blocks out in front of you – all you have to do is assemble them to your liking.

Easily earn up to \$1,000+ a month part time, and potentially \$2-3-4,000 per month full time offering your clothing alterations expertise to your local community.

You are a champion sewist. It's been a labor of love acquiring this much sewing skill over the years. On a scale of 1-10, you consider yourself to be an 8, 9 or 10, don't you? Zero to few people around you are as skilled as you are. You've even begun to accomplish – or already have nailed – the art of garment alterations. You've reached the pinnacle. So now what?

Maybe it's time to put yourself out there and get paid for serving the public with your sewing skill.

Does that idea cause you to nod your head in agreement?

Or maybe you're already in demand and have been giving your services away. Maybe that's been OK until recently when the conversations you have with yourself in your head and discussions with your immediate support system of family and friends have explored getting paid for a service people are clamoring for.

What if all your sewing experience has led you to this point of making an important decision to add income to your household by sewing for people who stream to your home studio?

Wouldn't that be exciting?

It certainly could be. Especially when you can quickly learn the ins and outs, the ups and downs, the pride and pitfalls of running a business from home with the contents of this book.

Nowhere that I can find is there a collection of information about how to run the specific business of garment alterations from home as comprehensive as the pages in this book.

Because people experience a unique love affair with clothing unlike other possessions, you need to be informed about how to conduct business with people and the subject of perfecting the fit of their clothing.

What you will not find in this book are the specific techniques for doing alterations. For that kind of information, you can find comprehensive video tutorials on my huge YouTube channel.

Simply find the channel *Alterations by Phyllis* and learn the art from scratch or refresh your existing skills.



What you will find in this book is everything else it takes to run your sewing and alterations business from home including many juicy stories about my personal experience.

An easy 136-page read, you can explore this world and check it all out for yourself to see if it's a match and/or inspirational to your desires before you take the leap.

That's why I wrote the book. Because we're super-hero sewists, you and I. the world calls and we go out to meet the demand. Or, if you design your desire to meet that demand just right, you can bring them all on home!

You decide. Good luck!

PART 1

PART 1 – All About Business Setup:

Follow the steps in each of these sections to stay organized and become a rocking success with loyal, raving customers.



Imagine that you're sitting in your dedicated sewing room just a year from now surveying all that you've created with great satisfaction.

In one corner of the room is your attractive, eclectic, and maybe even quirky collection of sewing machines and tools that customers admire.

Across one of the walls you display your emerging brand of women's designer clothing line consisting of pullover hoodie, leggings, tank or tee, flared skirt short dress for over leggings and skort/shorts. Just 5 hot items that clients can't leave without.

And what's a wardrobe without its designer handbag that you've acquired the perfect machine to stitch up and clients go gaga over.

Folded neatly on display in another area is your emerging brand of children's clothing, baby layettes, adorable toys, simple and irresistible designs.

Available on shelves are DIY kits of various types – hand embroidery, beginner sewing for kids, fabric painting, fabric marker coloring, cut and sew – you conjure it, you create it!

Unforgotten are other fab items you've created that perhaps are not fabric artistry yet are complementary such as paper creations, bead art, ceramics, knitting and crochet – honestly, don't let me overwhelm you with YOUR . OWN . TALENT!

How can you achieve your own in-demand home sewing business including foundational alterations? Let me show you.

ALTERATIONS BY PHYLLIS

All about running your own alterations & sewing business from home!
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Are You Ready To Explore The 3 Ways to Know If A Home-Based Alterations & Sewing Business Can Work For You? This Section Is For Sewing & Alterations Specialists who intend to DIVERSIFY & THRIVE

Technical Skill

You will be ready when you do this one thing. Isn't that encouraging to know!

Take your existing skill set, add in creative sewing, and get going!

Interpersonal Skill

Can you balance solitary days with crowd-filled days?

Take your existing skill set, add in creative socialization, and get going!

Business Skill

Get good at it as you go!

Take your existing skill set, add in creative resourcing, and get going!

Technical Skill

It's all right if you are uncertain of your skill worthiness on the subject of alterations as you begin to read this section. By the time you finish reading, you will be certain of what and how to do it.

Think of it this way - performing clothing alterations requires no inventory and is the service that will get customers in the door the fastest so that they can experience precision fit of their existing clothing AND become amazed at all the creative products you display, sewing products and non-sewing products alike. That's the magic of the home sewing business.

WHAT TO DO: Begin by admitting to yourself if you are rusty because it may have been awhile since you sewed. Also, be certain that you still like sewing in general and that, in fact, you are excited to begin afresh, and that you can feel at your core that you have a valid service to offer, no matter global or local societal concerns. This feeling of eagerness to reinvent oneself applies to existing sewing and alterations specialists who are experiencing low to no client influx as well.

If you're a crackerjack sewist and have been keeping up with the skill, then expect to really enjoy this skills assessment section.

Look at any of my Alterations by Phyllis YouTube channel videos. Expect to find dozens at any time, all free, in the Playlist entitled: *Basic Alterations Videos*. If you can complete any three of the tasks featured in this playlist, you are most likely ready. Isn't that encouraging to know!



WHERE TO START: Pants hems are probably going to be your biggest volume. Start with all things hems – skirts and dresses, too. Next are pants waists. After that come men’s suit coats and formal wear. Uh-oh – did your heart skip a beat about those last two categories? Not sure about your skill on those? Either take the time to learn them or don’t – decide not to specialize in those and, for example, do something more creative like offering hand-embroidered jeans, or how about assembling DIY embroidery kits for your customers, and teaching them how to embroider themselves...See how instead of worrying about what you’re afraid you cannot do, it’s better to learn to cope either by becoming confident and competent or compensate with something else.

Let those 3 “C” words work for you:

confident / competent / compensate

If you decide upon getting confident and competent on a skill, that will mean finding clothing to practice on. Be creative and find these items in attics, storage, Goodwill for cheap.

Set a timetable and completion goal for becoming razor sharp at sewing. If you are rusty, give yourself a good month of diligent practice. That means 2-3 times a week take on something inspired by my videos.

While you are doing that, make sure you keep a diary of how long it currently takes you to do these tasks so that when you get to the section on *How Much Money Can I Make?*, you can easily figure it out. Keep this same kind of track of other things you make.

Does that seem discouraging to have to wait to get started while you sharpen up? I've got good news!

While you are practicing, you could still get started and specialize in tasks that you are polished at doing. Not sure what those are? Again, make it all about hems – especially jeans hems. If you can do a regular jeans hem plus the European/original/tricky jeans hem, and have the machine for it, then you are in business! Don't forget to consult my free video "Blind Hemming On Your Home Sewing Machine."

If you are stuck on where to start practicing, make it pants hems and pants waists – then you are ready to start getting the word out that you specialize in those jobs.

Let's talk about other sewing specialties that you either already do or would desire to do.

Do you already have an embroidery machine? What if you were able to offer embroidery and monogramming?

Do you get involved in craft fairs, especially at holiday time? If so, you could spend summer down time, if alterations are slow, getting ready to sell your handcrafts and entering multiple fairs.

Do you have a talent for writing patterns, or would you desire to? People go crazy over DIY items and you might want to consider opening an Etsy shop or other type of crafter's online venue selling patterns and kits. Better yet, get your own magnificent website and sell directly. Don't let a single alterations customer get away from your shop without getting their cell phone number and email address to notify about Facebook Live sales, pop-up shop venues, holiday boutiques, etc.

Now is not the time to be shy and worry about appearing pushy to customers. They've told you "you're the best" when they beam with satisfaction about alterations, so get them on a mailing list and don't look back.

Do you especially love to sew children's clothing? You are already aware there is quite a market for children's clothing and accessories. I can't tell you how many dozens of kids shorts, hoodies, sun dresses I sold off a simple curtain rod attached to a wall to customers who couldn't help but notice them and went gaga over them.

BOTTOM LINE: Assess all types of sewing you love to do that will pair with alterations. The need for alterations will get customers in your door long before these other types of sewing services/products mentioned above, but once people see your range of talent, you will convert your alterations customers into buyers of your handcrafts, your line of handbags, your designer line of clothing, as well. The opportunities are limitless.

Take your existing skill set, add in creative sewing, and get going!

Interpersonal Skill

Countless people are going to come into your home once you decide to do this and take action to get it all going.

Are you certain that you possess the self-confidence to deal with all personality types? Because you will need to be business steel and compassion real at the same time, all the time.

WHAT TO DO: Get real with yourself and think about what types of personalities push your buttons and then imagine how you will bring awareness to these situations and handle everyone smooth as silk.

HOW TO DO THAT: Be the silk. Be smooth. And be steel smooth, too, because this is business. You are not just some nice lady (or fella) filling idle hours sewing for something to do. I mention this because sometimes people forget when they are in a home atmosphere that this is business.

Have you thought about what it would be like to work no two days the same? Sounds idyllic but sometimes is not. Sometimes you wish it was predictable like a regular job. Other days you are so grateful you are definitely not working someone else's dream away from home. Some days you don't see a soul and run machines all day. Those days are good for a lot of introspection and the Zen of sewing. But an all-day or stretch of days like that in quiet winter might be too lonesome for some. You have to know who you are and what you will tolerate.

Have you thought about what it would be like to have people in and out all day and not get a chance to sew? Would you be able to balance all manner of personalities and their needs? Those days are great for enjoying the magnificence of connecting with others – your main purpose for doing this, really – and thriving on knowing you have made someone else's day lovelier than it might have been otherwise.

NUTSHELL WHAT/HOW: If you can balance these two worlds of solitary and crowds, business steel and compassion real, and thrive, then you are ready. Especially if you have determined that you are ultimately in charge of all situations.

Take your existing skill set, add in creative socialization, and get going!

Business Skill

You are probably not an accountant, right? Nor an attorney? No, of course you're not, you're a technical artist. Nobody needs you to be a business major. Nobody needs you to know everything before opening your doors.

WHAT TO DO: If you're worried that you don't have the business acumen to run your own small business from home, the solution is to get business savvy along the way.

HOW TO DO THAT: Don't wait to take one more class or read one more book. Read them and do them on your way to business success. The resources you need are a friend, a family member or a Google search away, all to be taken one step at a time. As you build the foundation of your business, it may be so tempting to get everything perfectly into place before ever receiving a customer. I recommend resisting that temptation. Of course, you will want to follow the business setup section that outlines everything in EXACT ORDER – yet the best momentum is gained while actually already doing business with customers and learning as you go.

NUTSHELL WHAT/HOW: You are so needed by the public, that I encourage you to open your doors and begin receiving these people, these countless people, who will end up being some of your best teachers in this life. You will get just as much benefit from interaction with them as they get from your sewing service. Believe it - sewing for people in your home is the best job in the world!

Take your existing skill set, add in creative resourcing, and get going!



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Are You Ready To Explore The 14 Essential Business Setup Tasks?
This Section Is For Sewing & Alterations
The idea is to DIVERSIFY service & product offerings, but first things first – follow the steps systematically and you'll be ready!

14 Essential Business Setup Tasks
STEP BY STEP in EXACT ORDER
Steps 1-6: Evaluating What's Possible
Steps 7-14: Making Your Dream Business A Reality

1. Check with your Homeowner's Association if a home business is allowed.
2. Contact City Hall about zoning requirements. Get actual permit in step 10.
3. If numbers 1 and 2 are a go, evaluate where your dedicated sewing and reception area space will be in your home, plus consider supplies on hand to get started.
4. Consult, arrange and set ground rules with other household members about what is expected of them while you are conducting business.

5. Is your sewing rusty? Practice until you are satisfied with your readiness for the public.
6. At this point, confidently decide to advance to the reality of your dream home-based business! Then take the following actions.
7. Decide which business entity structure is best for you: Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, Limited Liability Company (LLCP), C Corporation, S Corporation.
8. File your business identity with your Secretary of State and follow the easy directions.
9. Decide how bookkeeping and tax records (including sales tax) will be done.
10. Wait until you receive notification from the Secretary of State that you're official.
11. Go ahead and contact City Hall about getting that permit mentioned in step 2.
12. Get business liability insurance.
13. Get a Sales Tax ID.
14. Now all the activity gets really exciting: **Let Everybody Know About Your Business!**

And They Will Come, Your Customers. Soon. Trust Me!

You have been struck with the brilliant idea to change the course of your life for the better and work from home doing what you already know you love – sewing and working with people.

You are so excited you don't know where to begin. That is why these guidelines can give you focus and organize your thoughts so that you don't have to figure it all out yourself.

You may, of course, do things your own way, in whichever order you desire. Yet I am willing to bet these exact order steps are going to come in very handy.

Here they are.

1. Do you belong to a homeowner's association? If not, advance to the next step. If so, look over your copy of the association rules. Do the rules prohibit home businesses with foot traffic? If prohibited, perhaps you can appeal to your association board members; my best advice is to try. Why? Because alterations is such a "friendly" home business and encourages business from your own neighbors. If no rules prohibiting, great – you can advance on to the next step. Avoid negative input from neighbors in your association about your desire to run a home business with foot traffic. Also – you know the old rule – sometimes it is *easier to be forgiven than to ask permission*, and it is that rule of thumb I relied upon myself when I started; meaning, do NOT ask if you think there will be baseless contention. Enough said, I think you get my drift.

2. Contact your City Hall about zoning requirements. Some residential areas are prohibited from running a home business that will result in foot traffic. If prohibited, then it is up to you to decide whether you will still go ahead or not. If your City Hall allows your home business, they will want you to estimate what the foot traffic will be. Simply make your best guess of what you hope it will be, file an easy form with them, and pay an annual, very inexpensive, permit fee (mine is \$15) that you can display in your studio making your business “official.” I have only ever had one customer want to see my permit. Once you start paying annual permit fees, your City Hall will expect you to always pay your annual permit fee or be subject to a stiff fine penalty and a misdemeanor charge, so do not let it slide, if you are still in business. Believe me, you will not get forgiveness on that score. If you ever go out of business, officially inform your City Hall. Do not actually get the permit until step 11.

3. Evaluate dedicated sewing and reception area space plus consider supplies on hand to get started. See the bare minimum supplies list in the Tools of the Trade section. You probably have enough to get started without much further investment.

4. Consult, arrange and set ground rules with other household members about what is expected of them while you are conducting business. The same for household pets applies. You may find it interesting that for many years I had the friendliest calico cat who was insistent on greeting most clients, she loved people so very much. And they loved her! It was the dearest thing. Still, you will probably want to mention to clients in phone calls, upon first greeting, and state it on your website if you have pets to apprise those with serious allergies or aversion to pets.

5. Is your sewing rusty? Do you need a little rounding out of skills? You already know intuitively what may be lacking, so practice until you are satisfied with your readiness for the public. This does not mean you need to know everything because experience from actual clients is the best teacher. Trust your instinct about readiness and avoid doubt. You know whether or not you were already a pretty darn good sewist when you first became inspired to do alterations from home. The Skills Assessment section will help you further on this subject.

6. At this point, confidently decide to actually advance to the reality of your dream home-based business! Then take the following actions.

7. Decide which business entity structure is best for you: Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, Limited Liability Company (LLC), C Corporation, S Corporation. Do not allow this legal decision to become an obstacle. Do research and seek advice from trusted resources and proceed with forming your chosen structure. You can always change it later. A Sole Proprietorship fit my needs and was very easy to form. *Congratulations on taking your first official step!*

8. Figure out who and how your bookkeeping and tax records are going to get done. If it is going to be you, get that system in place with the right stuff like software or ledger if you're a pencil and paper person – my best advice is to get that system nailed down early on. See the Bookkeeping & Taxes section for further information on this subject.

9. File your business identity with the Secretary of State and follow the directions for your state. This is very easy and usually consists of

submitting easy forms, publishing your business entity in the newspaper for a certain short period, and that is about it. There are associated inexpensive fees. Google: secretary of state business filing (your state) for all the pertinent information for your state. *Congratulations on your second official step!*

10. When you receive notification from the Secretary of State that you are official, that means there was no contention about your potential business at the public hearings that were published in the newspaper, and your entity is now legal.

11. You can go ahead and contact City Hall about getting that permit mentioned above in step 2. There can be a delay in getting the actual official permit; go ahead and start taking clients.

12. Also get business liability insurance – it is inexpensive. Do not be tempted to skip this step. It covers fire, flood, if someone gets hurt on your property, etc., but does not cover you in the event of a determination that you ruined someone's garment. See #8 in the Policy Suggestions section.

13. Get a Sales Tax ID. This also is easy to do although sometimes it can be confounding to navigate state department of revenue sites. Since you are only collecting sales tax in one state, simply be ready with either your EIN (Employer Identification Number if you have employees) or Social Security Number; visit your State's Department of Revenue website; search for or click on the "Sales and Use Tax" link

and click the link to register your business. If you have other sales venues (see Business Plan section) and any of them are out of state, then you will need to set up systems for collecting sales tax from other states. For instance, because I have online customers of digital, not physical, products, I only need to collect sales tax from customers in my state. I use PayPal and have easily set up in my account a system to collect sales tax.

14. Now it is finally time for an exciting flurry of activity: **Let Everybody Know About Your Business!** Do all or some of the following: Newspaper advertising, Social Media, Word of Mouth, Fliers, Business Cards – really, everything you can think of to spread the word. Consider a Grand Opening party.

And They Will Come, Your Customers. Soon. Trust Me!

You can decide to work by appointment only, as I did, and provide an entire exclusive experience for customers.

For those sewists and clients who wish to avoid close contact, devise a drop-off/pick-up box system and be careful to get full payment up front. Think through details about how to set this up with great thoughtfulness – this is only effective for easy alterations – like hems, making the client responsible for accuracy, yet making it simple for them to grab 1-2 safety pins to pin one or both legs. Make sure you write a policy on the entire drop box system. You will want to catch up on pertinent, if not lifesaving, store policies you may want to consider employing to save you from problems proactively in the Policies section coming up later.



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**Are You Ready To Explore How Much Money You Can Expect To Make
As A Home-Based Alterations & Sewing Specialist,
Including Fabric Artistry?**
**This Section Is For Sewing Business Specialists because your intent is
to DIVERSIFY**

Shoot for 90th Percentile

What I want to talk to you about here is achieving the 90th percentile income of \$20 per hour and higher by working at home and running your own show.

The Secret Sauce That Guarantees A 40-Hour Work Week, Every Week

Wait until you find out the secret money maker that nobody is taking advantage of!

Worksheet Worry Eliminator

My easy worksheet eliminates the worry of wondering what to charge, how to figure out a sweet average hourly rate and how to target a high annual salary by working backwards. Read on!

How Much Money Can I Expect To Make?

The resounding answer to that question is: You can make as much money as you desire as an alterations expert when – and only when – you work from home.

I'm going to share with you what to do to make the money you desire and how to go about doing it.

To start, we are going to work from low to high. What I mean by that is, I'm going to show you that if you Google alterations and tailoring and visit some pay scale types of sites, you might come away from that experience feeling low in enthusiasm about the whole prospect. Yet you may not. It depends on your income needs.

What I want to talk to you about here is achieving the 90th percentile income of \$20 per hour and higher by working at home and running your own show.

I want you to go ahead and have that Google experience.

Then realize – no matter the job growth outlook or geographical mean wage figures reported – all those sites you have visited assume you are working away from home in a bridal shop, dry cleaners, clothing store or department store. None of them include numbers for independent at-home workers (except for those working off-site for any of the above). When you work for others, you are at the mercy of your employer and most likely will not be paid your true worth, in my estimation.

Now that said – you may be the type of person who is happy with a wage such as you can expect to find on those pay scale sites and working within the structure of employer-employee relationship.

But this report is about *working from home*, and I think you are really going to like what I have to share with you here, based on my recent years of experience, and it will take your spirits soaring high.

So, stop reading this right now, go Google some information, and then come back here. Use the terms “tailor” and “seamstress,” as well, for best results because there seems to be less information using the term “alterations.” The reason I’m not actually sharing sites with you is because, pay scale sites change and the info changes with the years. Start with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. You know how to Google, so check it out for the current year, and then come back so I can reveal to you the tried and true that I believe is going to be solid guidelines for you to work from for some time to come.

You’re back! Was that a little sobering? A bit discouraging? Or was it all the more intriguing? Regardless, I’m going to elevate your thinking and prospects about the subject of alterations and sewing from home, even if you are new to alterations.

It’s no secret that you should already be a pretty darn good sewist to take on alterations, and you will assess this for yourself in the Skills Assessment section.

Nor is it a secret that working from home provides you with the freedom to set your own prices and command your top dollar worth.

So do this:

WHAT TO DO: Get price averages in your community. That means figure out the average prices for each kind of alterations job.

HOW TO DO THAT: Call around to get rates from your local competition. Call dry cleaners and other service/retail outlets you can glean info from. Pretend you're a customer or a personal shopper and get as much info as you can from phone calls, websites, your BFF's auntie who sews on the side, and whatever it takes to figure out averages in your community.

Consult my price list at <https://www.alterationsbyphyllis.com> keeping in mind these are prices the market will bear in a large metro area in the Upper Midwest. Make a list, chart, or use the worksheet provided in later pages -- whatever it takes for you to see the range of prices in your area. Figure out averages across all your competition. Does the average approach your dream price? Figure out your dream price for each task.



During your Skills Assessment section, you were advised to take note of how long it took you to comfortably complete alterations tasks. These were tasks you chose from my YouTube channel to follow along with, or you accomplished this assessment in some other qualitative way. Now take your dream price chart or list and add in the minutes it took rounded to the nearest quarter/half/three-quarters/an hour.

So for instance, if it comfortably takes you an hour to hem a pair of pants and your area average is \$16, but your dream price is \$18, then establish your price at \$18 and anticipate getting paid your worth! In time, as you get faster, that is how you'll give yourself a raise, and you may also choose to raise your prices from time to time. Now you see how in time you can bring yourself to \$20 an hour. When you become so efficient that it only takes a half hour – Wow! – you are making \$32 an hour hemming pants.

NUTSHELL WHAT/HOW: Get area price averages, base your desired prices on that info and your own task completion time averages. Then – most importantly – believe in and EXPECT to get your dream prices. Practice confidence at all times. It may seem silly to emphasize this, yet it is THE.MOST.IMPORTANT piece of all.

It all comes down to the Law of Attraction. If you don't believe in your prices (fear they're too high or you're not good enough), then you will attract the customers who will resist your prices and make you feel like you are not good enough. When you believe in what you are doing and the associated best prices with all your heart, then the best – and I mean BEST – customers call and show up.

I promise!

Okay, so there you are going along making \$32 an hour and everything is great except – wait! You are not getting enough sewing work to fill 40 hours a week consistently.

That, my friend, is a reality in the alterations world. There is an ebb and flow to it. Which validates even more your good reason to charge best and highest prices you can live with at all times.

It takes some getting used to the ebb and flow. Over time, you will learn to use the slow time to your advantage and you will grow to like it just as well as the crazy busy times. That is why I strongly advise broadening your services to include other skills you possess like selling crafts such as on Etsy, craft shows in-home, designing fabric such as utilizing Spoonflower, offering beginner sewing lessons to children and adults, monogramming, embroidery. Truly, follow your imagination to grand ideas, and you'll easily fill those 40 hours.

If you are located where your clientele is steady and you do not lack for filling 40 hours or more, then all the better, and that is most fortunate.

Still – I reveal one more secret gem of advice that will certainly **MAKE.YOU.MONEY.** and fill 40 hours in no time. Here it is:

Offer RUSH services. This is the secret sauce that makes money. No one is doing it. That means dry cleaners cannot or will not do it, do not value it, nor do other sewing outlets buy into it. You have a tremendous edge when you offer emergency and just-in-time service.

In my area, I compete with 2 prominent dry cleaners and a smattering of other home sewists. None of them offer rush service. I can't tell you how many times someone will call and lament that all other contacts said they were weeks out and could not take a rush.

Well, guess what! I'm weeks out, too, for those not requiring rushes. But my secret is to be so efficient as to stay up to speed with the non-rushes and allow the emergencies to butt in and charge **PREMIUM PRICES.** Yes! That means a rush fee on top of my best price!

Seven times out of 10 on average, a customer needing rush service is happy to hear during their frantic phone call that I will take them, often requiring 3, 2, and even 1-day turnaround, and ecstatic to thrust the rush fee into my hand, often tipping on top of that.

That is your ideal customer.

Does this seem like over-the-top exaggeration to you? If you had told me this three years ago, I would have thought so, too. But over the past couple years, rushes have been on the increase. And in recent years, rushes have increased so substantially that I have not been able to ignore the phenomenon and the opportunity it represents.

So do this:

WHAT TO DO: Decide you want in on this most lucrative aspect of alterations service. Decide how much to add as rush fee on top of your best prices. Let the world know. And they will come. I promise!

HOW TO DO THAT: Offer rush services prominently on your website, marketing materials, phone message and by word-of-mouth. A website that is well optimized so that your business shows up on the first page of your area search results is a must! Before putting all that in place, however, really have a talk with yourself about your efficiency status. You need to know yourself well enough to understand if you will be able to tolerate the hurry-up-ness of rush services. If you decide you are built for it, then do not hesitate to begin offering it.

My best advice is to get more than half down payment on rush jobs. Endeavor to get all or most of it up front. It is just good practice to especially enforce that in the rush situation.

Not everyone who calls about a rush will end up coming in. No, once in a while your caller will find your rush price outrageous or their request of you is outrageous (meaning a ridiculous job like patching an ice fishing house the night before, or they simply called it too close and there really is no time left) – that’s not your ideal customer, so let those GO. With time, you will become so wise about who you will take and who you will not for rushes.

NUTSHELL WHAT/HOW: Offer rush services, get a loyal following, an outstanding reputation, and make a lovely income. Finally, just as before, be aware of the Law of Attraction. Believe in your fine service offering emergency attention, and you will get the BEST, most GRATEFUL and RETURN customers you could possibly acquire.

Because you deserve it, Superhero Sewist!

Do the worksheet on the next page, and then we will explore how to work backwards from a desired annual income to figure out how much money you will need to make per week and approximately how many hours per week that will take.

NOTE: The Companion Workbook helps you arrive at income potential with just a little more work than we do in these pages, FYI!



BLANK HOURLY RATE WORKSHEET

Alterations Tasks	Competitor 1	Competitor 2	Competitor 3	Average	Your Completion Time	Your Desired Price	Your Hourly Rate

WHAT TO DO: Now calculate how much time it will take each week to work up to your desired annual salary by working backwards from that desired annual income.

HOW TO DO THAT: If you only need to work part time and let's say \$15,000 annually is plenty additional income to meet your needs, this is the math:

$$\$15,000 / 52 \text{ weeks} = \$288.46 \text{ per week.}$$

Let's say you're working at \$18/per hour as figured from the worksheet **Average Hourly Rate** above.

$\$288.46 / \$18 = 16$ hours a week. Those are sewing hours. Remember, there are the client interaction hours, so realistically you would probably be working 20 hours a week. Also, keep in mind the necessary additional time spent on administrative work; e.g., bookkeeping, purchasing supplies, taking phone calls, scheduling, etc. These other activities dilute your average hourly rate – that is not a bad thing, yet serves as inspiration to always work as efficiently as possible.

How many pants hems, pants waists, suit sleeve hems, zipper replacements, etc., does that translate into? That part is hard to deduce. In time, having kept track of the types of jobs you usually get, you will have a better feel for how much work it takes to fill your 20-hour week.

Let's do another example at the high end of \$48,000 annually.

$\$48,000 / 52 \text{ weeks} = \923.07 per week.

To achieve this salary, you will want to be working at an efficiency rate that pays you at least \$32 and ideally \$40+ per hour.

$\$923.07 / \$32 = 29 \text{ hours a week.}$ Again, those are sewing hours only. Realistically, at that higher end salary you would probably be working at least 10 hours and likely more hours seeing clients. As mentioned above, it's necessary to spend additional time on administrative work; e.g., bookkeeping, purchasing supplies, taking phone calls, scheduling, etc. While these other activities dilute your average hourly rate, making an income towards \$48,000 annually is a superhero achievement and is expected to require a lot of additional work beyond the sewing itself.

NUTSHELL WHAT/HOW: Shoot for your desired annual income by following all the guidelines in this report, spend thoughtful time with the worksheet, make it all happen – and then congratulate yourself on whatever level of income you make a reality because you are creating a super helpful service to the public that deserves to be applauded. I applaud you!

In summary, my best advice is to dream of a lovely salary, play around with the numbers after diligently doing your area competition research, assessed your efficiency rate – and remember that you are needed. So ramp up your energy, your self confidence, your big plans, and go for it!

Whew! That was a lot of info to contend with and doesn't even include the income potential from your fabric artistry – such as embroidery (hand and machine), your own designer clothing line, your own designer handbag line, DIY kits you create, repurposing and upcycling clothing into fabulous one-of-a-kinds, not to mention costumery and cosplay...and let's not forget about other non-fabric artistry you may do such as paper, ceramics, basket weaving – really – if you can conjure it, you can create it.

All covered extensively in the Companion Workbook found here:



Now off you go.



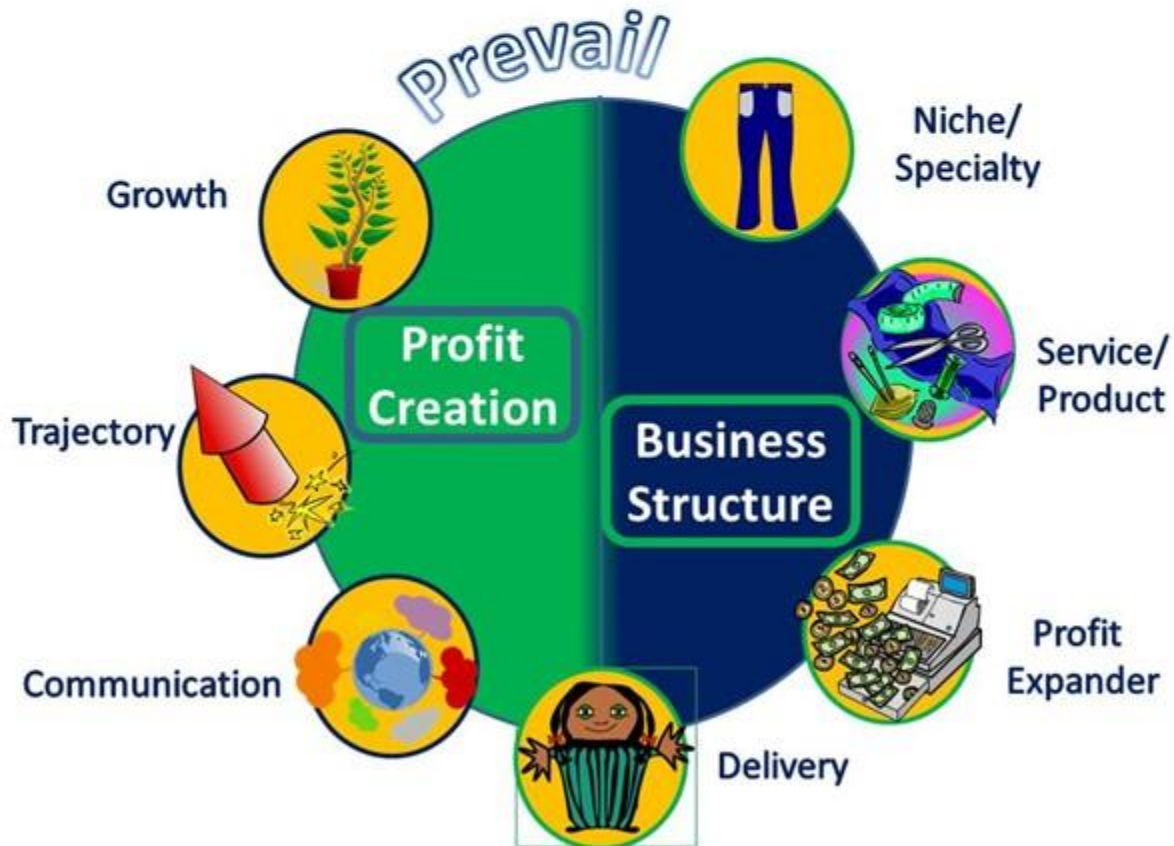
ALTERATIONS BY PHYLLIS

All about running your own alterations & sewing business from home!
Created by Phyllis Smith - Alterations by Phyllis - Stillwater, MN, USA
<http://www.alterationsbyphyllis.com/video-tutorials>



**Are You Ready To Explore How To Prevail Alongside Competition?
This Section Is For Sewing Business Specialists – because your intent is
to DIVERSIFY**

Here's a system diagram I've created that illustrates the steps to rapidly start and grow your own home-based alterations and sewing business.



STEP 1: NICHE/SPECIALTY



Find Your Perfect Niche. Have fun imagining all sorts of specialties, and then the one(s) that makes you feel the best, as in a joyful heart, at least to begin with – well, now you’ve arrived at your first important decision!

You can make money in any niche: Whether it’s curtains, bed coverings (I get requests for duvet covers) that marry beautifully with quilting, product prototyping, all-things-denim, everything-suits and business attire, sky’s-the-limit bridal/formal wear plus bridal accessories/bridal party gifts, pants only including hems-waists-leg tapering, T-shirt adjustments that partner with your silk screening artistry, custom sewing with custom fabrics that you design utilizing on-demand fabric printing like Spoonflower, baby – oh baby! – items and list your own designs on a crafting platform like Etsy, wardrobe consultation including redesign of existing garments and creation of custom garments, bulk mending to include buttons-rips-general maintenance. You get the idea. Brainstorm. No idea is too silly. You can practical-ize (like that coined word?) any ideas later.

Then round out your brainstorming with these considerations: Again – what do you enjoy sewing and altering best? What task are you the most capable at accomplishing? What is the service your friends and family are always approaching you about?

This is how you arrive at the answer to your niche/specialty.

If your thoughts divert to worrying about competition in any of your ideas – stop worrying. Competition is good. Good-good-good. While alterations specialists are becoming fewer in number, the demand is still great, and I believe there would be less instance of “disposable inexpensive clothing” societal outlook if there were more younger generation specialists coming onto the scene.

STEP 2: SERVICE/PRODUCT



It's alive! Your service or product lives here. This is the time to be proud of what you have to offer. Be so very proud and grin from ear to ear. Your clients can hardly wait to find you. Your clients can hardly believe they've found you once they do. You will make every effort to reach out to potential clients, yet believe me, they will find you and they're the ones who will explode your outreach by word of mouth. Don't hesitate to start with the friends and relatives you've already been serving and tell them exactly what it is you need from them – share on social media, make a home video about the results you lavished upon them, mention at church, work, events, if they have a blog of their own ask them to feature you. Ask for what you want. Never assume people know what they should be doing for you after all these years. Ask and you will receive, they'll be thrilled to reciprocate all your free service. Especially ask this favor of those whom you won't ever

charge, those who are closest to you, and they, too, will be thrilled to help you. But you must ask. This is a great exercise in asking for help.

Still, having said all that to stimulate your thoughts about self-confidence, the common objections I hear from people, “I don’t want to be responsible for other people’s stuff,” “I’m afraid I’ll mess up on somebody’s clothes,” “I’m not that good,” “what if I get really stuck, where would I turn?”

The answer is you set up easy safety nets or policies for what to do in the event of messing up or getting stuck. As far as not wanting to be responsible or feeling not good enough, those are issues with underlying emotions to examine and resolve to the point where you can do this and experience the joy of your clients’ wonderment that you possess this mystery of a skill, and your mastery of it.

Those safety nets are outlined in the suggested policies section on page **61**.

With your safety nets in mind, here are the 5 steps needed to create your valuable service:

1. Research the niche you decided you would love to do above. For instance, if you love the all-things-denim idea, but you already know Franny, the seamstress at the dry cleaners, is very good with jeans issues – be glad not sad – make certain you are as good technically as you believe she is and then be

proud of the personalized service a home-based business can offer over the dry cleaners, and it is up to you to discover the potential for ***prevailing!***

2. Which leads us to discovering your unique angle. It's there within you. Dig deep. Otherwise the answer may be right at the surface. Grab it. For instance, let's say your prices are going to be higher than the local competing dry cleaners – can you offer bonuses, whether little handmade items, coffee and scones, do giveaways, coupon codes. The answer is within! So is your best price list. Make your prices as high as is comfortable, having done your research of the local competition, and then stick with that price list proudly; you can always offer discounts and those coupon codes mentioned.
3. Decide! Then get going. Further down the road, be willing and proud to change your mind. You are not tied to your niche specialty; really, the idea is to expand as is comfortable for you.
4. A service/product outline will serve you well. Imagine you're the client, or get someone to act out a client role with you from the time s/he enters your front door to the time of departure. This should cover initial phone call, greeting, explanation of what will happen, discovering the task at hand (which can be far different than the client described), expectations (including your policies), due dates, payment policies, and then most importantly a friendly assurance upon

departure that you are their solution so that they feel like they've made the best possible decision by coming to you. And they have!

5. Appoint responsibilities and create a timeline. Naturally you'll be doing a great deal of the responsibilities yourself, however, a simple website may be outsourced, for example.

STEP 3: PROFIT EXPANDER



Many times, one garment problem leads to others in the same garment – that the client isn't aware of. For instance: Pants too long? Great, hem them up AFTER you take in that massively loose waist! Or, bridesmaid dress too long? Great, hem it up AFTER taking in the bodice and straps a smidge (which may solve the hem problem) and now your client absolutely loves you and throws the rehearsal dinner dress and ITS problems into the mix! How about this one: Suitcoat too big? Great, the pants probably are, too. Or, need another lint roller? Try this – would you like me to create a custom garment/travel bag for you? Is your newly crafted duvet cover lonesome for a pillow sham?

When clients are so pleased they mention wanting to bring in other stuff soon, devise a friendly email/phone call follow-up reminder system. That means gathering email addresses besides phone numbers. An email list proves valuable as time marches on.

This is how you expand profit. Always (honestly) identify as many problems/potentials with a service/product as possible for the client. This results in a very satisfied customer who feels like you really invested in perfect fit/best outcome of all aspects of the service you offer.

STEP 4: DELIVERY



Now that everything about your product and service and how you will bring it to the world is in place, it's time to actually do it, actually be this technical artist you've been training for all your life! You will get your first phone call in short order, and it will be thrilling to watch your first customer come in the door! Go and create the career lifestyle of your dreams! Trust that the right customers will come to you...because remember, you won't get them all...and thankfully, that's the way it should be. You'll see!

STEP 5: COMMUNICATION



There are 3 very important communication points in your experience with clients.

1. Initial phone/email inquiry. You will become so adept at handling initial phone and email inquiries that you will hardly recognize yourself. You will learn what to do when callers are just fishing, insincere, are scattered, rude, undecided, irresponsible,

wishing, decided, determined, eager, understanding, compliant, humorous, lovable – you name the personality, and you will hear from it either over the phone or in email.

During that all important initial inquiry, you will learn to reel them in like a trophy fish on the line AND you'll learn how to get them off the line and throw them back without regret.

Always allow a caller several seconds to state the problem, and then I encourage you to take control and direct the call when people aren't succinct or clear. People don't know how to describe their problems fully or accurately. You will draw them out and largely they'll be so relieved that you understand that you'll get the appointment and they'll show up for it.

Learn how to recognize that initial phone inquiries that do not get to the point, are super friendly and lengthy, sometimes – not always – are another form of fishing or what I call “sweet talking” and result in no sale because the caller hopes to have “sweetened” you to a bargain basement price with their story, over the phone. Always help your customer come right to the point with guiding questions so that if it is a “sweet” call you can make short work of it.

You may find people will ask you to take their alterations when you're away from your home-based business. For instance, say you're at church, and a friend pulls you aside and tells you they

brought their garment that needs fixing along and would you take it home and do it.

It is entirely up to you if you want to do this. I resist it because then the expectation becomes you will not only pick up off-site but drop off hither-thither, and when the arrangement is casual like this, rather than businesslike, the energy expenditure can exceed what you would prefer. All of this is especially true if you are asked by coworkers at another job. Encourage people to get to the shop. Your ideal customer would, wouldn't s/he!

2. In-person consultation. When a client arrives, you must – and I emphasize – must be in charge. Handle reserved people gently but firmly; handle overbearing personalities pleasantly but firmly; adjust your handling to the personality types you'll learn to quickly assess and *be in charge*. For example, when a new client shows up without the half payment down that is your policy, firmly but kindly state that that is okay, you'll start the job when you receive half payment. Believe me, compliance will be forthcoming. Some personalities perceive a home business as a less serious endeavor than a storefront; whether they are aware of that perception or not is not as important as your awareness of presenting behavior that gives away that perception.

When you are in charge, everybody ends up appreciating it. For instance, when clients try to tell you how to sew it, again you will learn to patiently hear them out, then clearly and simply state how you will actually sew it if it differs from their idea, and that they can choose to leave the job with you or take it elsewhere. You do

not have to explain every technical detail to clients. I'll tell you why. Once in a great while someone will come along to my shop who is fishing for how to do it herself/himself. Give away too much about the process and you'll lose the job, and maybe you want them to get lost if that's what they're doing. Rather, leave it enough of a mystery or mildly confront them that you're happy to consult with them about how they can do it themselves but that, of course, there is a charge for that.

One last example for now: When a client states emotionally that your charge is more than the purchase price of the garment, there is an effective response I've concocted to help the client see that one price has nothing to do with the other price. Simply state, "Clever you! Getting this item on sale means you're better able to afford the alterations. Good for you!" While it may sound a bit patronizing, this statement usually shifts the client away from subjective reasoning to more objective reasoning.

3. Service/product completion. Again, emphatically I stress to you – be in charge. Put on your boldest, liveliest, most assured self and you'll be irresistible and people less likely to take advantage of you. Most people throw on the garment, are so thrilled with the not better but BEST fit and will toss the money at you and leave all smiles. As you close the door behind you, you're going to realize you just love this well-built business of yours!

STEP 6: TRAJECTORY



Will loads of business come your way from the get-go? You better hope not. What I mean by that is, *steady as she goes*. You'll be eager, guaranteed. Yet the rate at which the experience opens up for you I can guarantee will be the best it is supposed to be. Trust the Universe – it's cheering for you. Destiny is trying to provide you as stress-free an experience as possible. Allow this wonderful thing you've created to find its way. Learn to go with the ebb and flow because depending on where you live there may be slow and crush times of the year. When it's slow is when you use your positivity and creative energy towards other endeavors because, for most of you, the idea is to be sewing/creating in other ways that are bringing you streams of income as well.

STEP 7: GROWTH



As this wonderful thing you've created finds its way, something will happen. You'll acquire true fans and followers! Imagine that! Fans who will despair if you go on vacation. Or if you move. Followers who will bring you oodles of their clothing. These people will tell their people who will become your people. You may not always remember all of these people, but they remember you and don't mind when you need your memory refreshed when they call for an appointment.

It's a great feeling to be needed. It's great to be preferred over someone else's competitive service/product. Yes, sometimes you will be whimsically dropped by a client. Let them go and simply acquire others.

If you keep an email list and promote stuff to it, or if you maintain a blog or vlog, expect to gather more converts to your proven successful method of performing sewing wizardry on their clothing *while* uplifting their spirits. People may not even be aware of why they keep coming to you, but they do because you make them feel so good – about *themselves*. That brings you vertical and horizontal expansion. Do you begin to see the value of such a service, your service? I hope so.

Remember, all this will not happen overnight, but you'll get lots of early tastes of success while you commit to your:

- 1.Customer base.
- 2.Customer relationships.
- 3.Self-confidence.
- 4.Pride of workmanship.
- 5.Sales.
- 6.Profits.

CONCLUSION

My goal is to teach you about a life-enriching potential within reach because of the skill set you already possess. Are you going to keep your sewing talent all to yourself or are you going to share it and become sought after and paid your worth? Are you going to advocate against the disposable clothing lifestyle the western world has adopted and show it a better way of creative solutions to existing wardrobes? Think about creating a stitchery legacy!

I did it. So can you!

Look in the mirror, the one your potential customers would stand in front of. Who do you see? You may be looking at the type of person who is able to really run with a home-based alterations and sewing business. If this chapter has left you buzzing with ideas and on fire with a passion to investigate the subject further, then I have done my job to inspire you to assess your situation and then spring into action -- because you are needed.



The Total Package



**Start Your Own
Home-Based
Alterations Business**



10 Solid Policy
Suggestions
&
Guidelines

ALTERATIONS BY PHYLLIS

All about running your own alterations & sewing business from home!
Created by Phyllis Smith - Alterations by Phyllis - Stillwater, MN, USA
<http://www.alterationsbyphyllis.com/video-tutorials>



Are You Ready To Explore 10 Solid Policy Suggestions That Will Proactively Save You Headaches? This Section Is For Sewing Business Specialists because you intend to DIVERSIFY and always be in charge

Why Having Policies Is Best Practice

Why You Should Develop Your Own Based On These Guidelines

Nobody says you must have them. Sometimes the idea of policies seems like a bunch of rules. They're not really "rules" per se; what they really are is strategy to follow for when you find yourself in certain situations. They're preventive measures to keep in mind – because it's not "if" situations will arise that you need quick response to, it's "when" situations will arise – because they...will...arise.



There's an art to being friendly and playful with customers while still being totally in charge.

1. Payment. Know how you want to handle payment. Get solid on this.
2. Will you take appointments or allow drop-ins.
3. Re-do's. How are you going to handle requests for re-do's?
4. Snags in sheer fabric, such as formal wear dresses.
5. Responsibility for showing up to 2nd fittings.
6. Shoe policy.
7. Have a behavior policy in mind. That's right – you read that correctly.
8. When you make a mistake, what will you do.
9. Rush jobs, rush fees, client responsibility for timely drop off and pick up.
10. How do you imagine handling returns and exchanges...and the odd request?

1. Payment. Know how you want to handle payment, especially when someone has forgotten to bring money. Just remember – you are as worthy of payment as any brick-and-mortar store that would never allow someone to take a product out of the store and come back later with payment. Have firmly in your mind how you will handle strangers, friends and family when it comes to payment. I've found that approximately half down up-front causes the client to become invested in the job and is the magic that brings them back within a reasonable amount of time to pick up and pay the remainder.

2. Appointment timeliness. Decide if your home set-up can withstand customers dropping in like a store front or if you need to take appointments. Either way is valid. I need to work by appointment because of my small space since I can't have a crowd waiting (or wandering) in my house and is therefore more practical to know who's coming and going and when. Increasingly, however, the world finds it hard to make yet one more appointment in otherwise appointment-crowded lives. Still, you need to know just how flexible you can realistically be on this subject.

3. Re-do's. How are you going to handle requests for re-dos? When your work is great, a re-do is very seldom requested. When it's plainly your fault, of course you re-do it graciously. When the request is whimsical, e.g., "I wonder if we can take this up another ¼ inch," then my suggestion is that you graciously agree and assert a charge will be assessed. Especially I assert this when it comes to whimsical waist adjustment requests on garments because our waists are the most size changeable part of our bodies. Whether or not you agree with this policy, my best advice is to know spot-on and be able to state clearly and confidently what *your* policy is.

4. Snags in sheer fabric, such as formal wear dresses. My best advice is to have clients sign off on the job ticket that you're not responsible for snags in sheer. You will be so glad if you have this policy in place – because I find it to be the magic that then snags don't even happen! Those dresses go through rough and tumble to be altered, and there's lots of potential for snags to happen even at our most careful. A customer can put a snag in sheer fabric just by trying it on, stabbing a heel through trailing fabric. Cover yourself or not, it's up to you how you feel about that.

5. Responsibility for showing up to fittings. When you estimate at initial consultation how many fittings a garment may require, that lets the client know how masterful and knowledgeable you are, and that they need to be responsible for showing up to additional appointments.

6. Shoe policy. How many times has a customer forgotten shoes and said, "Oh, that's okay!" Many, many times have I heard this statement. I have them sign off on no responsibility for hem length disappointments when they didn't bring the right shoes. If they're going to wear flats, that's a different story. When you show how interested you are in the most perfect outcome possible for a client, that person takes notice and becomes your loyal customer.

7. Have a behavior policy in mind. That's right – you read that correctly. The odds are you will at some time or another experience some behavior problems such as anger, disgust, deceit, etc. The most likely candidate for this type of behavior challenge will be the bride.

Practice and know in your mind how much histrionics you will allow remembering that you have the right to terminate a job at any point – as do they – during the job. But not without payment up to the point of severing the relationship. You already know, or will soon learn, how to read people and know who will be harder to deal with than others. Just be prepared. Don't be scared or dread anybody, simply know who you are and that the customer and you can be right at the same time, you can be wrong, and the customer definitely can be wrong.

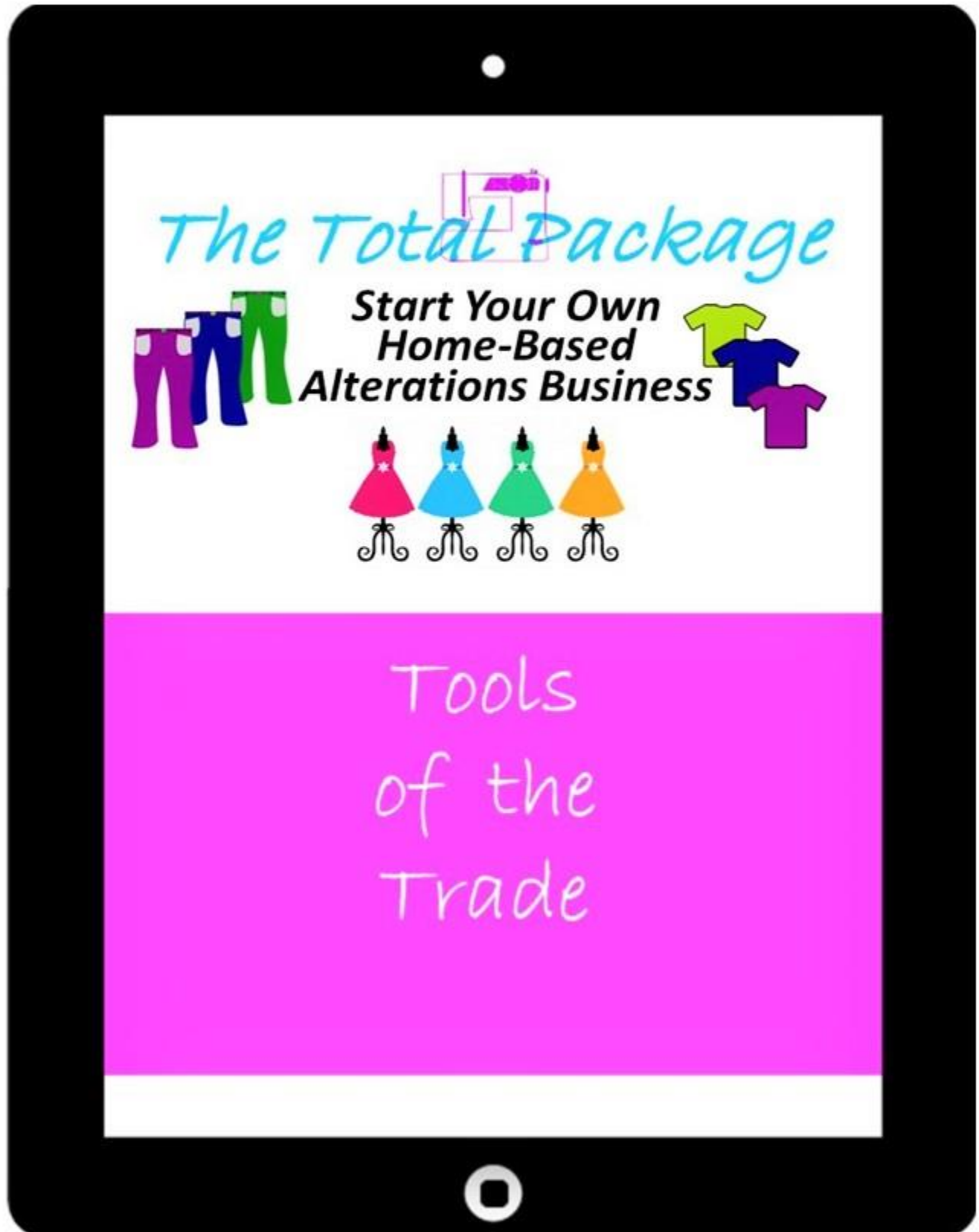
8. When you make a mistake. Know how you will handle this ahead of time. I bet it will never happen to you. If it does, you'll feel badly, of course, and you'll need to compensate the client. Plus, you'll have to figure that out on your own because each unique situation is going to call for a unique remedy. Yet – have a policy in place about the right to devise a creative solution, if you feel there is one. If it's actually the customer's fault and you just don't want to fight it, you'll need to come to terms with just what you are willing to do...and live with it. Because you will live through it and it may make a great story to tell later, believe it or not.

9. Rush jobs, rush fees, client responsibility for timely drop off and pick up in the rush situation. I love rush jobs. I love to help, I love to get the rush fee, and I love to save the day. Decide upon whether or not you're going to be the rush job alterations specialist. I happen to be the only one who accommodates rush jobs in my area. I just make sure I'm always pretty much on top of the non-rush stuff so that I can take on the true rush situation. Decide if you want to offer rush services and get all the money up front in cash, is my best advice.

10. Will you allow returns and exchanges on products? Get clear on how to handle requests on custom items and sale items. If you come across a situation unsure how to handle, try to avoid a snap judgment you'll regret later. Tell the client you'll decide and get back to them. Avoid being pushy and getting pushed. You're in charge!

Now that you've considered all these policy guidelines, I can confidently assure you will encounter few problems. That's because you will exude confidence to your customers. Trust me, you know what you're doing, you're in charge, and you do great work. Devise your own policies, gather a following and become an industry icon.

What a stitchery legacy you shall create! Good luck!



ALTERATIONS BY PHYLLIS

All about running your own alterations & sewing business from home!

Created by Phyllis Smith - Alterations by Phyllis - Stillwater, MN, USA

<http://www.alterationsbyphyllis.com/video-tutorials>



Are You Ready To Explore Basic Tools Of The Trade PLUS Wish List For Later? This Section Is For Sewing Business Specialists because your intent is to DIVERSIFY and THRIVE

TOOLS OF THE TRADE FOR A SUCCESSFUL HOME-BASED ALTERATIONS BUSINESS!

You will need at least these many items to get started

Bet you've got a lot to start with already
Plenty to wish for later

TOOLS OF THE TRADE FOR A SUCCESSFUL HOME-BASED ALTERATIONS BUSINESS!

I love to order my supplies from *Wawak* out of New York. You get a monthly catalogue of hundreds of supplies at wholesale prices, and even minimum orders are offered at discount prices. I would shop local for these supplies, however, nothing compares to the minimal to free shipping costs, its budget-friendliness, super fast arrival and carries more product than you will ever need!

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sewing machine that handles the thickness of jeans hems• Sewing machine cabinet or table• Office chair• Ironing board• Iron• Cutting surface (I use the dining room table)• Equipment manuals (keep nearby or don't forget where they are)• Closet area for garment safekeeping• Hangers• Ruler• Measuring tape• Pins – straight pins• Pins – safety pins• Tool kit – sewing machine (keep nearby)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seam ripper• Scissors/shears• Pinking shears• Nippers or small scissors• Colored thread spools• Colored thread bobbins• Box Tailor's chalk• Waste basket• Appointment calendar• Computer for bookkeeping, client list, social media, etc.• Receipt book or online invoicing• Pens• Phone and messaging• Storage for miscellaneous, e.g. hem tape, interfacing, buttons, hooks & eyes, zippers, patch fabric, etc.• Floor Length mirror
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Here is a Wish List of all the lovely tools of the trade you hope to have one day!

- Sewing machine that handles the thickness of jeans hems
- Sewing machine that handles lightweights and medium weights + buttonholer
- 4-spool tabletop serger
- Blind hemmer tabletop (inexpensive through outlets like Overstock.com)
- Embroidery machine, home type for monogramming and custom jobs
- Industrial/commercial power sewing machine (for contract sewing volume)
- Office chairs
- Ironing board
- Irons (one on hand for when the other conks out)
- Cutting surfaces
- Equipment manuals (know where they are and keep nearby)
- Closet areas, 1 for unfinished jobs and 1 for finished jobs
- Hangers
- Rulers, various sizes
- Measuring tapes
- Pins – straight
- Pins – safety
- Machine tool kits (keep nearby)
- Seam rippers
- Cutting shears
- Pinking shears
- Nippers or small scissors
- Colored thread spools
- Colored thread bobbins
- Box tailor’s chalk
- Waste basket
- Appointment calendar
- Computer for bookkeeping, client list, etc.
- Receipt book or online invoicing
- Pens
- Landlines or 1 smart phone + messaging
- Storage areas for miscellaneous e.g. hem tape, interfacing, buttons, scrap, etc.
- Pressing ham
- Foldable pressing board (for sleeves and pant legs)
- Plastic garment bags
- Floor length mirror
- Collection of buttons, hem facing, zippers, seam binding, snaps, hooks & eyes, your favorite stuff



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**Are You Ready To Explore The One-Page Business Plan Exercise?
This Section Is For Sewing Business Specialists because your intent is
to DIVERSIFY and stake your claim to that in a short and sweet
business plan**

A short and simple one-page business plan is bound to keep you more focused and help make everything feel less overwhelming. Because let's face it – this start your own business thing is exciting but it can also freeze a person into indecision and stalling if some details are perceived as less fun than others. That is just the reality of it. Often, depending on the type of person you are, a business plan can feel like such drudgery to compose.

However, I promise this exercise will approach something like fun, if not outright joy, for you to be able to see on one page how you are breathing life into this fantastic small business you are creating.

In fact, it is going to take me more than one page to talk about your one-page business plan – that's how short and sweet it is going to be.

So let's get started!

I've coined a word when it comes to slimming people's clothing – "slimify." My clients get a kick out of that term. Let's slimify your business plan down to one page in the following way.

WHAT TO DO: Follow these guidelines and at the end of this exercise you will know more about yourself than when you began!

HOW TO DO THAT: Open a document or grab lined paper and make the following slim headings followed by one short sentence:

Benefit Proposal One sentence that describes the benefit or value you plan to bring to your customers. There is a problem you are solving for others – state it here.

For example, here's mine (also placed prominently at the top of my website):

"Alterations by Phyllis bringing transformative alterations expertise to individuals and alterations businesses."

That statement makes sense because I serve my local community and anyone globally who wishes to start a home-based alterations and sewing business.

Yours might read:

"I offer a broad range of alterations solutions for men, women and children, including monogramming and embroidery."

“[Your business name] specializes in bridal and formal wear including handcrafted bride and groom specialty products.”

“I’m the Jeans Queen and I work on all things denim and outdoor gear.”

“No job is too small or too big when it comes to offering alterations to my local community.”

“We serve our local community with a wide range of alterations services and a portion of the proceeds go to [cause, charity].”

“Our team keeps people from falling apart at the seams with our extensive alterations and sewing services.”

You see how this one sentence identifies the market need and your problem-solving solution.

Target Market This may seem like a tough one at first because you want it to be everybody. It feels like it should be everybody because you are so aware of the need for people to behave proactively and go “green” by overhauling their entire closet. This wish is completely understandable. However, with time, you’ll see the wisdom of defining a target market, especially as you rack up the many and varied encounters with people, and you will start to see who you enjoy seeing and who not-so-much.

It’s fair to define who you would rather see.

Here is my target market:

“My ideal customer is male or female, 28-68, of grateful attitude, willing to spend maintenance money on clothing, allows himself or herself to enjoy the experience, demonstrates joy over the outcome, has a sense of humor, returns in the future and refers.”

Area competition Guess what! Everybody has competition. Competition is good-good-good. It means you are not the only one doing it so you don't have to persuade your market as much as if you were a novel service that no one understands yet. Everybody understands literally falling apart at the seams, and most people hold a high regard for the seamstress. Here is where you simply list who else is out there that you are aware of PLUS how you will present a better opportunity for customers than they are able to do.

Here's mine:

“My biggest area competition is two prominent dry-cleaning establishments, one with an on-site seamstress. My business presents the better alternative because of my cute studio, appointment-only policy for private and personalized consultations, appeals to customers who wish to patronize small business and because I offer amazing emergency and same-day service which others do not.”

Need Funds? Even if you own most of the items in the bare minimum tools of the trade list and wish list, it is likely you could use a certain amount of money to get started. Here is where you state your needs. If you have a lot of financial needs, do yourself a favor and keep it to one sentence as best as possible.

Here was mine in the beginning:

"I need X dollars for a website building program to build and maintain myself and a second sewing machine that handles heavy-duty sewing like jeans."

Sales Venues If you are strictly doing alterations for your local community then your sales venue is your local community. In my case, I sell programs online plus offer alterations to my local community. That means I have two sales venues.

Simply state what yours are to start and if you wish to elaborate about what they will expand to, all in one sentence as best you can.

Here's mine currently:

"I serve my local community with alterations and custom sewing, sell alterations tutorial videos online, sell alterations startup business programs online and huge YouTube channel." (4 venues)

Budget & Sales Goals Yikes! How are you supposed to know the answer to that at the start? Do NOT let anxiety over this subject overwhelm you. Details are not needed the first day you lay down the outline of your Business Plan. It can all be fleshed out later. To start with, try to explain in big picture terms what your budget and sales goals are. You don't know how much it is actually going to cost you to run your business at this point, much less sales goals. You could simply state your income goals here as arrived at in the How Much Money Can I Make? section and leave it at that for now.

If you are good at this kind of planning, then proudly lay it out here with graphs and everything you can think of.

Benchmarks What has your progress been so far, if any, and where do you see your business going in the next weeks/months/years?

Here is mine as I plan for retirement:

“After 10 years of in-home alterations services to this particular local community, I have reached my goals of a steady local following, successful global outreach teaching alterations and how to start a home business, with retirement plans for winding down local community alterations services and increasing passive income activities over the next five years.”

Team If you are planning on being a fierce alterations duo or team, here is the place to state who your business partners are. State why you alone, or the bunch of you, are the best person/people to make your business a raving success.

On the next page, you can see for yourself the distillation of all my examples on one page and how such a clean and simple one-pager can bring a smile of satisfaction at a job well done.

Your Business Plan need contain no more information than this, unless you wish to go all out and plan details to your heart’s desire. You be the judge of what you need to see on your Business Plan, yet avoid stalling out and becoming overwhelmed. I say this because of what was advised in the Skills Assessment section – do this stuff along the way while you are actively doing and being your dream business!

Alterations by Phyllis Business Plan

Benefit Proposal “Alterations by Phyllis, bringing transformative alterations expertise to individuals and alterations businesses.”

Target Market “My ideal customer is male or female, 28-68, of grateful attitude, willing to spend maintenance money on clothing, allows himself or herself to enjoy the experience, demonstrates joy over the outcome, has a sense of humor, returns in the future and refers.”

Area competition “My biggest area competition is two prominent dry-cleaning establishments, one with an on-site seamstress. My business presents the better alternative because of my cute studio, appointment-only policy for private and personalized consultations, appeals to customers who wish to patronize small business and because I offer amazing emergency and same-day service which others do not.”

Need Funds? “I need X dollars for a website building program to build and maintain myself and a second sewing machine that handles heavy-duty sewing like jeans.”

Sales Venues “I serve my local community with alterations and custom sewing, sell alterations tutorial videos online, sell alterations startup business programs online and run an Etsy shop.”

Budget & Sales Goals I’ll leave it to your imagination what mine are!

Benchmarks “After 10 years of in-home alterations services to this particular local community, I have reached my goals of a steady local following, successful global outreach teaching alterations and how to start a home business, with retirement plans for winding down local community alterations services and increasing passive income activities over the next five years.”

Team No plans for teams or partnerships now. Me, myself and I are the best person for this endeavor because I am a superhero sewist!

See how easy that was! Whew! Nail down a Big Picture that works for right now, then leave it alone. You’ll know when to get back with it.



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Are You Ready To Explore Bookkeeping, Taxes, Invoicing & Organization? This Section Is For Sewing Business because your intention is to DIVERSIFY and become well organized

How To Organize The Client Clothing Closet

Try my easy system and then develop your own from these guidelines.

Invoicing, Down Payment & Final Payment Handling

This is how you collect the money and keep track of it.

Bookkeeping, Income Tax & Sales Tax

Oh Joy! The Tax Man Cometh. Let me show you how to take the anxiety out of tax reporting and the pride of making good money from this fab business you created!

How To Organize The Client Clothing Closet

Wonderful! Your first client is changing into her problem garment and is about to emerge from the changing area. How are you going to document what needs to be done and the associated charge? The answer is with a simple invoice, a sample of which you will find on the following page.

Everything I suggest from this point is just a guideline, and you will become inspired to either copy this system or devise your own.

Once you have noted everything on the invoice that you need to do about the job, received down payment and REPEATED BACK to the client what is to be done to make sure you are both on the same page, have the client snap a photo of the invoice with a smart phone to serve as the receipt. Trust me – the client won't ever look at or understand the receipt, so repeating back is best practice.

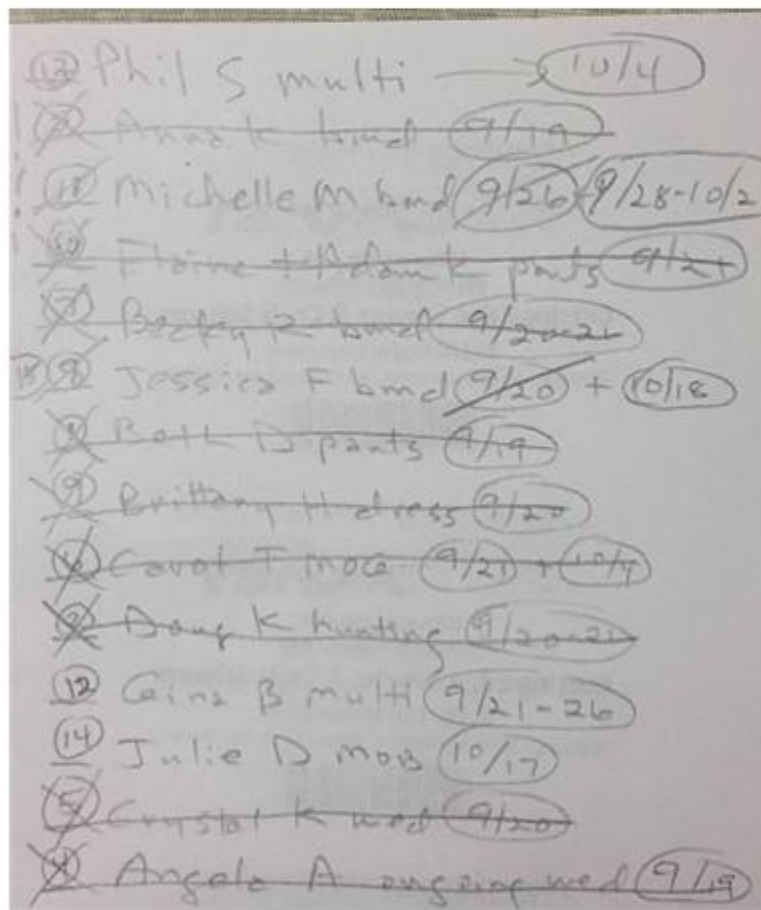
Next, after the client has left, attach that invoice to the garment. I do this by punching a hole near the top and slipping it around the neck of the hanger.

Before it goes in the closet, I add the client's name, item to be altered and due date to a running list which serves as a quick reference cheat sheet. I number each name in the order the job needs to be done according to due date. If I lose the cheat sheet, no big deal because the items are in the closet with invoices attached. However, the list is especially nice for quick reference that I delight in checking off when jobs are completed.

Invoicing, Down Payment & Final Payment Handling

So here is what the invoice and cheat sheet look like that you can fill in by hand or computer generate:

Sample quick reference job cheat sheet scribbled on scrap paper



YOUR FABULOUS ALTERATIONS COMPANY NAME

Address

Phone number

S A M P L E

Date 2/29/16		Invoice # 0001 (optional)	
DUE DATE:			
FITTING DATE:			
Client Name			
Phone Number			
Down Payment Amount			
\$100.00			
Quantity	Description	Price Each	Amount
3	Pants Hems*	\$18	\$54
1	Suit coat shorten sleeves		\$55
1	Bridesmaid dress shorten hem. Cut 5" off now, do not hem yet, evaluate length at fitting.**		\$75
	*Did not bring shoes **Not responsible for snags in sheer fabric		
Subtotal Alterations			\$184.00
Sales Tax			\$ 13.11
JOB TOTAL			\$197.11
Less Down Payment			(100.00)
TOTAL Amount Due at Pick Up			\$ 97.11

Once jobs are completed, I either hang them in the “finished” closet or, if in the same closet as unfinished, hang the hanger neck of finished items backwards on the hang pole so I can quickly identify what is and is not finished.

Because of the way my space is set up, it is not practical to have the laptop by my side while fitting clients, so I fill out the invoice by hand. However, you may find having your laptop or tablet right there to be best, especially for the convenience of credit card readers.

At the end of the day or week – try not to let too much time go by – it is time to record the invoices, whether in a traditional ledger, an online invoicing and accounting system, a system of your own design or any combo thereof.

Currently, I enjoy using the free version of *Wave* online. I do not utilize it fully, but I do use it to connect to all my bank accounts and PayPal so that I can see transactions of money in and out. I could invoice with *Wave* but, again, my habit is to use the simple paper invoice and record each invoice manually either as below or in a spreadsheet:

 Date Invoice # Client Name Amount Sales Tax

So, using the sample on the previous page, along with other fictitious entries, that would look like this:

Week of: _____ through _____

Date	Invoice # (optional)	Client Name	Down Payment	Total Amount Paid	Sales Tax (MN)
2/29/16	00541	Their Names	\$100.00	\$197.11	\$13.11
2/29/16	00542	Her Name	\$ 45.00	\$ 89.00	\$ 6.34
3/2/16	00543	His Name	\$ 15.00	\$ 27.00	\$ 1.92
TOTAL				\$313.11	\$21.37

This way, I know how much to put aside for sales tax in a savings account, while depositing the rest in a business checking account.

Make certain to collect sales tax which is a fact of life in most states. Don't forget so that you don't end up paying it out of your earnings.

Now – a good question becomes – because of the down payment system, when should you record? Should you record twice per each payment, on the transaction date leaving a blank until paid, or use the final payment date and record the total? I use the original drop-off transaction date, fill in down payment and leave *Total Amount Paid* blank until all is paid for the sake of simplicity. You should use the recording system that makes the most sense to you, recording as many columns of information as feels complete to you.

Also, make sure you have firm policies in place for taking cash, checks and credit cards.

Finally, about bookkeeping, allow this administrative task to be fun and take pleasure in collecting in, as well as paying out, that which is due you, that which is owed, and how measurably you are growing your business!

Date		Invoice #	
Client Name			
Phone Number			
Down Payment Amount			
Quantity	Description	Price Each	Amount
Subtotal Alterations			
Sales Tax			
JOB TOTAL			
Less Down Payment			
TOTAL Amount Due at Pick Up			

Bookkeeping, Income Tax & Sales Tax

Paying taxes causes an emotional mix of dread over getting it right and elation over getting it paid for yet another year. Here is how to subdue dread and experience more elation.

Pay sales tax by February 15 and you are good to go! Mark it on your calendar because you will not be reminded before that date. If you forget, you will be sent a reminder after the fact and experience some penalty; however, just go ahead and pay it online, ideally. Your state department of revenue website will walk you through the procedure rather easily. Be glad you are so successful that you can do this. It is truly a milestone to be enjoyed.

Pay income tax and state tax quarterly from the second year on. It is best practice to calendar these dates which you will be provided with when you use tax software such as *TurboTax*, for example. Avoid resistance to getting professional help if income tax software feels overwhelming for you to wade into yourself. You may wish to hire an accountant right out of the gate so that the task of taxes is not so monstrous.

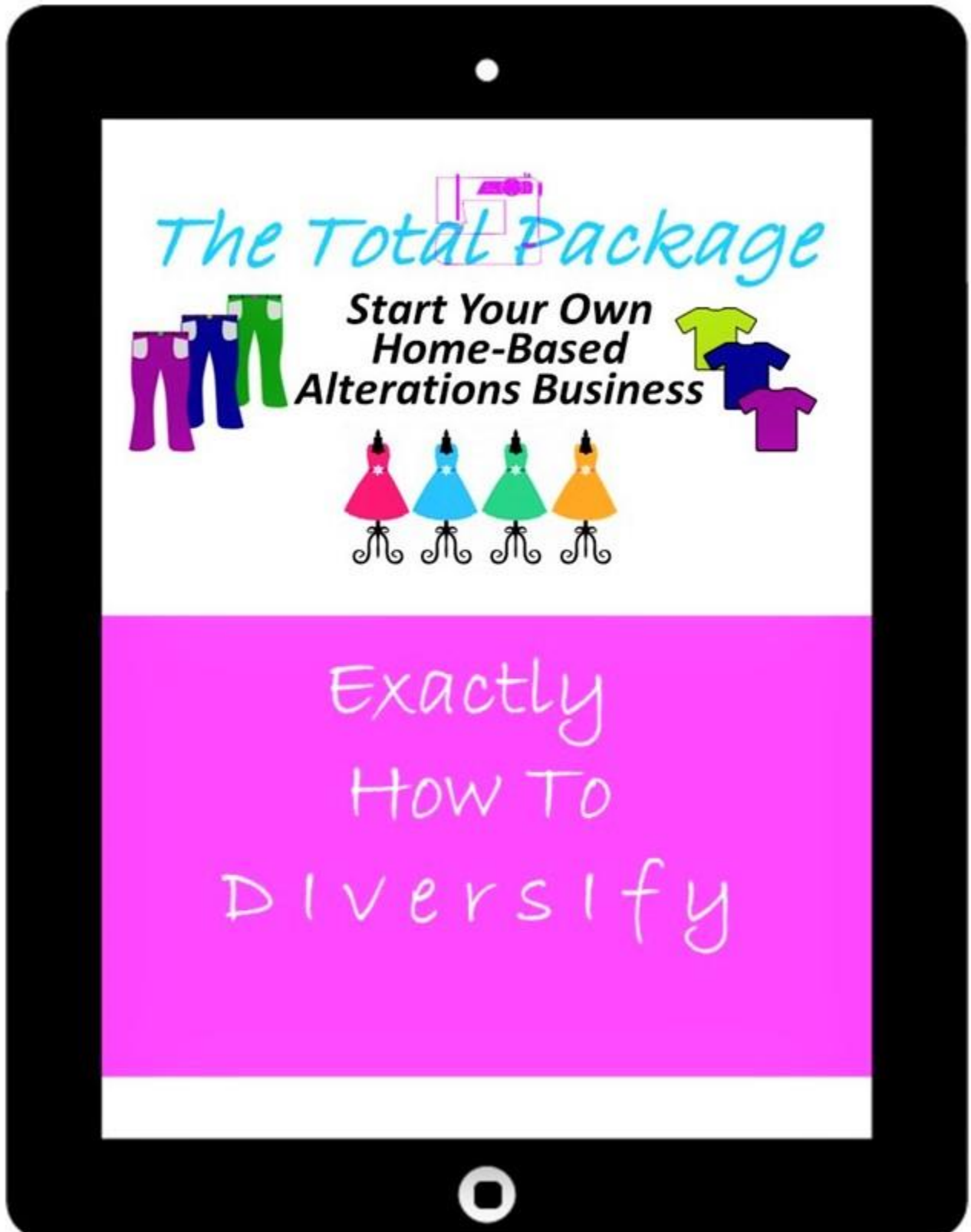
When you keep good records throughout the year on this simple small business of alterations out of your home-sweet-home, tax time goes smoothly. If you experience years that are bumpy at times preparing for tax time, ride it out and learn from it – I mention this because I had to learn some discipline for myself.

Keeping good records includes hanging on to receipts and keeping track of business-related expenditures. Again, an online program, such as *Wave* (and there are plenty more to choose from), makes everything so much easier.

Remember the Skills Assessment section recommending getting business savvy along the way?

That means you, superhero sewist, and if you make mistakes along the way – guess what – you were never going to be the only one to have that experience!

While this section was largely geared toward the organization of your alterations service, you can be sure this system is useful across the board of all your creative endeavors.



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**Are You Ready To Explore Exactly How To Diversify With
Services & Products?**

**This Section Is For Sewing Business Specialists because your intention
is to DIVERSIFY and go broad!**

**Tons of Ideas including minimal and maximal people contact
opportunities.**

Design Your Own Branded Clothing Line
Designer Handbags
Flip Designer Clothes
Upcycle & Recycle Clothing
Create Health-Related Products
Go Mobile
Neighborhood & Office Parks Services
Sew at Home for Drycleaners
Contract Sewing
Sew & Pattern for Local Designers
Sew & Create Wholesale for Boutiques
Sewing Classes Virtual or In Person
In-Home Boutique Year-Round & Holidays
Sew Cosplay & Theater Production
Sell Creations Online
Sell Fabric Designs

You can do all this and never have to see a soul if that's your desire!

Since you're tech savvy, a must in this situation, you can do all of this online and drive to locations for other ideas. Let's take a look below.

Naturally, you're going to offer alterations as your bread-and-butter service, at least at first, and we'll explore that in a moment.

But how about diversifying in some or all of the following, most of which require minimal to no contact:

Design an easy line of branded clothing including online home pop-up shops doing Facebook live shopping including alterations of that clothing. When I say "easy" I mean it – 5 simple pieces such as pullover hoodie, leggings, tank, shorts and short dress (that pairs with leggings). See these YouTube channels: Coolirpa, With Wendy, Rosery. Start with these and don't stop there! Hold 1:1 in-person by appointment sales events and Facebook live shopping events regularly. Decide if you will ship out products or require all local pickup at your home. When I say "branded," I'm serious and we'll cover that in the next section.

Minimal contact opportunity.

Sew designer handbags. Don't you think your local community would be crazy intrigued about and proud to purchase quality handbags from a local sewist/designer? See these YouTube channels: Lauren Mormino, Easy to Sew. Start with these two and explore the multitude of others. Hold 1:1 in-person sales events by appointment and Facebook live shopping events regularly. Decide if you will ship out products or require all local pickup at your home. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Flip designer clothes. Got a Good Will store or second-hand clothing boutique nearby? My neighborhood Good Will store stocks tons of mint condition designer clothing cast off by wealthy people. Usually one day of the week is a sale day when you can grab amazing finds on the cheap, post them on social media and resell them in your home shop – plus alter them if necessary. Do you mark pieces up as high as a retailer would. Probably not in today’s post-COVID world. But you can figure out a nice profit while providing an exclusive experience to customers who now do not have to forage somewhere for this item elbow-to-elbow with others. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Upcycle and recycle clothing. Tangent to the above, find cool stuff at a Good Will or other second-hand clothing store and make it better. Would the sleeves off one item refresh the bodice on that almost dreary blouse? What if an almost perfect dress needs a neckline redo? Could that plain pair of pants use improvement with lace ankle vents? Is this unremarkable pair of jeans perfect for a hand embroidery spiff-up. Hold 1:1 in-person sales events by appointment and Facebook live shopping events regularly. Decide if you will ship out products or require all local pickup at your home. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

You get the idea about flipping ready-made, right? You don’t need to sew a line of clothing from scratch if flipping is more you.

Offer designer face masks and other health-related products. What about scrub outfits? While health field personnel can get this stuff easily online, make it super easy for them to get to your location and try on scrub outfits, which are easy-sew projects, you zipped up in the fun fabrics you sourced, and clients pay no shipping.

Make this happen on your social media. Hold 1:1 in-person sales events by appointment and Facebook live shopping events regularly. Decide if you will ship out products or require all local pickup at your home. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Trick out an RV and go mobile to hosted parties and/or regularly scheduled parking lot alterations and pop-up shop events. You'll need to check out where you can do this legally...but how about this – entice your clients to host pop-ups and one-day events in their driveway or garage utilizing your RV. No fuss no muss setting up because it's all in the RV with perhaps a smattering of racks set outside.

(Side note: Do not price garage sale prices). Host is responsible for inviting a vast network of friends and earns item(s) based on sales. Naturally, advertise to your peeps on social media. While **not a minimal contact opportunity**, you can minimize contact by requiring a controlled filtering of people process by the host – such as one at a time allowed in the shopping area, kind of like when you go to the doctor and at check in you have to stand back and away from the person currently being helped for privacy reasons. If this kind of filtering does not seem like it would fly very well, then space out display racks and allow only one person in the RV at a time. You have the right to require face masks...or not.

Do office park contract alterations pick up and drop off. Similar to above, entice employees to come out on their lunch hour and get fitted for alterations, and set up return appointments. You can do this by contracting with businesses or simply tweet your arrival and allow this kind of systematic availability become routine for office park employees.

Plus offer pop-up shop hosting opportunities to businesses to earn points/products based on sales. Don't you think there is big opportunity to get a swarm of business park patrons around your RV? Again, while **not a minimal contact opportunity**, you can minimize contact by requiring a controlled filtering of people, or not since people are on a time crunch because they're on company time, then space out display racks and stagger scheduling different companies so that you aren't swarmed by building escapees dying for a diversion. You have the right to require face masks...or not.

The above RV ideas work well with smaller RVs, too. A client of mine got a used and obviously older Winnebago Rialta and does very well. It's set up with a sewing machine ready to alter including private fitting room and computer to take sales. Imagine a neighborhood or office park lining up to try on and purchase your products. Dreamy!

Do neighborhood contract alterations pick up and drop off. This would work like the Drop Box section below except the drop box is at the client's home placed outside and easily accessible. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Become the adjunct or main alterations specialist for dry cleaners. You pick up and drop off alterations completed at your home. See the extensive section below on the subject. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Design a line of fabrics and sell out of your home locally and/or drop ship with Spoonflower and never sew a stitch. If you're a digital artist, this is a great avenue for your talents. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Get involved in promotional products contract sewing. Reach out to companies and inquire what promotional items you can sew in bulk for their trade shows, etc.

Imagine that the same office park clientele that come to your pop-ups on their lunch hour to purchase personal items also clamor for the promotional items you create from their input. Once you commiserate with a business on a product(s), you offer a free sample on a tiny scale, once approved get a sizeable down payment, produce the item, notify the business rep of your arrival, they come out to your vehicle and finalize the deal. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Sew for local designers and their clothing or product lines. I cannot tell you how many times I've been approached by clothing designers who do not sew, therefore, need a sewist to translate the design. See the prototyping section below for more info. There seem to be a lot of millennials interested in design careers of various types, including "fashion" design, yet a lot of them don't intend to sew – unless post-COVID times become more influential for more folks to sew, any sewist who takes clients is going to be approached by designers and inventors. Opportunity abounds. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Sew wholesale to local boutiques. Check out Indie Retail Academy online – this retailer's sense of humor can't be beat! **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Better yet – Run your own online boutique on your own website utilizing Facebook Live or go live on YouTube and incorporate some or all of the ideas above. Hold 1:1 in-person sales events by appointment and Facebook live shopping events regularly. Decide if you will ship out products or require all local pickup at your home. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Sell handcrafts online including, but certainly not limited to, Etsy. There are now countless online venues. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Offer virtual sewing classes from home for groups or one-to-one. Or do community ed classes. Think how the world has gone wild about home gardening – isn't it time folks got more self-sufficient around sewing? You're the one, darling! This is a **minimal to no contact opportunity.**

Fill your studio with fab items for online Christmas in July and December boutiques and Year-Round. Hold 1:1 in-person sales events by appointment and Facebook live shopping events regularly. Decide if you will ship out products or require all local pickup at your home. **Minimal contact opportunity.**

Get involved in cosplay and the huge world of costumes and theater production. Do it at the theater or arrange to do it at home. Once you step into that world, **minimal contact opportunities** are limitless.

DROP BOX ALTERATIONS

Consider doing alterations for people who aren't desirous of seeing you or entering your home either. That would necessitate organizing a drop-off and pick-up box and involve only simple alterations, like hems, that clients would be responsible for grabbing a safety pin and figuring out lengths themselves. Believe it or not, plenty of folks are willing and able enough to do it that way.

You would need to have a solid policy in place for payment – which should be in full up front and online, firm policy about client accuracy, and prompt pickup. Many is the time a client simply would sling a garment on a curtain rod magnetized to my inner door and out of sight from the public for me to alter and toss back onto the door when it was ready for pick up. This method might be perfect for you. Figure it out and do it.

ABOUT WORKING FOR DRY CLEANERS OFF SITE

There is such a thing as picking up loads of garment alterations at your local dry cleaners and taking it home. You might like this alternative as the happy medium between traffic in your home and being a company alterations specialist. The tradeoff is the dry cleaners will most likely want a 20-25% cut. If you can live with a cut like that, then yours is the ultimate freedom if you do not want to deal with customers in person as you would otherwise.

In this situation you will need to be vigilant about communication with the dry cleaners, however, especially alterations instructions. Primarily your instructions will come via tag attached to garments written out by counter clerks who are not necessarily fluent in alterations-speak. You might find yourself spending more time than you like clarifying with clerks or calling faceless customers about what is wanted. I did alterations this way for several years and really liked it. I will say in a one-liner that you can go ahead and read between the lines – the owners of dry cleaning establishments can be exceedingly challenging to deal with. Trust your gut on this one, too, and make sure you are getting paid in a timely manner with plenty of accurate bookkeeping to back you up.

The timing has to be right to get in with a dry cleaning establishment; it has to be the right moment when they are just displeased enough with the current sewer, or are losing that person, or are just starting to consider offering the service. You might be “tried out” for a time and become on-call and then one day something shifts, and you are in top position.

There is not much room for error in this alterations scenario, especially when it comes to timeliness. Sometimes all you have to do is mess up once and then you are out as suddenly as you were in. If that happens to you, just remember what I indicated about dry cleaning establishment owners and move on. Also they tend to be jaded with worry that you will steal their customers, and when you are not an employee it is easy to dispense with you. Do not take it personally and be prepared for that potential eventuality with other income streams and have other plans in place. I could tell you a ton of stories about working off-site for dry cleaners as an independent contractor...just figure you'll collect plenty of your own stories if you go this route.

CONTRACT SEWING, PIECE WORK & PROTOTYPING

You may be contacted by local companies to do contract sewing or piece work. That means they have a product that needs to be sewn en masse. I did that at home for a while for a children's clothing company. They provided all the supplies while I used my industrial machine that sews very fast. In the end, it was a great experience making such cute stuff for children, but it did not pay nearly as well per hour as I am able to command doing alterations. It required picking up and dropping off, and sometimes the deadlines were very demanding. I'm certainly glad I had the experience. You might be enticed to work on-site for a company using their equipment. You would seldom make per hour what you could doing alterations, but it may be worthwhile to get the experience. The reason it was such a good experience for me to sew countless pieces of children's clothing is because I was considering doing that myself.

When the opportunity came along to gain insight into what that would entail, I was very glad to find out what kind of energy and investment expenditure such an undertaking requires, and I decided it was not for me at this stage in my life.

Prototyping, on the other hand, can result in a good payout. Always charge your top price per hour to translate designs, if you possess patterning skills. The reasonable inventor/creator understands that prototyping costs more per piece than when producing en masse. If a potential customer seems paranoid that you would steal their design and wants you to sign multi-page non-compete contracts or anything like that, my advice is to pass on the job. Prototyping for someone should be, in my humble opinion, a fun and gratifying experience for both you and the client, and that does not include the pressure of legal ease.

Okay! That ought to be enough for many of you to find something viable, who understandably don't want crowds traipsing through your house. Believe me, you can manage social distancing beautifully, and become wildly successful.

As well, I hope those of you suited for close client interaction enjoyed the expansive ideas to choose from.



ALTERATIONS BY PHYLLIS

All about running your own alterations & sewing business from home!

Created by Phyllis Smith - Alterations by Phyllis - Stillwater, MN, USA

<http://www.alterationsbyphyllis.com/video-tutorials>



This Section Is For Sewing Business Specialists because your intention is to DIVERSIFY and stand out in the crowd!

Branding and marketing is necessary in today's business world, no matter the size and type of business. You have an edge. Let's find out what that is together.

No ordinary business name

Tag line

Swag

Intro to the Companion Workbook for much more

Branding & Marketing

for success!



The prospect of branding and marketing your own small business can be extremely exciting. Only a few years back, the concept of establishing your own Nike-type branding wouldn't even occur to us, the quiet little home sewing business. But we need to boom loudly as well, these days. Not necessarily like the foghorn that large businesses hit soundwaves or sound bites – how about a sweeter sound, such as a tag line that rolls off the tongue like a song. A tag line that embodies core values, stands out on a website, business cards, Facebook page, craft fair sign, clothing line hang tags – you get the idea.

Many people who love to sew for others for income still resist technology, and that's okay. Amazingly, often it's those folks who capitalize on a sizeable following somehow without that and social media. Perfect.

The rest of us who get a kick out of tech and social media can strive to work it to our will. Dare to get a simple, even free, website. Insist on client emails and assert it's for a mailing list that they can always unsubscribe from, and then make your newsletter consistent and irresistible including fashion interests, global and local sewing and green interests, peppered with occasional sales pitches. Post photos from client jobs on IG and a Facebook page. I built my YouTube channel on the hangers of client clothing – it came in and went out never to be seen again except on the channel forever and the client sometimes.

Think of every idea you can physically sew and do all that which you desire to create. We just covered extensive ideas offered in the last chapter. And if you knit, crochet or any type of fiber or even paper art (junk journaling that incorporates fabric and lace), add it in.

Having a good grasp of all that you're going to offer assists with marketing and branding decision-making. For example, your business name is more important than ever.

Back when I started in 2008 from home, home alterations businesses typically were named Person's Name Alterations. Not very exciting, right! Striving to be a little different yet conformist, I decided upon Alterations by Phyllis.

I would not do that today. Let's say my niche was strictly working with all things jeans and denim – I might name my business *Denim Dance Designs*. If I leaned towards really feminine attire, how about *Squirrelly Girly Clothing & Patterns*. If my specialty were sultry, I'd choose *Leather 'n' Lace Stitchery*. I like the sound of *Alter This!* for everything alterations! Why not *Gentlemen's Club Alterations* or *Lady Boss Apparel & Alterations*. Strictly bridal? Try *Vow Wow Bridal Alterations*. Using a mobile RV unit? I like the sound of *Sew Gypsy Will Travel*. Or if deeply into cosplay and costumery, try *On Stage Costumery & Alterations*. Or simply *Fast Fix Fit Alterations* for rush jobs. Now you get the idea!

So what would a tag line look like for the above business name examples:

Denim Dance Designs – Exceptional Upcycling All Things Denim

Squirrelly Girly Clothing – Fancy Custom & Upcycled Clothing

Leather 'n' Lace Stitchery – Romantic Interlude Apparel Created and Repaired Here

Alter This! – Where No Job Is Too Much

Gentlemen's Club Alterations – Where Dapper Is King

Lady Boss Apparel & Alterations – Take it up with the Boss Lady!

Vow Wow Bridal Alterations – Much I Do About Weddings!

Sew Gypsy Will Travel – Pop-up Shop Sewing & Alterations

On Stage Costumery & Alterations – See Us Now So You Can Take A Bow

Fast Fix Fit Alterations – Just In Time Rush Alterations

While some of these may seem a little silly, allow brainstorming to go wild – that's when the best ideas show up. I just made these up on the fly while updating this book post-pandemic and would grab one of these for myself if starting out.

Thankfully, there are lots of non-labor-intensive product you can market and sell commonly referred to as “swag” including T-shirts, coffee mugs, totes, hoodies, leggings...Sound familiar? No doubt you own a ton of swag already. Once you have designed a logo, figured out theme fonts and colors for promotional materials and website, you can create oodles of swag products to sell on Redbubble or Teespring (countless platforms) and display all that in your studio. I mean, really, is that not exciting? Makes me want to start all over again in this new era. However, I'm retired now, and immensely enjoying passing it all down to you.

That's why, along with this revised edition, I've created the companion workbook which, I promise you, solidifies and makes comprehensive your ideas. Once completed, this workbook tells you ***in your own words*** that you're ready and ought to just go do it!

In the workbook you would thoroughly explore your ideas after playing around with fictitious superhero sewist characters desiring to build a business sewing from home – and those characters are the fanciful business names on the previous pages.

I've found once marketing and branding strategies are applied to anonymous fun characters, it becomes easier to allow the flow for yourself and *voila!* – magic happens!

The workbook's title, aptly enough, is:

How To Run A Successful Sewing & Alterations Business From Home – Companion Workbook: The \$100 Startup for Superhero Sewists.

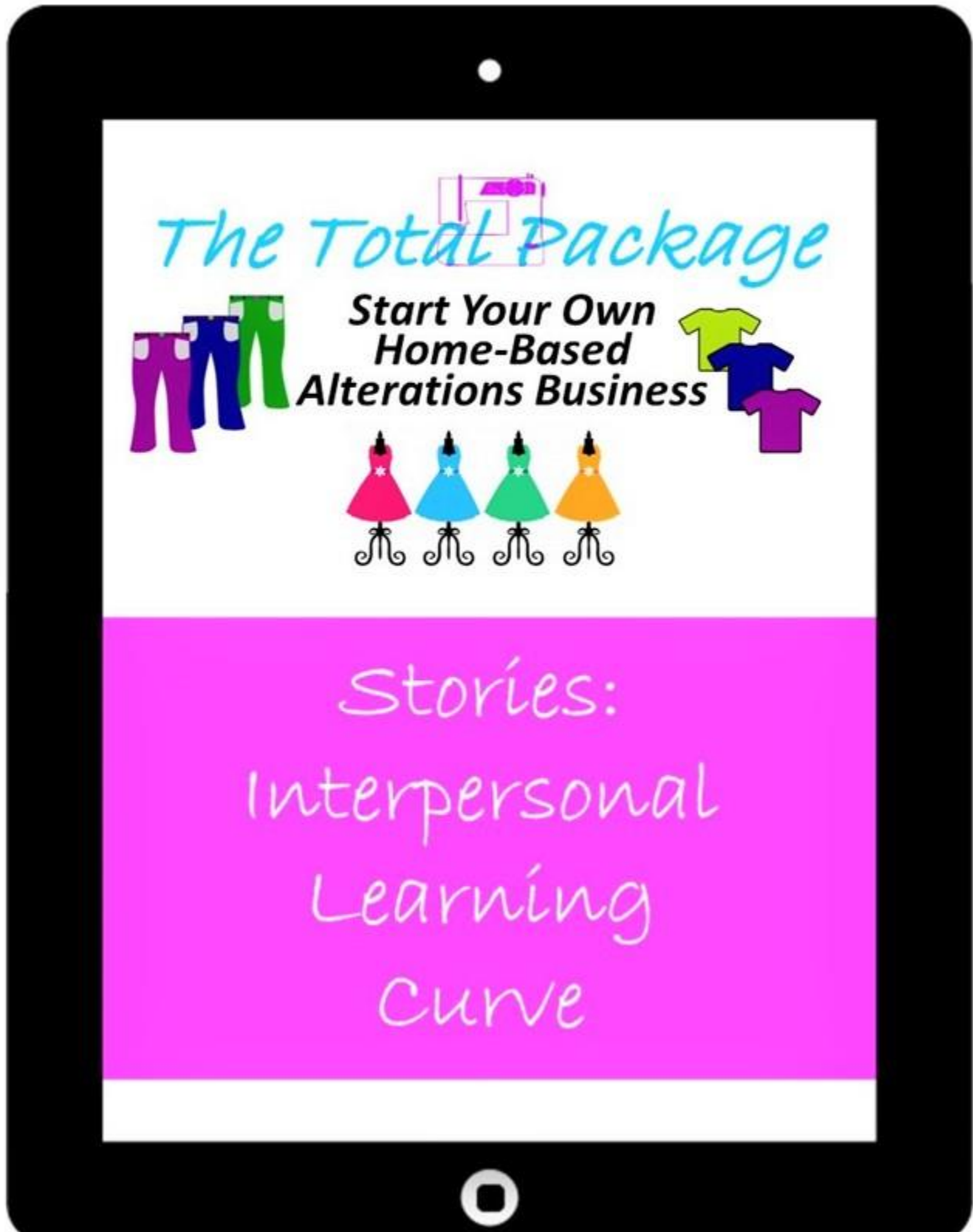
Get it on Amazon:



PART 2

PART 2 – All About Client Interaction:

I experienced the following difficulties so you don't have to, and so many victories for you to look forward to! Here are some excellent, even juicy, situations that happened to me that are now worth gold to me for sharing with you



INTRODUCTION

What can I say? I must admit, there were times in the beginning when I attracted the worst clients.

Remember when I mentioned the Law of Attraction earlier on?

Well, by not regarding that Law with greater awareness and allowing the fear of the 2008 economic crisis and its aftermath to dictate my business behavior, sometimes I chose in error to deal with those who were not my ideal client.

So here are some stories that I delight in telling despite their rawness, because they are worth gold to me now, crazy shocking as they are, and will never happen to me again because I learned from them. You can learn from my stories and be confident that they will never happen to you either.

Let's just say I went through them for the sake of us all!

THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO

There I was a victim in my own home. The dread washed over me as I realized a seemingly innocent encounter with a stranger I let into the house had turned into a home invasion. The stranger glared at me cruelly and threateningly. I really could not believe this was happening to me. She drew her weapon and delivered a crushing blow in the form of these words: "You ruined my wedding dress!!!" Then she stabbed me with these words, "I'm going to sue you!!!"

People love their clothes. They're attached to them. They're a status symbol; they become dear for any number of reasons. You know this to be true for yourself. Clients regard their image as a valuable asset, often assembling strategic wardrobes that assist them in the pursuit of happiness and success. We have to wear clothes. It's much more fun when we enjoy wearing those clothes. Clothing acquires our essence, actually, and I'll talk more about that in a while. Sooner or later everybody falls apart at the seams and then people have to decide if they can part with their garments while they're undergoing transformation. Because when that wardrobe doesn't fit right, it might as well be junk clothing, until you, the alterations specialist, make it right. You get to be the foster parent while other people's clothing is in your care. People exhibit all kinds of behaviors and attitudes about their clothing. You need to be prepared for all manner of personalities.

FEAR BUSTERS

All you have to do to avoid a situation like the "home invasion" excerpt above are these simple things. Make them your daily mantra.

1. I follow my gut instinct. When you meet people, you can tell who is going to be a problem behaviorally and who is not. Even when you're new, you can hear your gut when:
2. I'm not hungry. You resist being so hungry for business that you'll take anybody.
3. I know I'm in charge. You know that ultimately you are in charge in your own home and nobody gets to take over your home with their attitude or wander around breaking boundaries. Nobody. People are

in your home by invitation only (that's why you may want to work by appointment only).

4. I follow my policies. No policies, no control. I have plenty of policies to share and ideas for more.

You can arrive at this wisdom and attain great success with your clients by realizing that your alterations business is half superbly sharpened sewing skill set and half superiorly honed interpersonal communication. Not to mention knowing who your ideal client is. The experience you provide for your clients is best remembered by how they perceive they were treated interpersonally first, and alterations results second.

Largely, you will have great experiences with people. People will hug you. People will cry with joy. People may occasionally cry because you're the best listening ear they got all day. Sometimes people tip you. Happy people refer you. Happy people return. People share entertaining stories (sometimes I wish they could stay all day!) Parents bring their children, which is a bonus in my opinion. Those great experiences will offset the difficult ones. You may not have any difficult experiences at all. However, chances are you will at the very least encounter *potentially* difficult clients. But when you listen to them closely and have your mantra running consciously, you can avoid problems. You have the right to refuse work -- just because someone came all the way from here-and-there, and has such-and-such hard luck story, or is big-name so-and-so, or is the epitome of spare-no-expense rush job -- if the job seems "off" (your gut), you have the right to refuse business.

Just the other day, a perfectly lovely woman came in with an exquisite mother of the groom dress, but I diplomatically sent her away because I could tell from a short conversation that there would be issue with cost for the amount of work involved, and her demeanor belied the imminent hyper-critical appraisal I would likely endure. Did I lose out? Did I snap judge her? I don't think so. How do I know? From years of experience, I know. So back to the "home invasion" scenario -- how can you possibly hope to avert one especially when you're new?

Start out small, meaning specialize in certain alterations of your choice and build up to the bigger jobs like formal wear. Formal wear is the tipping point alteration service when so much comes into play emotionally for the client that, even armed with solid policies, a bad situation can still befall you. That's why you really need to know your strengths and weaknesses. Know your timelines and assert them. Run the mantra loop continuously. If you work alone during the day like I do, you must be alert. If you work at home with others, your group needs to resolve to support each other in any dicey situation, no matter what. Never undermine or chastise each other in front of the client. There is a way to honor the client without making a business partner look bad. Be accountable, don't blame.

In the end, I was not sued by the bride. And chances are very good that she wore that dress to her wedding. She did report me to the Better Business Bureau; I came out unscathed. She had to decide if she was marrying the man or marrying the dress. Stay tuned and I will give you the play-by-play of that story and many others -- transcendent, great, good, hysterical, bad, ugly -- as we explore how to run a successful alterations business from home.

Why did we talk about the worst-case scenario to begin organizing your glorious idea to run a successful alterations business from home? Because as much as you want to do this, you are hearing your own voices that tell you, “I’d never be good enough” or “I don’t want to be responsible for other people’s clothing,” or even “Can I stand to have so many strangers come into my home.” After the previous story, you wonder, “What if I got sued?”

It would be a problem if you were not considering these problems. Your ego is just trying to protect you by being critical, skeptical, inner childish and protective. Yet I believe that if you feel driven to provide an alterations service to your area, then you have the delightful responsibility to let everyone know of your availability, and go for it, because you are needed. You may have noticed you can’t find alterations experts just everywhere. It’s kind of an underground business to get into. Clients will definitely find you though. That said, most likely you will have competition: Lots of people do it off the grid; on the grid, your local dry cleaners will either send out to an independent or have an in-house tailor; men’s wear stores have staff; formal wear shops have specialists. Discount retailers are your competition, too, when it’s often easier, faster and cheaper to buy a new outfit.

We home-based alterations experts save the day and make someone’s day by paying caring attention to not only a client’s garments but the clients themselves and their range of physical, mental, emotional and sometimes even spiritual needs, while never forgetting the gifts of connection that the clients bring to the table.

WAIST NOT WANT NOT

I had an interesting experience with a fellow and his pants waists. He needed pants hems but had the curious habit of constantly adjusting his waist. Not only did he pull them up constantly, but he would swivel the waist to the left and right! That's how loose they were. He clearly needed waist adjustment or at least suspenders! But I could not persuade the guy to do his waists, much less do them before hems. He said it was okay to just go ahead and skip the waist and do the hems saying, "But I can always have you do them over..." I said, "Sure, I can redo! *But. No. FREE. Redos!*" A shadow passed over his face, but he agreed, I did the hems, and he even came back for a few more, still swiveling his waists. I got a kick out of the whole thing. Let people be who they are. But let people know who you are and that you're going to policy them up!

MARRYING THE MAN OR MARRYING THE DRESS?

This is where our "home invasion" saga continues – the bride who came to me in that instance was a rush job. While she wasn't getting married until July, she lived outside the US continent, and was there with me in March for a weekend only. The goal was to do her hem over the weekend because there would be no time when she returned in July. I told her I'd need her to be available over the weekend to ensure correctness, intending to cut her overly long hem conservatively so as not to cut too short, then trim any remainder later after the second fitting. She flatly refused to be available for any fittings because her weekend was filled with other wedding preparations. I informed her of the risk.

She gave me carte blanche to just get it done. I collected all the money, including rush fee, up front but failed to have her sign off as is underlined above. Wouldn't you just know it – right where we had determined her hem should be, the manufacturer had placed small dots of a glue-like tacking in 3 different places (to hold the voluminous skirt folds, I suspect), and I was going to be forced to cut above them because I couldn't un-do them, try as I might, without making holes, and I couldn't cut below them because I wouldn't be able to sew through the hard glue. I'd seen them at consultation but though they looked and felt like stitching that I could undo, not glue! The result would be that her skirt would be about three-quarters to one-inch shorter than she would like for the heels she preferred to wear. The heels that she wore to the fitting were not those she intended to wear, but she assured me the "real" ones would be the same height; this was policy oversight number two.

When I discovered the issue with the hem, and despite her initial refusal to be available for fittings, I called her anyway and asked her to come in so that I could show her and discuss what to do, including that she consider a change in shoe height. Again, she flatly refused and authorized me to go ahead and do whatever was needed. So, I cut, narrow hemmed and it looked great on the hanger.

It looked great on her, too, although a tad short. I indicated that if she felt it was a tad short, that a plan B shoe choice was in order. That's when all hell broke loose and the threats and crying foul began. I quickly took multiple photos of the doomed hem, scraps, closeups of the glue tacking and a video so comprehensive of the situation that I covered myself well. Plus I had record of all authorizing phone calls. All this because she was a lawyer! But I'm a former court reporter so...just saying. Actually, her mother was the worse experience...I told the bride I was finished with her, to take her dress and go. She did. A couple of phone calls about suing followed. Zero ever came of it.

1. This is why I mentioned having a shoe policy in earlier pages. If they don't arrive to the initial consultation with the actual shoes they intend to wear, even if they swear it won't matter and the heel height will be the same, but want you to fit to those "wrong" shoes, have them sign off on the invoice to that effect. Have an overarching shoe policy for any garment, not just formal wear. Many times people forget to bring along shoes of any type, act casually saying that will be okay – but have them sign off. Period.

2. Now you may better understand the need for a behavior policy. In earlier pages, you may have doubted this necessity. I have one that enforces best behavior in all situations. Especially with brides. Let them know in your own verbal or written policy, that there will be no screaming, accusations, bitching, moaning; that there will be adherence to policies. Yes, customers are right to want what they want; however, in my shop, flexibility is a key condition on which I'll take the job.

My policy basically states, "This is my home, you are here by invitation only. You must agree to demonstrate your best behavior at all times, even at times of disagreement or misunderstanding, because you have the responsibility to understand to the best of your ability what is going on with your garment; you are responsible for changing your mind mid-job after alterations have been made that cannot be restored to their previous condition; you are responsible for helping me to understand fully what you want-if my interpretation is different than what you supposed I would interpret, you are responsible for that difference; you are responsible for being flexible because there is always more than one way to achieve wonderful results." Think big picture and cover yourself. Your ideal customer will understand.

You can cover yourself thoroughly and still encounter problems, however. That leads me to the following story.

BLOOD IS THICKER THAN WATER

A bride, her sister and niece came to a couple of fittings. All was going well. When it became apparent that a third fitting would be necessary and that they would be bringing along a bridesmaid who needed alterations late in the game, I agreed but asked that the niece and sister please do me the favor of not coming along because I have a very small place and have a hard time accommodating a crowd (make a policy about that – brides bring a gaggle of gals and moms which can be very distracting). Agreement seemed mutual. The bride didn't show up for her next appointment without calling to cancel or returning my calls. She called another day requesting to come in spontaneously at a time that I couldn't accommodate (because of other clients). She behaved as entitled yet I stood my ground.

When she showed up for the appointment time that we were able to finally set subsequently, I opened the door to the usual three – bride, niece and sister, and no extra bridesmaid – but what a stone-faced grim lot they were, an unusual presentation to the usual jolly crowd. They burst in, looked the dress over hyper-critically, the sister grabbed the dress and she and the niece stalked out of my house to my utter dismay. It looked like the bride would ditch, too, *without paying the remainder due*, but at the last moment, she turned to me and complained bitterly about the job in lay terms that made no sense. Once the sister was out the door, she softened and asked me what she owed me and paid without complaint. She even thanked me. I was aghast. Prior to that moment, I thought I would need to dial 9-1-1.

I have surmised that I offended the sister when I asked her to not come along, that she and the bride were very close, the bride bent to the sister's will to take the dress elsewhere to finish, and now out of hearing of the sister, the bride knew the right thing to do was to pay me every penny owed. And thank goodness. Now -- I had covered behavior policy with them because the experience with the "home invasion" bride was still fresh. And yet -- well, you see what can happen.

That was my last bride for a long time. When I got a rash of bridezilla experiences in one year's time, I took that as a sign and have sworn off brides. Bridesmaids I welcome with open arms, but no brides. You need to consider whether it's worth it to take on brides. I say let the bridal shops contend with them!

But have a behavior policy. In my humble opinion, it's a home invasion when someone's sister walks off with a wedding dress out of the house before the bride gets her conscience working right and pays up. It's a home invasion when somebody comes in and starts walking around other off-limits areas of your home and is difficult to redirect to the fitting area. It's a home invasion when someone stands there and behaves viciously. Let people know that's unacceptable. I do. Back that assertion up with the fact that you will call the police if necessary. I did. There was a time when I did call the police! But that's another story for later.

Post your policies or have mini hand-outs available or clearly state them or clearly write/type them on the invoice. Just scribble an informal but pertinent one-liner and your clients will get the message. All these policies may seem a pain and like you're the sewing police. You are -- and a superhero one at that -- covering your butt.

BOO-BOOS – WHEN YOU REALLY DO MAKE A MISTAKE

Let's be real. Everybody makes mistakes. You are going to at some time make a technical mistake that has nothing to do with your clients' difficult behaviors or miscommunication as covered above. The most important thing to do for yourself is go ahead and allow yourself to feel badly for a few minutes and then recover following these guidelines.

1. Figure out what a Plan B might be that would achieve the same result. For instance, one time while hemming up a full skirt, I accidentally cut along the hem line marking instead of the cutting mark 2-3" down. Once the dread diminished, I realized all I had to do was very narrowly sew the cut piece back on, press up along that seam, and all would be well. The skirt was all of 1/4" shorter than had been preferred. I chose to tell the client who was easygoing, and we had a laugh. But I sure wasn't laughing at the time I made the error. A less easygoing client I may not have told since the outcome was just as good as having cut as originally planned.
2. Either go ahead and follow through on Plan B or call the client for input on going ahead with Plan B. Really weigh carefully whether it will only confuse the client to talk about it if the outcome would be as good as the original method.
3. If Plan B is something creative that you cannot avoid telling the client about, then you must brave communicating with the client. Trust me, you will live through it. Your client might really go for the creative Plan B or have a good idea of his or her own!

4. If Plan B is something creative that would really look great, in your humble opinion, but the client is not keen for it, or if the garment is truly ruined, then you need to work it out with a compromise or a concession. By concession I mean you will need to offer to pay for the “damage.” You would be covered by your liability insurance for fire, water damage and theft, but for your error, you will need to pay out of pocket. How you arrive at that number is difficult for me to advise since no two situations are alike. Client must prove garment worth, however, such as with a store receipt. Simply be your best, honest self, explain the error doing your best not to lay blame elsewhere. Be accountable. You will get through. At some later time, you will realize the value of the lesson, while at the time it may seem like you were a victim of circumstance and “Why is this happening to me?”

5. If the situation results in a report to the Better Business Bureau, then so be it. As long as you do your part (all prompts come from the BBB), and avoid hysteria, you will come out okay. You will. I promise. I did. Most people don’t even check your BBB rating. Remember, you get business from people who adore you and refer you.

6. If the situation results in a bad online review, again, so be it. Most of the time those reviews read like soap opera hysteria, and those who would believe an exaggerated story (because I’ve seldom seen a review that didn’t read very subjectively), you don’t want for customers – so you really lose nothing. Reasonable people don’t post an exaggeratedly bad review. Simply make a point of getting a stack of good to great reviews to offset any bad ones. I have a very few bad reviews, but I have many glowing reviews. I have had the instance where someone became my customer because they felt sorry for me for a clearly exaggerated bad review they read next to all my good reviews. Imagine that! Do not despair. Learn and grow.

7. MAKE A POLICY that covers the right to explore creative remedies to errors and remind all of best behavior policy when dealing with your error. Remember you are in charge. Be proactive.

It will all make a good story later. I promise.

SWEET REUNION

Here's a story I find uplifting. I hope you'll find that to be true for yourself. There was the time a pretty little red-haired lady in her 80s came to me with a winter coat alteration. She said she came to me because my name is Phyllis. Her sister's name was Phyllis. Then she had a few tears. Her sister had passed away in a car accident of some notoriety, and I remembered the headliner well. So I put my arm around her and thanked her for coming to me, a Phyllis. We spent a few minutes talking about and remembering her Phyllis.

That night, while I sat at my computer drawing, a pleasurable and profitable pastime, my drawing was suddenly interrupted by inspiration to draw something else. I followed the curious divine intuition and inspiration to the last flourish of the pen – or should I say the last flourish of the tablet pen nib – and what resulted was a rather fairytale style illustration of two little girls, one running toward the other one standing there with open arms. Instantly I knew who they were. When my little red-haired friend returned for her coat, I showed her and sent her off with the illustration. I told her, "This is you and Phyllis. A reunion awaits." She left, and I watched her head down the sidewalk, absorbed in the illustration. My work was complete and I thanked Phyllis for the privilege.

That, my superhero sewist friends, is an example of what it's all about!

THE 9-1-1 ABOUT CUSTOM SEWING

Ah, custom sewing. We super-hero sewers long for the day when through the door whisks an affluent lovely woman, wafting high-end fragrance and carrying a gargantuan designer handbag stuffed with endless, countless legal tender ready to hand over in full payment for a custom designer wardrobe. Wouldn't that be a dream come true!

Yes, it would. Seldom happens. When it does, you will work very hard for the money. It's something you want to take a long look at just like you ought to when it comes to working with brides.

I've experienced the following 4 types of custom clients: The one who is wannabe until you educate them that custom sewing is not the shortcut discount way to go, rather the opposite, and they find this fact incredulous; the one who is eager, pays down readily, and later complains a litany; the one who is the real deal dream and for whom you can never be grateful enough; and finally, the one you have to call the cops on.

A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

Lara, I'll call her, came to me 3 weeks before the Kentucky Derby and wanted a custom outfit for which she had obtained a stylish hat and now needed a raw silk skirt, raw silk camisole top and silk crepe de chine over-blouse.

Every fiber of my being screamed a warning. Her demeanor was so intense; there was nothing generous about her. But I didn't listen. Because I thought I was hungry for business and sometimes love an over-the-top challenge, I took her on. I won't detail the technicalities, but this was going to be an exacting project and my ego was up for it. In the initial consultation, I allowed Lara to stay 2 hours, breaking boundaries from the get-go.

Over the 3-week period, Lara showed up on time for her several fittings, but oh-my-oh she was a cross and pushy specimen! I should have sent her packing. I felt somehow strung along to endure and model serenity, patience and GENIUS by the way. It was all lost on her. There were enjoyable moments when we talked about her own horses, and the Derby, but that was about it.

Initially she just wanted the skirt and cami. Later she wanted the blouse. Of course I told her the price would be adjusted upward. Her response was that she was only budgeted for the original price. I asserted, "Lara, you aren't getting 3 pieces for X." She made a face at me! Can you believe it! Can you believe I didn't throw her out then?

The final day came. Lara donned the outfit, hat and all. It was pricelessly pink and lovely, just the way she wanted it. She changed back into her street clothes.

It came time to pay the remainder, I told her the number, AND SHE SAID NO, pushing a check across the table made out for the lesser amount. She went on a tirade; I couldn't believe the things she was saying and won't repeat here! I was appalled. I told her I wouldn't be letting the outfit go with her without X dollars. So, she said, "Then I'll just sit right here," folded her arms across her chest and became fused to my dining room chair. This was full out narcissistic behavior.

At that point, I knew exactly what to do. I went to the work room, gathered the outfit, strode past her saying, "I'll be right back," went to my car parked out in the parking lot, put the outfit in the car, locked it, and came back in the house. Lara still sat there arms crossed, but her eyes were big as saucers as she said, "Well, that's a first. I've never had anyone walk out on me from their own home!"

I said, "Get out of my house."

"No," she said.

"Get out of my house right now," I said stepping closer and hovered over her.

"No," she said. "I'm not leaving without my outfit."

"Okay," I said, "here's what happens next." I grabbed the phone and dialed 9-1-1. She didn't know that. But she did hear me tell the responding officer that I had an "unwanted" on my property, language I had learned long ago is what the police need to hear loud and clear when you want them to come immediately because of an intruder. Lara had crossed the line and was now an intruder. I thought her eyes would pop out of her head.

"You didn't have to do that," she said, and now I knew I had used the element of surprise to my extreme advantage, because she was more than a little freaked by this turn of events. I surprised her beyond belief when I flung her check back at her. I knew I could sell her outfit to a grateful candidate some time down the line.

The cop came pretty fast. He was a young guy and in no time Lara “made her case” and darned if he didn’t sort of side with her. I could barely contain my disgust.

That’s when I told the both of them, “Officer, I called you to take her out of my home. Both of you leave. NOW.” He had to honor that command and so they left.

I never saw her again, although she did email me and try to sweet talk me into giving her the cami to smooth over “our unfortunate situation,” but I just responded with the one-liner, “Your outfit can be obtained for X in cash.” When she tried to argue a few times further in email, I kept responding with the same one-liner until it stopped and that was that.

This is your bottom line take-away from an experience that I endured for it’s terrific lesson that I needed to learn for my sake and yours as well – do not allow yourself to be taken advantage of, especially when your custom sew, because you deserve the best money and the best treatment for such a fine service as custom sewing calls for. The value of that experience is so that I can teach you to assert policies, don’t reveal your hunger for business, and to call the cops if someone won’t leave your home when you tell them to.

Let people know that there is nothing about your behavior that gives them permission to behave badly in your home.

By the way, I have since sold that pretty pink pastel confection to a deserving customer who paid handsomely for it. Knew you’d want to know.

CHINOISERIE

On the flip side, a very fulfilling custom sewing story tells like this. Olivia came to me at the dry cleaners where I worked part time at the counter, was the seamstress for that location, as well as still had my own business. First words out of her mouth were, “Are the alterations here any good?” or something like that and I had to resist a crabby reactionary response. Glad I did. I ended up doing three custom jobs for her. She is indeed an affluent New Yorker who spends summers here in White Bear Lake, MN, in an exclusive island neighborhood. Really, I cannot emphasize enough what a dream experience she was.

The best undertaking was the third project. Just in time for Easter that year, I took a swath of embroidered gold silk she and her husband had acquired in China years ago and handcrafted an exquisite lined blazer for her. The embroidery was finely detailed Asian birds and I was just in heaven working with it. I mailed it to her out east but not before asking her to mail me the check first, which she did without question and post haste. I mean – this is the type of client you hold out for and hold on to, if you can. Olivia, dear lady, thank you for being my favorite, happy, marvelous custom sewing story to tell.

BUSTED!

I have to tell the following story. A young man walked into the downtown skyway dry cleaners tailoring shop where I worked one hot, sultry, August day. A very pleasant dude with delightfully gay affectations, he was trying to tell me something urgent that I didn’t understand. He was telling me he had burst his rear pants seam. When he turned around to show me his backside, I couldn’t see a thing to be wrong.

He saw my confusion and said, “Just wait,” while he popped into the dressing room and handed his pants out to me. I looked and nearly shrieked with amusement, managed to keep it to a chuckle. He was amused, too, and a good sport to have to wait quite some time, pant-less, in the dressing room while I painstakingly picked out 30 or so staples that gripped his rear seam together so well that I could hardly get them out. Apparently, he had bent over a file cabinet drawer and that’s when he ripped, to his dismay. Because it was a hot day, he hadn’t brought a suit coat to work and was forced to close the seam somehow so that he could go out in public and make his way to the shop. I spent more time taking out those staples than running the seam, that’s for sure.

You will see it all, and it will be entertaining!

ESSENCE

Clothing acquires our essence. Well, wait a minute – what is essence first of all? I like the definition that goes something like this: Essence is whatever most sums up the heart and soul of something. So, you’ve got a heart and soul, right? What do you think most sums up the heart and soul of yourself? Whatever your wonderful essence is, your clothing acquires it. The same is true for your clients.

When I mentioned Zen land a bit earlier, I wasn’t kidding. While I’m sewing, of course, I’m very focused on and interested in efficiency but also efficacy, or the intended result, which for me includes meditating on/praying for the client. Why?

Because usually while I'm sewing, when I find myself thinking about the client, and the things they may have shared – like the things that keep them up at night worrying, the joys and sorrows of their lives, information which seems to take nothing to pour out of people, people who so often need a stranger's ear – I get to visit with the essence of that person, which the clothing I'm working on has acquired. Your work becomes an exceptional experience when you take it to the level of heart and soul.

I've had several mystical types of things happen to me in this business. As the business and I have grown and evolved, I have become more and more aware of the assistance that comes from the divine and angelic realms. I believe in the realm of existence we don't easily see that is all the brilliant goodness God provides for us. It's from that place that the next stories come as just two examples of how present God is.

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

I guess it was the first year back in business right before the 2008 economic crisis, but along came a bridesmaid one day, I'll call Janette. What an effervescent and lovely young woman she was, and I knew I was going to enjoy having her back for the second fitting that she needed so that we could visit more.

Except when she returned, well, I don't know who that was; she was not the same woman and behaved exceedingly irritably. Nothing, and I mean nothing, I did could sweeten her up. No amount of tenderly trying to draw out the real problem (because it couldn't have been me) or just letting her blow off steam was doing the trick, she could not be placated.

Also, something she said (I can't recall exactly what) raised a red flag as far as payment was concerned. Of course, I had gotten the half down from her, but I decided she needed to bring cash at pickup time since I didn't have credit/debit card capability yet.

I wondered which woman would show up. It wasn't Lady Luck, let me tell you. I met Janette at the front door, dress in hand, because when I saw it was the same irascible person as before, I knew I wasn't going to endure her through a try-on. That seemed to be perfectly fine with her, and she withdrew her checkbook from her purse. Right then and there I knew nothing was going to stop me from getting the cash legal tender I'd said she needed to bring because I didn't trust her. She flared hotter than ever. I matched her heat and wouldn't back down. After some argument, she left without the dress.

A little later I saw my neighbor, Judy, walk down the sidewalk. I told her the story and asked her if she had time to come in. I don't know why I asked her in, I was busy, she was busy, but in she came. It was a good thing. I was following an intuition to avoid being alone.

Sure enough, my little Janette returned about an hour later with some guy, and they were marching very purposefully down the sidewalk. I asked Judy to answer the door with me and to just follow my lead. God bless that Judy, she was solid!

Both the man and Janette started to come forward, but after one step, he hung way back. When Janette realized he wasn't coming forward with her, she flung a piercing look at him, came the rest of the way forward, thrust the cash at me, I counted it, gave her the dress, and off she stalked, past the guy whom she gave a murderous look, I kid you not.

Then and only then was when he stepped forward looking ready to say his threatening piece, but we just closed the door and he left.

Sometime later, I was discussing the incident in session with a wise intuitive sage who told me the man was not able to come forward because the Protector Archangel Michael held him back. The angel held him back, you see; otherwise, they planned to be aggressive. I leave the rest to your active imagination.

Thank you, Archangel Michael.

DREAM JOB - SARA'S SOUL QUILT

I want to tell you about one of my favorite creative jobs. Sara called me one day. She wanted an old BELOVED tattered quilt to be repaired and warned me it was in very rough condition. Well, as diplomatically as I could I indicated it probably wasn't worth it cost-wise or outcome-wise... I most assuredly didn't want to do it either...however, Sara was quick to add that she was actually more interested in an artful re-do, incorporating whatever pieces could be salvaged from the old quilt into something entirely new.

Wow, did my interest become keen. Plus price was no object. Also, something else clicked. It was a quilt her grandmother made her, long since passed away, and she couldn't shake a restless feeling to get something special done with the quilt. The idea to find someone to take this on was absolutely consuming her. Now when I say something else clicked, I actually mean, something else began to glimmer -- an idea, in fact a MESSAGE was taking shape from the saintly soul of grandmother to her granddaughter, also involving Sara's mother (perhaps close to passing herself), and the young great-granddaughter.

So, I came to believe the message to impart was that a rendezvous of four generations of souls was destined to take place centering around an old quilt that would be re-purposed into something new.

I guess I'll just tell it plain and true – because I am intuitive, I received lovely inspirations from Grandmother Sarah (my client is her namesake but without the “h”) about the quilt’s design concept. I received lovely inspirations from the three other souls as well without ever speaking a word to any of them – Sara left it entirely to me. It became a picture representation. This was a dream job to be trusted to fly such a project.

What a thrill it was to conceive the design, plan it, handcraft it and present it. I documented the process and made a slide show bonus product. Sara was thrilled with what became a quilt worthy of a wall hanging, if she chose, and featured a great tree with deep roots and representations of four women gathered underneath it with butterflies alighting everywhere. All pieces were made from new fabric EXCEPT the butterflies were fashioned from the salvageable original quilt pieces.

I haven't seen or heard from Sara since; however, I love knowing that the essence of four souls is stitched into a quilt that hangs on a wall somewhere or drapes a couch and comforts someone somewhere, doing its magic, as intended by the spirit of Grandmother Sarah.

CONCLUSION GROWTH AND EVOLVING

When I started my business back in January 2008, I knew there would be considerable growing pains. Even though I had been doing alterations throughout my adult life, alongside other careers, I had never done it at home on my own during daytime hours. I wanted to do it because I could feel there was more coming, that it was a portal of some kind to other things. Those other things have come and continue to arrive daily as evidenced by a growing fabric art design business and a growing alterations tutorial service. I've earned and am proud of every pain and its accompanying growth -- growth that has brought astonishing wisdom about people and my connection to them, to you.

The most successful businesspeople fail and start again, often many times. There have been times when I thought I would never come out the other side. Despite the several difficult stories I've shared, I realize they had to happen in order to succeed. Those rough times are just a fraction of the whole experience which has been and continues to be gratifying. I'm thankful for all the life lessons. All these countless interactions with hundreds of people are the classroom of life, and I raise my hand to be called on to assist with all things fabric and deliver to my clients a fabric prayer.

How about you then? Having read this book entailing my experience and visualizing and thinking and dreaming about what your alterations business would look like, ask yourself: What do I want for myself? The best thing that I hope my experience does for you is get you closer to realizing whether you are a fit for an alterations business and, if so, that you can make an exciting plan to get to that world of your full potential.

I hope you've formed your opinions and experienced a range of emotions about my story so that you can identify with the fact that difficult situations build character, that a collection of screamers is not going to stop you entirely, that you may fail temporarily, and that so many smiles will beam upon you with joy about perfect fit and a genuine attentive demeanor, that it will all be worth it.

With experience over time, I realized the bad and ugly incidences - few as they were compared to good and great interactions – reduced to zero because of 100% confidence in myself all around.

Remember – my difficult experiences cancel out any potential foolishness catching up with you – and that's because I've trained you to know yourself and wear your confidence like a fine garment you have altered to fit perfection!

You have a need. You itch to sew. Craft a sewing business that includes alterations, and then go and have a marvelous time with it, gathering a following.

I tell you – people are crazy attached to their clothing, and they will clamor for you. So, you, my superhero sewist friend, are now ready to close this book and go be your own version of superhero sewing, transforming clients' clothing with all the love in your heart that you can manifest. I applaud you. Good luck and let me hear from you!

Get the Companion Workbook – it's worth it!



Okay-okay, here's one last story.

I've actually become disabled in recent years.

I fell, sustained a concussion, and subsequently, over just a few weeks' time, my balance and walking suffered so substantially, that I quickly graduated from cane to 4-prong cane to walker.

And I still needed to work, I was too young to retire then. Imagine my despair about ambulation. How would I manage?

Fortunately, my upper body was not affected, and I could still sew like a champ.

I had myself convinced with immense dread that people would knock on the door, see me with my walker, snap decide, "*She's a gimp, she can't help me,*" and take off. Oh, I was so scared.

Never happened. Instead, I muse that folks found it a novelty and figured they were helping me. They were! Or it simply did not matter, because my fine reputation did precede me, and some seemed to not even notice in their desperation for help!

Why do you think I tell this story that isn't easy to tell? It's obvious. If I can do it handicapped, you can do it, too, handicapped or not - if you're a pretty darn good sewist.

Take your creative, courageous and crazy ideas about a home sewing business and get going!

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MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR



A native of Stillwater, MN, USA, Phyllis Smith is adopted by her socialized feral cat, Shadow, and her stray cat, Cleo. Together the three of them own ScribaDoodle Press, so that they can enjoy writing and illustrating quality children's books, often with a touch of the magical. She is hoping to inspire young global readers to think beyond themselves and value the lives of all earth's inhabitants.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

All magical books:

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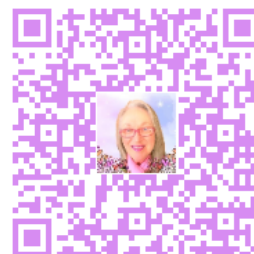
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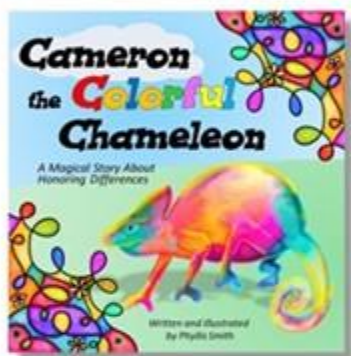
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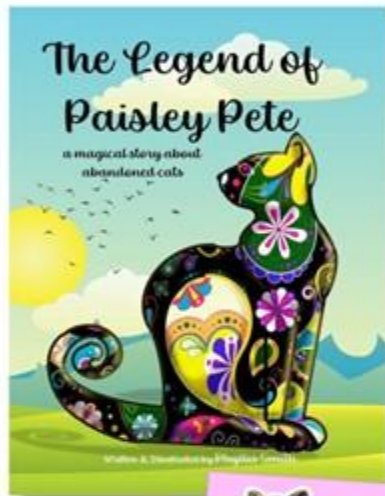
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