

# If It's Not Free, I'm Not Gonna Buy it!

Where would we be if there were no one who would make a business out of selling beads, magazines, books and patterns to us? Where would we get the mounds of beads we so love. How would we learn to do the stitches, and projects we can't wait to get going on? Where would we get the patterns that inspire us to stay up "just a little while longer" to finish another row or two, when we know we really should be going to bed?

Someone has to offer these things we so love. The key is, these offerings come from a BUSINESS. And big surprise, businesses exist to make *money*. Some of us do it full time, some of us part time. Some of us depend heavily, if not entirely on what we earn. Some of us are in it for "fun money". All of us, big or small, spend a lot of time with our various bead businesses.

It seems to me, that so many people don't understand that. They think things ought to be free. Free patterns, free books, free classes, heck even free beads! And not only that, there are those who want to be part of our business community who don't want to *work* towards that goal. They want a *free* business, complete, locked and loaded so it will run and earn money *by itself!*

This is an outlook that seems prevalent in so much of our society. When has our society become a society where so many people feel that they are owed everything? When has the pride of working for (or towards) something fallen by the wayside? When have we become a nation of short attention spanned morons who think that everything should come easy?

We used to be a nation that took pride in what we worked for. We had pride in our accomplishments. The harder we worked for it, the more pride we had when we achieved our goal, not to mention how much more value that goal or item had as a result.

Yes, thankfully, many of us, and I hope most of us, still have that old American sense of work ethic. Most of us still understand that life is what we put into it. Our sweat, hard work and often sacrifice will earn us what we want, that is, if we put enough into it. We may not be able to have *everything* we want, but certainly, we should be able to have enough to make us *happy*.

I fear we have become a nation of lazy, greedy, bottomless pits with the attention span of a gnat, who think that everything we want is a birthright. There is a fair number of slackers who think that those of us who work hard, owe them not only subsistence, but a certain level of lifestyle. Their demands have become so strong that they are beginning to erode the very morale of those who still feel you get out of life what you put into it, because more and more of what we work for, go to those who won't work for anything.

### **Free Advice From an Unlikely Source**

One of the best pieces of business advice I have heard came from a prostitute. Mind you, I did not hear this first hand. I have never spoken to a prostitute, at least not knowingly. Perhaps I muttered something to one while I was coming out of the Market Street BART station in San Francisco. Maybe I exchanged a "Hello" late one night with a lady who was underdressed and overly made up while I was in Las Vegas. But NEVER have I actively sought out a simple conversation, much less one on the finer points of business practices with a prostitute.

This business advice, or actually a philosophy, came to me second hand. I heard it from a friend who liked to frequent some of the more colorful bars in Manhattan. He is an older man, and he sure liked to drink his share.

One particular night, while he was at one of those drinking establishments, he sauntered up to the bar to get "another dram of whiskey". Next to him, sitting on a barstool was a "lady of the night". Being a tad shaky on his tired old feet, he pointed to the barstool and asked the lady if she would "give it up for a tired old man".

Since the lady was *sitting* on the barstool, and since the direction my dear old friend was pointing to, could arguably be interpreted as her lap, she

replied, ***“If I can’t sell it, Honey, I am gonna sit right down on it!”***

Whether she was referring to the bar stool. or whether she was referring to a specific part of her anatomy, the lesson to be learned is, if there is a market for something, then a business can be created. And by extension, since a business small or large, exists to earn money, why give something away if you can sell it?

### **Send me the Free Stuff!**

It amazes me how often people ask for FREE patterns (you can also substitute books, classes and beads for the free requests). While I may not blame *anyone* for taking advantage of “free”, as a designer, I *do* find it offensive when someone says the *only* patterns they want are *free* ones. To me it’s not much different than wanting only “free” bread when going grocery shopping. What the hell are they thinking? That designers will labor over creating a pattern, spending perhaps 4-12 hours on a 3 X 4 pattern (or upwards of 40 on an 8 X 10 pattern), making sure it is just right, down to the FINISH of bead, only to give it away *free*?

To those who *do* give away free patterns...**WHY??** If you feel that your talent in designing isn’t worth a shit, and you have no hope in ever selling the poor quality ink blot designs you create, then please, DON’T even bother designing the lousy dribble you are designing!! If it is worth creating, then EARN something for your efforts. If it’s not good enough to sell, it sure as hell isn’t good enough to invest the time and beads beading it up.

Shit....I wonder if these free pattern seeking cheapos would slog away at a greasy spoon for free? I wonder if these people would work for some sort of community service for *free*. I wonder....if they work at all...

Many who want free patterns, also want it thrown in their laps. Gee whiz....have none of you who fit this description, ever hear of GOOGLE? Get daring!! Type in “Free Bead Patterns”. It won’t cost you anything. Can you guess what it pulls up?? Can it be?? Sites with FREE BEAD PATTERNS!! Get off your lazy cheap butts and find the FREE stuff on your own. Don’t bother me with *free* requests. Don’t expect the FREE services of bead related groups to do your searches for you. Don’t expect

people to send you free beads because you have some sort of phobia. Please leave off the *free* designation on your posts to whatever group you are posting to. Ask where to find a pattern for a Tiger...but leave your options open as to whether it is free or not. Don't insult those of us who try to earn a bit of a living with your cheap requests. (pun intended). Odd that you ask for free....and not *QUALITY*. Must be that quality is not a consideration for you.

I used to give out free patterns on my web site, long ago. The pattern offered on my site had to be requested by sending me an e-mail. Once I received this request, I sent it out as a pdf. I did this because of the old marketing adage: Offer something for free and it will bring traffic to your web site.

Perhaps it did bring me traffic. But it brought me bottom feeders who never bought a damned thing from me. They were just there in line, waiting like hungry piranhas for the next free thing. As soon as the free pattern changed, I got so much e-mail, its a wonder that my e-mail didn't get jammed up! I dutifully sent off each and every one. But sadly, I rarely ever got a "Thank you". Rare was the e-mail that showed *any* sort of appreciation. If anything, it was quite the opposite. If I happened to be more than 12 hours without responding to the free requests, I started to get hate mail! **"WHERE IS MY FREE PATTERN YOU PROMISED!! WHAT A RIP-OFF!!"**

I don't know about your upbringing, but I was taught that if someone gives you something, you better have the *decency* to say "Thank you". If you don't, don't ever expect a favor again! It's called being RUDE. If something is coming your way for free, and you don't get it, then there could be a reason for it. Perhaps I am busy, sick or otherwise disposed of and can't get to your request *immediately*. Perhaps the e-mail gremlins ate your e-mail, trust me, it does happen on occasion. Or maybe, if I am doing everything right, I am busy taking care of my *paying* customers first, before I take care of freeloaders. I did NOT rip you off, since you never paid for the friggen pattern to begin with.

Needless to say, I no longer offer free patterns. Sorry, I am not doing the work for a group of people who were largely unappreciative and rude. Just not worth my time. (Referring to the freeloaders, not my present group of appreciative customers).

I know that the reasons that people want free patterns are wide and varied. But it seems the most come down to what we all want: MONEY. Our dollars just don't seem to go as far as they used to. Gas is crazily expensive, food is expensive, housing is expensive, and Uncle Sam seems to be reaching through our pockets and getting a tad too personal for my taste. Money simply doesn't go as far as it used to.

Here are some of my favorite reasons for wanting free patterns.

### **Volume**

This is probably not as irritating as some requests, depending on how it is presented. While this isn't always a request for free items, *per se*, the discount does earn the buyer "free" patterns/books in the savings.

Some have offered to provide resale licenses in attempt to get discounts, and perhaps a free pattern or books here and there. Often, it is a thinly disguised ruse to get free items. There is no desire for buying and reselling, or even buying in volume, but only to get a discount. My minimums for wholesale and/or discounted prices usually drive these penny pinchers away. Sorry, a sale of three patterns does not qualify you for a discount.

By the way, your resale license was issued to you, so when you RESELL something, you pay the appropriate taxes. It doesn't give you a right to any sort of discount from a retailer.

### **Sampling**

I am not your grocery store on a weekend. I do not have a table set up, with my product displayed next to a toaster oven. I do not give out samples with gloved hands to get you to "try" my product to see if you like it with the hopes that if you like my little nibble, you will buy some.

There are those who have think that I am. This is a sample question:

" Your patterns look nice, but I would like to try one to see if they work up as nice as the pictures show. Could you send me a sample pattern to try?"

Are you *CRAZY??* No, I can't. Hey....looks like its lunch time. Gotta go, and see what my local store is offering as samples for lunch.....

## **Limited Income**

I don't know why....but it pisses the hell out of me when I hear someone asking for free patterns because they are on a "limited" income. They still need to buy the *beads*, right? Last time I looked, by the time you bought beads for a project, they were significantly more expensive than the pattern.

I am a working type of gal. I get paid by the State of California for the work I perform during my day job. I get paid once a month. Last time I saw my check, I did not see a note from Mr Schwarzenegger that said "If you need more money, give me a call, and I will give you more to tie you over, and by the way, here is a coupon for free gas". I get X amount of dollars per month. No more, no less. My income is *limited* to that amount. I have to try my best to live within my means, or find some other additional source of income. Its one or the other.

I can sympathize with those of you struggling on disability, and social security. It's not a heck of an income. I was on welfare for a time, so I do understand. I know what it's like not to have money for the things you would like let alone for what you *need*. I know what it's like to be on the verge of being evicted because there is no money to pay rent, to get groceries from the dumpster, to steal a banana for a baby who was crying with hunger, I have lived in the projects. That is a story that I don't need to get detailed about here. But never once did I expect anyone to give me a single bead or book for free. Never once did I ask anyone for anything that was not a necessity.

Budgeting and living within your means is simply called being an adult. Whatever your income is, you must make those choices. It does not entitle you to *free* anything.

## **Pattern is too expensive**

This one really got my goat. Someone wrote to me asking if I would send

the color key for the pattern that she was considering buying so that she could price beads for the project. I complied. Not long after, this person wrote back stating (believably) that the cost of beads to create this tapestry would cost around \$300. Since the pattern was so expensive at \$15, would I consider selling the pattern for half price since she would be spending all her money on beads. Gotta give her credit, she didn't ask for it for *free*, right??

Simple division would show you that if you considered the cost of the beads and the full price pattern for the project, the pattern would only be 5% of the cost. A small percentage! I repeat 5%! And that's not even considering the dowel or frame she intended to display it on, which would drive down the percent even more. That's not considering the value of the time spent beading. She wanted the pattern for half price, so the amount that she was hoping to save was a whopping 2.5 % of the cost of the project.

I explained all this to her. Perhaps she realized how silly she was. I never did get a reply. Did she buy my pattern? Frankly, my dears, I don't give a damn!

## **Contributions to Charities**

This request can take on several forms, with the key word "Charity" either stated or implied. From individuals to beading groups, to finding a cure for genital herpes and leprosy, there has been a request for me to give to some sort of charitable organization.

I think overall, charities do reflect the spirit of the American heart. We are a giving, caring people. Ask us to help, with any problem, anywhere in the world, we will be there. We give and we give, until one day we are bled dry.

Similarly to what happens to us on a national scale, happens to us in our little corner of the bead world. People looking for contributions to charities with bead related items are endless. Free classes for the handicapped, free beads for community centers, free books for the local library, beadwork contributions for charity auctions. The list and the requests are relentless. I could truly give away more of my beads, books, patterns and beadwork than I would have time and resources to make and buy them.

Like anything else, it is all a matter of balance. Time, energy and money. More likely than not, I do not contribute because of a lack of one or the other. It has *nothing* to do with how noble the cause is. It has *nothing* to do with whether or not I believe in the cause. It is simply because I have been bled dry. If I give any more, the next charity will be for me.

If I do not contribute, please don't try to make me feel guilty for something I cannot do! What may seem like a small amount of my time and resources to you, may become the straw that breaks my back.

Another factor that makes me a bit reluctant to give, is finding out how much my piece (and others who have contributed) auctioned off for. While the charity organizer may have been thrilled to have raised hundreds of dollars, I was APPALLED!!! All the work, all those pieces of EXQUISITE beadwork sold for a few hundred, when it should have been the same figure, but in the 1000's. You might get more selling magazines or asking for financial contributions going door to door. While it is not for me to question if such organizers are as altruistic as they would like you to believe, or if the charity is a way to feed an ever growing ego, I can't help but wonder why so much work went into so paltry of a return only to ask for more of the same sort of insult the next year.

Some questions just can't be beat. Here are some of the priceless ones.

**I am incarcerated, can you donate a pattern to me?**

Ok, I will say the politically incorrect thing here....As a tax payer, don't I already donate enough to your upkeep? Go steal it.

**I have an image that I created. Would you create a pattern for me that only I can use and sell? I want to own the copyright of the pattern. Can you do it for \$5?**

Not a "FREE" request....but close enough! You are out of your F#(#\$& mind!! ....enough said.

**I have an incurable tropical parasitic disease, can you donate a**

## **pattern to help me?**

*Hallelujah!! My Sweet Jesus!!* I have found my *fortune!!!* **MY** pattern is the cure for a disease!!! Where do I get a patent? What drug company out there is willing to help me with marketing my cure??

It is amazing how many diseases, handicaps, and phobias people think a free pattern, beads and books will help them ease their suffering. Funnel all that charity money to me!! Apparently I have more cures than there are diseases!

## **I have endured a national disaster. Can you give me patterns to help my suffering?**

I once had a request from someone who lost all her beads, patterns and books (not to mention home and business) during a natural disaster. She gave me a list of things she lost. I figured what the heck, I will e-mail her some of the patterns that were lost. I don't know if it was a scam or not. Perhaps not, perhaps it was. I will never know. I don't WANT to know.

Things I considered once I received this request:

If I were trying to recover from having lost a home and business (and my business did NOT involve beads) would bead patterns and beads be the first thing I would try to recover?

During such a major loss, would beading be on MY mind as to the first thing to try to do? Would I have the time and energy for it?

If I didn't have a place to live, or live in such tiny surroundings would I have the room for beads and beading.

And again, that same old question came up.....where is the money coming from to buy the BEADS??

Perhaps this request was just an attempt to reclaim some sort of "normality". I know all too well that beading is a great source of calm, of escape, and of comfort. Perhaps she did, even as a hobbyist, have the passion I have for beading. But really, in that situation, I think my energy

would go to rebuilding my home, and the business I lost.

To lose as much as this person claimed, would be an insurmountable pain. The e-mail sounded genuine, There was no guilt involved, there was no “demand”. The e-mail resonated in such a way, that whatever doubt I had, was overruled by the believability (or my gullibility). And it was a simple thing for me to do. I did not fill *all* the request, but enough to make her happy.

Let me believe her! Let me think I did the “right thing”. Let me believe it was not a scam. Let me believe what I did helped her on her road to recovery.

But then again, I guess it’s ok to be a sucker every now and then.

### **Final words**

Before you think I am a money sucking bitch, let it be known that I feel for many of the requests I do get. Many do touch me in a way that leave me with one reaction, and that is to give. But I enjoy giving the best when it is **NOT** asked of me. When it is *unexpected*. Out of the blue. **FROM MY HEART!** To me, that is what the spirit of giving is. Not a knee jerk response to an attempt at guilt or pity.

I know many of you who know this to be true. I give freely, and often. Just don’t demand it of me or the rest of us who have our bead business. You have no right to those demands, however nicely put.

The important thing is, for the majority of you, beading is a *hobby* (shame on you if you are in a business asking for free items!). A hobby is not something that is life or death. You don’t **NEED** to bead, as much as you would like to think you do. If you can’t afford a pattern, *live with out it!* You won’t die as a result. Make your choices, financially, and be adult just like the rest of us do.

Don’t forget the sound business advice of the prostitute.

**“If I can’t sell it, honey, I ‘m gonna sit right down on it!”**

Now where are my stilettos and sequined red dress ....????