



READINESS INFORMATION & RESOURCES



GCA Mentorship Introduction and Frequently Asked Questions

The GCA Mentorship Program is a unique opportunity to connect people who share a passion for the greeting card industry. It is designed for individuals who would like to build a relationship together as mentor and mentee that will help the mentee stabilize, grow, or change directions for their business. The goal is to pair an experienced industry professional with a new or smaller publisher who wants to broaden their understanding of the industry and take their greeting card business to the next level of growth or expansion.

In order for the mentorship relationship to be successful, it is important that a mentee have both reasonable expectations and an understanding of what the relationship is, and is not:

- Mentoring is not training, social chit-chat, or supervision. It is a unique relationship that takes both participants out of their day-to-day activities, and allows the mentor to help the mentee plan for their future and strategize a plan of action for how they will achieve their goals.
- The GCA mentor's role is not to teach the mentee everything they know and have learned from their years in the business, or to tell a mentee what to do next in their own business. Instead, the mentor will focus on facilitating strategic discussions that will help the mentee clarify and organize their own thoughts and plans for their business.
- The mentor relationship is not a crash course in "Greeting Cards 101." It is an opportunity for two industry professionals who both have an understanding beyond the "beginner" level on the greeting card industry, to discuss opportunities related to distribution channels, product trends, sales and marketing best practices, and strategic roadmaps for insuring the mentee's ongoing success in the category. (If you are just getting started, there are several tools listed in our Resource Guide that should prove helpful before you get to the stage where a mentor relationship would be productive.)

In order to be matched with a GCA Mentor, we strongly suggest that you have done the following:

1. Attended and/or exhibited at one of the major industry tradeshows, such as the National Stationery Show, NY Now, The Atlanta Gift Market, Las Vegas Market, Dallas Market, or another regional gift or stationery show.
2. Designed your product line of more than 50 everyday designs and 25 seasonal designs for which you have printed, ready-to-ship inventory.
3. Produced marketing materials for your greeting card line, which includes having a digital and/or printed catalog or flyer, an order form, and an active website.
4. Have a customer list of least 20 retail locations

If you have not yet executed the four tasks mentioned above for your greeting card business, the GCA will provide a list of Industry Resources related to the greeting card and social expression industries. You will be encouraged to do additional research using these resources prior to being assigned a mentor.

Mentorship Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Who determines whether or not I am ready for a mentor, and who matches me with the appropriate mentor?*

The GCA Mentorship Questionnaire will ask specific questions about your business, your particular areas of interest, and your goals for a mentorship relationship. Your answers to those questions will help the GCA Staff determine if the time is right for you to be matched with a mentor. They will review available mentors with the intent of matching you with someone whose area of expertise is best suited to your particular goals. If your business is not at the level necessary to be assigned a mentor, you will be given a list of Industry Resources that will help you take additional steps in your business to help prepare you for a mentor.

2. *What is required of me and my business in order to be assigned a mentor?*

In order to be matched with a GCA Mentor, we strongly suggest that you have done the following:

- a. Attended and/or exhibited at one of the major industry tradeshows, such as the National Stationery Show, NY Now, The Atlanta Gift Market, Las Vegas Market, Dallas Market, or another regional gift or stationery show.
- b. Designed your product line of more than 50 everyday designs and 25 seasonal designs for which you have printed, ready-to-ship inventory.
- c. Produced marketing materials for your greeting card line, which includes having a digital and/or printed catalog or flyer, an order form, and an active website.
- d. Have a customer list of least 20 retail locations.

3. *How long does the mentorship relationship last?*

At the onset of the mentorship relationship, the mentor and mentee will discuss the goals and timeline for the relationship. A reasonable commitment by both parties should be in the 6 to 12 month range.

4. *How soon can I be paired with a mentor?*

Oftentimes, the demand for a mentor exceeds the current supply of industry professionals available to serve as a mentor. As new mentors become available, you will be paired with a mentor most suited to the needs of your business or the area of expertise in which you feel you need the most assistance.

5. *What is my role as the mentee?*

As a mentee, you are responsible for being an active participant in the mentoring relationship, which includes ensuring timely and responsive communication with your mentor. You are expected to follow through on advice, introductions and connections provided to you by your mentor so that you are doing your part to move your business forward with the expertise being provided to you.

6. What happens if my mentor and I are not compatible in our mentor relationship?

We understand that there are a variety of dynamics that make some relationships work better than others. Both the Mentor and the Mentee have to be comfortable and feel they can establish a rapport with each other in order for the mentorship to be successful. The GCA Staff will be available at any time if you feel you need to consider being matched with a different mentor.

7. Can I have more than one mentor, in order to gain insight to different areas of expertise related to the greeting card industry?

Unfortunately, we can only assign one mentor to each individual requesting a mentor relationship. We will do our best to pair you with someone who is best suited to address the defined goals that you provide when answering the initial mentee questionnaire.

8. Are there limits to what I can ask my mentor about the industry, their business, or other companies within the industry?

The GCA Anti-trust Guidelines prohibits discussions regarding pricing, competition, bidding practices, or allocation of customers or markets (the GCA will provide the full Antitrust Statement to you and your mentor). Further, the Mentee should understand and expect that the Mentor can choose to not answer questions that would require them to disclose proprietary information related to their own business, customers, clients, or product lines. In turn, the Mentee can choose not to answer questions related to the same topics. Boundaries regarding these topics should be discussed at the onset of the relationship.

9. What results can I expect from the mentorship?

Because mentoring is about human relationships, it can be difficult to quantify or measure with hard data. The GCA's goal for its mentorship program is that the mentor will help the mentee develop specific skills and knowledge that will enhance their professional and personal growth, and provide better understanding of the greeting card and social expressions industry.

10. How can I make the most of my mentoring relationship?

Open communication is the key to a successful mentor/mentee relationship. Throughout the mentoring relationship, you should be speaking with your mentor about whether or not you are fulfilling the goals set out at the beginning. You will also be asked by your mentor to provide feedback on your experience throughout the mentoring relationship.



GREETING CARD
ASSOCIATION

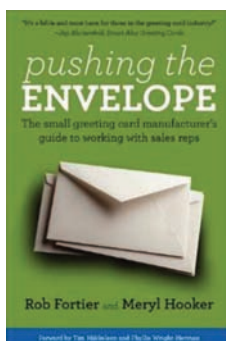
Mentorship Readiness Resources are intended to help newcomers to the industry understand where they and their business need to be prior to requesting and working with a mentor. The GCA Mentor Program is not intended to be a "Greeting Card 101" introductory education, and companies that apply for a mentor need to be able to demonstrate that they have taken the initiative to get their product line established, have a marketing plan in place, and have already placed product at retail.

These are suggested resources and not endorsed by the Greeting Card Association.

Mentorship Readiness Resources

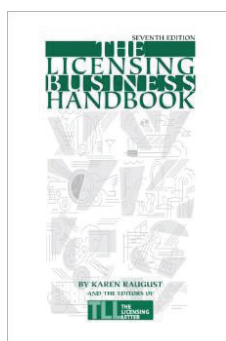
If you are brand new to the greeting card industry, or in the earlier stages of building your business, we recommend the following resources to help you familiarize yourself with the industry and its practices. We would strongly encourage you to utilize these resources before requesting a GCA Mentor so that you have the necessary understanding of the industry basics before being paired with an experienced industry professional.

Books:



Pushing the Envelope: The Small Greeting Card Manufacturer's Guide to Working with Sales Reps by Rob Fortier and Meryl Hooker (http://www.amazon.com/Pushing-Envelope-Greeting-Manufacturers-Working/dp/0578056976/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1389770101&)

Are your greeting card sales at a standstill? Do you want to move your sales beyond the local store to stores across the country? Have you thought about working with sales reps but have no idea where to begin? This is the book you've been waiting for. Finally, everything the small greeting card manufacturer needs to know about finding, recruiting and retaining a winning sales force can be found in this easy-to-read handbook. Written from both the manufacturer and sales rep perspectives, this nuts and bolts guide is full of industry information, sales tips and guidance for building successful and profitable rep relationships. Are you ready to push the envelope?



The Licensing Business Handbook Eighth Edition by Karen Raugust (<http://www.amazon.com/Licensing-Business-Handbook-Eighth-Edition/dp/1885747969>)

A comprehensive business guide for property owners, manufacturers and their agents. Whether you're a beginner or veteran, you'll rely on the Licensing Business Handbook for the tools you need to build new revenue streams and profit centers. This well-organized guide shows you how to make money through licensed characters, teams, logos, trademarks, celebrities, events, fashion labels, likenesses and designs. PLUS: How to acquire properties that fit your goals; Extend product lines with minimal investment; Bring an existing consumer base to your product; And much more.



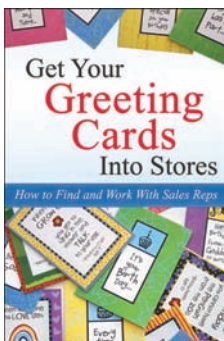
Showtime! The Greeting Card and Gift Company's Guide to Trade Show Success by Rob Fortier and Meryl Hooker (http://www.amazon.com/Showtime-Greeting-Companys-Guide-Success/dp/057808158X/ref=pd_bxgy_b_img_y)

Are you a greeting card or gift company exhibiting at a trade show and want a competitive edge? Have you signed a contract and sent in your check, but aren't sure what to do next? Are you overwhelmed by the hundreds of trade show books geared toward the Big Guys with huge budgets and a corporate audience? Then Showtime! is the book for you. Compiled from the experience of exhibitors, sales reps, and retail buyers, Showtime! is loaded with the very best of tried and true trade show survival strategies as well as seasoned insider tips on how to make the most of your trade show experience.



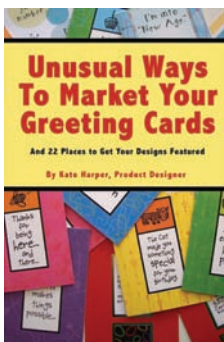
31 Days to Greeting Card Marketing Mastery by Bruce Brown (http://www.amazon.com/DaysGreetingCardMarketingMastery/dp/0965197581/ref=pd_sim_b_3?ie=UTF8&refRID=1BN80MZT9D0RYPFGB9VK)

31 Days to Greeting Card Marketing Mastery by Bruce Brown is an inspiring and powerful book that will teach you how to use simple greeting cards to accelerate your business. The 31 tips -- one each day for a month -- teach you what you need to know to get new customers and clients, as well as build loyal relationships with existing customers and colleagues. This expanded edition contains personalization and action plan pages.



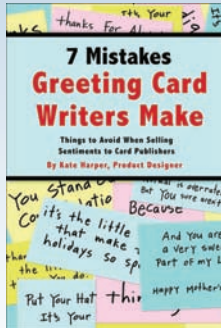
Get Your Greeting Cards into Stores: Find and Work with Sales Reps by Kate Harper

If you already make your own greeting cards, Get Your Greeting Cards Into Stores is a book that explains how to get them into stores and sell them nationwide. Included are guidelines on: how to price your cards for a profit, how to get professional feedback, where to find a sales representative and what industry standards you should follow. All the information is also applicable to gift items, such as magnets, journals, calendars, collectibles, etc.



Unusual Ways to Market Your Cards and 22 places to get featured by Kate Harper

A 20 page booklet on how to get your cards noticed in non-traditional ways. Everything from why you should send cards to your dentist, to how to get special features in national publications. Great tips for designers who are starting out and want to get their cards into the hands of people beyond friends and family. Special Section: Submissions guidelines and contacts for 22 Gift Industry publications and professional gift industry blogs that seek out new greeting card designs to feature for free. (5,000 Words and 17 greeting card images included)



7 Mistakes Greeting Card Writers Make

A list of 7 things to avoid when submitting greeting card verse to publishers. Includes a list of card publishers and their guidelines, links to writer interviews, articles, card samples and other current resources. 20-page booklet and 2,300 words and 8 Pages of Card Samples.

Industry Blogs and Websites:

Greeting Card Designer - <http://kateharperblog.blogspot.com/>

Topics include:

- Greeting Card Biz 101
- Card Company Guidelines
- Card Sales Reps 101
- Books on the Card Biz
- Card Consultants
- Writing Card Sentiments
- Card Online Groups
- Card Tradeshow Tips
- Card Trade Magazines
- Technology & Card Biz
- Expert Interviews
- Art Licensing Directory
- Copyright Legal Info
- Mail ART GALLERY

Greeting Card Insider – <http://www.greetingcardinsider.com/michaels-blog/>

Greeting Card Insider is specifically targeted to the greeting card artist, writer or small publisher who:

- Wants to build their own successful greeting card business.
- Wants to know the DOs and DON'Ts of submitting their work for consideration to established greeting card companies.
- Needs a greater understanding of the principles of layout and design as they pertain to greeting cards.
- Wants to learn the principles of writing greeting card verse that sells.
- Loves greeting cards, likes to laugh, and would be interested in hearing an insider's take on the industry.
- Might be interested in private, 1-on-1 consulting, coaching, and mentoring by someone with over two decades of greeting card experience as a best-selling, award-winning writer, illustrator, and creative director.

Online Courses:

Getting into the Greeting Card Business: New Online Class



In this class you will learn:

- The fundamentals of professional card design.
- Transforming art into a greeting card.
- Writing sentiments.
- Making designs “market-ready” according to industry standards.
- Top selling occasions.
- How to turn one card into a larger “collection”.
- How to make a card out of any image.
- Handmade cards.
- Where and how to sell cards (including online).
- Licensing art on cards.
- Manufacturing and distributing nationally.

This class includes:

- 8 Units
- 14 videos
- 39 steps
- Final project
- Feedback

- See more at: <http://kateharperblog.blogspot.com/#sthash.ZND0f3ae.dpuf>

Tradeshow Bootcamp: <http://tradeshowcamp.com>

Launched in the spring of 2011 by Katie Hunt of Kelp Designs, Tradeshow Bootcamp offers webinar and in-person workshops to help small businesses prepare for the wholesale market and large scale tradeshow. We cover everything from booth logistics, product development, creating sales tools such as catalogs, order forms and line sheets, working with sales reps, feedback from retailers and the media as well as general business courses throughout the year.

TSBC brings together a powerful group of stationery industry veterans to share first-hand experiences of building a small business and a number of valuable resources that took years to uncover through trial & error. Our workshops go beyond the basics of exhibiting, saving you hours of research time and giving you access to a community of colleagues who know what you can expect.

TSBC speakers have participated in the National Stationery Show, New York Now, Atlanta Gift Show, CA Gift Show and others. The TSBC speaking roster has included an amazing line-up of stationery manufacturers, retailers / buyers, sales reps, consultants and members of the media.

Tradeshow Bootcamp evolved from the belief that the more we share with one another, the stronger our individual businesses and our industry will become. TSBC has helped hundreds of stationery and gift companies, and we are very proud of the community we've built together.

Industry Consultants:

If you think you might be interested in working with a consultant, please check their websites for services and rates, or contact them directly at the email address indicated:

Rob Fortier, www.robfortier.com Email him at rob@robfortier.com

Rob is an internationally recognized writer and is the co-author of *Pushing the Envelope: The Small Greeting Card Manufacturer's Guide to Working with Sales Reps* and *Showtime! The Greeting Card and Gift Company's Guide to Trade Show Success* (Center Aisle Press). As the former Owner and Creative Director of Paper Words, and an 8-time National Stationery Show exhibitor, his greeting card and stationery designs have earned him recognition by leading industry magazines such as Greetings ETC, Gifts & Decorative Accessories, Art Buyer, Giftware News and Stationery Trends. He has also been featured on the HGTV cable network.

Meryl Hooker, www.merylhooker.com Email her at meryl@merylhooker.com

Meryl Hooker is a Small Business Development Expert and Sales Rock star dedicated to helping independent businesses thrive in a big box world. She is an internationally recognized consultant, speaker, and writer. In 2012, Meryl retired after nearly 15 years of serving as a Mid-Atlantic sales representative for greeting card and gift companies. From 2007 - 2012, she was the writer of "Road Rage: The Blog", which chronicled life as a road rep and sales lessons learned while driving miles of highway. She has been a contributing columnist to numerous industry blogs and publications. She was a partner at Center Aisle Group (2009 - 2012), an agency dedicated to providing product development and sales training to the greeting card and gift industries. At Center Aisle, she co-authored with Rob Fortier what has been hailed as "the bible" and a "must-have guide" for the greeting card industry with *Pushing the Envelope: the Small Greeting Card Manufacturer's Guide to Working With Sales Reps* (2010, Center Aisle Press) as well as the best-selling book, *Showtime! The Greeting Card and Gift Company's Guide to Trade Show Success*.

John Mavrakis, www.ideaologie.com Email him at john@ideaologie.com

John draws on his deep executive expertise with brand titans Hallmark, American Greetings, Discovery Channel, The Body Shop, Intl., Kathy Davis Studios, Mary Engelbreit Studios, and The Gap/Banana Republic to strategize and execute the mission of *ideaologie*. At Hallmark, John served as Senior Vice President of Product, Marketing and National Sales, and was responsible for leading the entire creative team and all product decisions, including marketing and licensing strategies while overseeing key account sales.

Michael Rhoda, www.greetingcardinsider.com Email him at mdrhoda@gmail.com

Mike Rhoda has built a successful, award-winning career writing, illustrating, art directing, and developing card lines for two large greeting card companies over a 20+ year span. During that time, he has earned the respect and admiration from artists, agents, and industry leaders across the nation and around the world that have had the opportunity to work with him and benefit from his unique blend of creative and analytical abilities.

Kate Harper, www.kateharperdesigns.com Email her at kateharperdesigns@gmail.com

Kate Harper is an artist, writer and designer who has had more than 1,000 greeting cards published and distributed through various publishers. She writes extensively on the greeting card industry through her blog, Greeting Card Designer, which you can find at <http://kateharperblog.blogspot.com/>. Kate offers numerous blog posts on all aspects of the greeting card industry, and offers a Greeting Card 101 e-course through her site as well. She has written numerous books on the industry, all of which are available through her blog and website as well, all geared toward helping small publishers gain experience quickly in the greeting card industry.

Social Media Groups:

Greeting Card Designer - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/greetingcarddesigner/>

LinkedIn - Greeting Card, Stationery and Gift Industry Gurus

LinkedIn - Greeting Card Professionals

