

This script is intended to accompany the related PowerPoint presentation. Each paragraph header corresponds to the same slide number in sequence.

1.

Let's talk about all the resources the internet has available to help you develop classes. We all know how important classes are to any quilt shop – not only to generate extra revenue with class fees, but also to introduce new books and products and position yourself as a trusted expert with your customers.

2.

After this hour, you will come away with some great tips and resources for online tools that can help you increase class attendance, develop new class plans, and find new teachers. We'll talk about the key benefits of using a variety of online tools – such as social media, blogging, vendor sites, Google and Amazon. These icons here represent the 4 social media sites that C&T uses regularly in our own marketing efforts: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.

3.

So this is a really long task list, right (read slide)? Planning classes is a huge undertaking and shop owners often tell us that they struggle with getting it all done. As a teacher myself, I know how challenging it can be. The internet can provide lots of useful and efficient ways to make many of these tasks easier.

4.

We have surveyed hundreds and hundreds of quilt shops around the country over the years, about general business operations as well as class planning. I want to share some of what we have learned with you in this next batch of slides, because it helped us pinpoint the types of online tools that shops would find the most helpful. As we go over how we analyzed some of our survey responses, think about how you would answer the questions for your own business.

5.

We asked shops these questions about class length, frequency and topic (read slide). What their responses told us, is that shops hold lots of classes on pretty regular basis, but perhaps without enough variety of topics. Also, many shops are NOT holding any long-term classes, which not only keep customers coming in to the store all month long or even all year long, but which also might go deeper into helping customers develop stronger skills...which translates to stronger loyalty. You certainly need the short 1-2 day classes because they can be cheaper to produce, they get customers excited about something new without a big commitment of their money or time. But once you have them hooked, the challenge is to keep them committed to coming back again and again. One thing we've learned at C&T is that great products or great prices aren't enough to compete in the marketplace. Being a trusted and respected expert and educating your customers about what you sell are some of the most tried and true sales tactics that work. Anything you do—classes, demos, kits,

stellar service—to give your customer that **special added value** will set you apart from your competition - whether that's a big chain, online stores, or another local shop.

6.

Here's what shops said about why they hold classes (read slide). Of course, these are all really good reasons for holding classes. But it's interesting that the most altruistic reason was the most popular; it's wonderful that shops want to share their passion and use that to add value to their business. When put together, the other 3 reasons comprise the majority of votes, and these reasons are all more directly related to growing your business...that's a good thing too. But it's interesting to look at each of the other 3 reasons individually. Not very many shops see classes as the #1 way to grow their customer base and keep traffic in their store. Not very many shops see classes as the #1 way to move more product. And very few shops see classes as moneymakers, in and of themselves. What do you think? Are classes really worth all your time and energy, if they aren't profitable, if they don't get people psyched about buying your products, or if they don't bring in new customers? I think that classes can be the #1 way to do all these things. One of our authors, Beth Ferrier, asks shops where she teaches to make a list of "gadget alerts" that she can use in class (separate from the official class supply list), just to get students excited about buying even more of the items she might mention or endorse. In Beth's opinion... "a class is nothing more than an appointment to shop."

7.

When asked about who is teaching their classes... (read slide). What do you think, are good teachers hard to find? Do you as a shop owner (or your staff) have time to do it all...plan classes, teach classes, plus work the store? We believe good teachers are out there and that you can find them in lots of places, especially online. I have found that many talented and creative people who are capable and interested in teaching are also a little unsure how to promote themselves to shop owners. If they aren't coming to you, you can still reach out to them.

8.

So, we move on to how shops promote classes... (read slide). Promoting classes inside the shop will be as effective as your current shop traffic allows. Earlier we saw that most shops don't see classes as the #1 way to generate traffic, yet we see that all the shops are depending on traffic to generate class attendance. Feels a little like the chicken and the egg, right? Does traffic build classes or do classes build traffic? We really believe that classes can build traffic first, then the more traffic you have, the more classes you can fill. It's really great that most shops are using email and a website, and of course nothing beats a good personal referral. The question is, are enough people visiting their site or getting their emails? Do they know how many customers are spreading the word, and is the word good? Later I'll give you some info on free ways to monitor who's "talking" about you.

9.

So this is the last part of the survey - questions about what is or is not working, with respect to the various aspects of class planning (read slide). The last two responses were interesting - can you really say you're doing well with promotion if attendance is low? When the shops said they don't know why attendance is low, we reviewed everything they said they were doing in other parts of our survey. Two reasons for poor attendance that stood out to us were: 1) they did not have enough outreach beyond the store walls or beyond the existing customer base, and 2) they did not have enough variety of topics or teachers to have a broad appeal. These are two areas where online tools can make a big impact!

10.

What we learned overall is that ... (read slide). So this is where we began to assemble a list of some ways to address these challenges and more - with online tools. In the next group of slides, I will give you lots of website addresses. My goal is to get as many online tools in front of you as possible, and share the key features and benefits of each. Unfortunately we won't have time to go into any specific details here about how to start using these sites, set up various accounts, etc. But do keep an eye out for upcoming QTA webinars that will go into more detail on using specific online tools.

11.

Let's talk about inspiration...finding topics for classes. This is my one little commercial plug...C&T has over 300 books in print, with scores more now available as either e-books or print-on-demand. Each book has an average of 10 projects or techniques. That is thousands of class ideas right there, and they come complete with supply lists, fabric kitting ideas, not to mention a book sale. When we asked if shops were teaching any classes from books, only about half said yes. What I have seen work for some shops is coordinating classes to coincide with the release of a new book. We share info about our new releases anywhere from 2-6 months in advance, so you can plan classes for them ahead of time, then run the class as soon as you get the books (shops can get new titles a whole month earlier than Amazon does). I know that full-price books can be a hard sell for shops. But you can get your customers excited about buying the book with the class, because they'll be "first on their block" to get the book and they will actually be making something from it right away. When you make the book a part of the class, the price of the book is now perceived as part of the value of the project they made, and the education they got. Enthusiasm and education are two key assets that you have to compete with online discount retailers like Amazon. As a customer, I think paying full retail for the book and immediately putting it to good use in a class with my friends feels great! Maybe even better than the little bit I might save buying it online (shipping costs eat into the price discount), waiting a week for the book, flipping through it once or twice, and then it goes on the shelf and I have nothing to show for it. Use our website to look more closely at books, decide which titles have what you want to offer in a class. Read our blog posts and emails to learn more about the newest books, read author interviews, take advantage of sales and prize drawings, and just keep your finger on the pulse...you'll find loads of inspiration and ideas for classes. And I bet your other suppliers have similar things to offer you from their websites and blogs, too.

12.

Speaking of Amazon, here's a screen shot of a search I did for quilting books. Amazon may be your competition – but it is also a great way to see what's hot and find good class topics. Statistics from several different reports show that most readers use Amazon for research, but many still buy their books from a local retailer. Amazon is a great research tool for you too (review slide to point out how to search for books by topic, bestselling, best reviews, by author).

13.

The blogosphere! It's a big world, but it does wonders for reaching out to people beyond the walls of your shop. You can use it promote your class schedule, give sneak peeks of classes, post supply lists, and ask teachers and students to share their testimonials. These are just a few of the free places where you can quickly set up a blog. I use Blogger, at C&T we use Wordpress. If you are not so computer-savvy, I recommend Blogger because it's pretty easy to navigate and it has lots of blog templates that you can customize quickly. You can have a blog up and running in just a few minutes. Wordpress has better bells and whistles if you have stronger computer skills. Beyond promoting classes, a shop blog is a means of communicating regularly with your customers and building relationships. It's easy to update and it's fun to write because people expect a casual and personal tone on blogs. It costs time but not money, and it's good for SEO (search engine optimization) –

which means the more you write about your topics and products, the higher you can come up on search results when people are searching on those particular topics or products. Have you googled your shop name, your own name? Do you come up right on the first page of search results? You might also want people to find you when they search on other keywords besides your shop name, words like your class titles, types of quilting or styles that your shop specializes in, product brands that you carry. Remember you're online not just for the locals...quilters around the world always look for shops to visit wherever they happen to be traveling. If you also sell online, a blog can help drive people to your shopping cart. One way to increase your ranking in search results is to generously litter your blog posts with words and phrases that are common search terms. For example, if your shop sells fabric paints, not only do you want to mention the brand names (like Liquitex) and the words "fabric paint" - you also want typical questions and phrases in there, like "how to wash painted fabric" or "can I paint on silk" because that's what people type in to google. Eye candy rules on blogs...people like visuals. Another important thing to include in your blog post is links. Links give people the convenience of getting more information on key topics, which adds value to their experience on your blog, so they come back. And of course, nothing builds blog readership faster than giveaways – from a tutorial to a pattern to a prize drawing, people love freebies!

14.

Flickr is a huge photo-sharing site with millions of users and billions of images. By setting up your own Flickr page, you can... (read slide) Also, just searching on the tag name "quilt" brings up hundreds of thousands of quilt images. Flickr is a tremendous source of inspiration and trend spotting for class ideas – just watch the dates of the pictures to make sure they're current - you can see when the picture was taken, when it was uploaded, and when people made comments.

15.

Take advantage of C&T's Flickr site too – we post project images from our books, as well as handmade designs from our various ambassadors who use our products.

16.

Setting up a Facebook page for your business and getting the most out of it is a whole separate webinar, but these are just some of the ways you can use Facebook for class planning and promoting... (read slide).

17.

This is C&T's Facebook page (review the page format and key features for "likers").

18.

Linked In is more of a professional networking site, not as social as Facebook. Lots of people are looking for work here, including teachers. There are tons of groups for retailers of all types to connect and share best practices. Twitter can be a great way to instantly connect with customers and share news about your classes, search for topics (by using # hash tags) and teachers, or bring people in for special demos or sales.

19.

This is C&T's Twitter page – currently we are just doing an auto-feed of our blog posts.

20.

It's so easy and affordable with this new generation of video cameras to film a class teaser or demo and pop it online to share with current and prospective students and teachers. YouTube makes it easy to embed links to your clips anywhere - in an email, on your blog, Facebook page, etc.

You can also set up private viewing and invite select people to see videos that you create to augment a paid class. For inspiration, do a search on the word “quilting” and you’ll find more than 10,000 videos on the topic!

21.

This is C&T’s YouTube channel page.

22.

Using an email service is inexpensive and very effective. These are two that I really like. It’s free at first, then your price per month grows as your email list grows. It’s easy to use with built-in templates, and it has great reporting features – open rates, click-throughs, bad addresses, etc. It’s important to know if and what people like to read in your emails. You can repurpose content from your blog in your emails, link to other blogs, share pictures and videos, talk about your classes, invite registration for classes, solicit ideas for classes. Set up a Paypal account and you can place easy, clickable payment buttons next to your class descriptions on your blog, emails, website. You can also take advance class reservations on your blog, social media sites, or via email and then send Paypal money requests to the students when the class date gets closer. Google Alerts is free and super easy to set up – it’s how you can monitor who is talking about you or linking to you online, you just set up keywords like your name, your shop name, your teachers’ names, class names...and Google emails you whenever your keywords turn up online anywhere. Google Analytics is also free, but a little more complicated to set up – it’s how you can track and measure your online traffic – how people find you, what they click on when they get to your blog or website, how long they stay on your site, etc.

23.

There are still plenty of people out there who use email, but who prefer not to use social media. Yahoo Groups is the perfect way to privately or publicly connect with your regular students and teachers via an email-based interface, and it’s free.

24.

It is so important it is to get student evaluations and feedback after a class is done - their opinions and perceptions will make or break the success of future classes. SurveyMonkey.com makes it so easy to create an online survey. All the different kinds of questions are templated for you - multiple choice, true/false, open-ended, etc. They give you a link for each survey you create and you can email it or post it online to solicit responses. You’ll get more response if you give an incentive, like putting their names in a hat for a prize drawing, or giving out coupons for a future class discount. There is a limited version of SurveyMonkey that is free to use, or you can pay a nominal monthly fee for expanded features.

25.

Our time is up – thanks so much to QTA for this opportunity to share with you, and thank you all for being here. I hope I sparked a few ideas for you. There’s a whole world of quilters, sewers, and crafters out there...and you can use the internet to bring more of them into your shop to learn and buy!