
DESIGN • PROVE • PRODUCE

HANDMADE GOODS GUIDE

Start with one repeatable product.

Approve every custom detail.

Protect time and margin.

PRODUCT | PROOF | PRICE | SAFETY

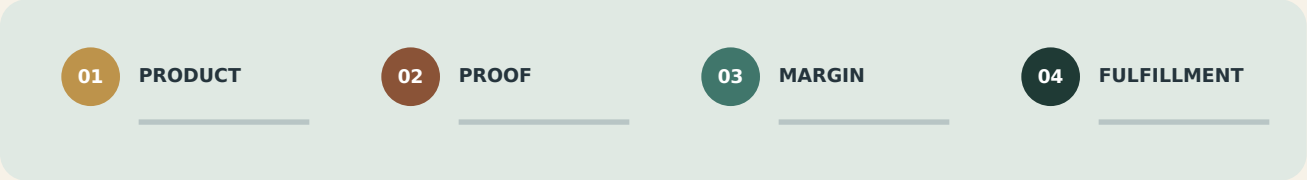
Veteran's Strategic Solutions LLC



START HERE

How to Use This Guide

Read the core guide first. Then use the worksheets to test one personalized product, confirm local rules, price the laser and materials, approve custom artwork, invoice orders, track leads and production, and control laser, ventilation, material, fire, privacy, and fulfillment risks.

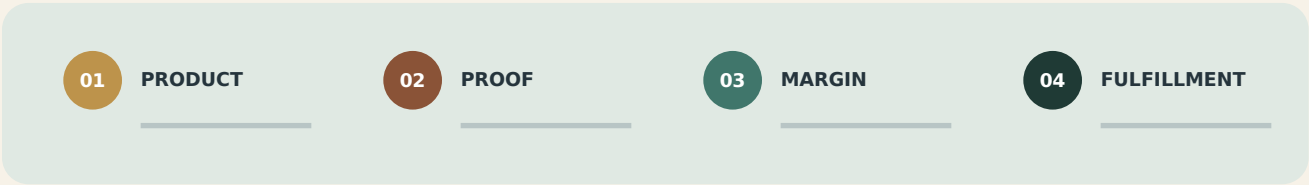


PRODUCTION CONTROL | Confirm the blank, file, settings, alignment, ventilation, and proof before a paid run.

PIECE	USE
Core guide	Test demand with five samples, narrow the offer to personalized laser engraving, and decide whether the production calendar can support custom work.
Operating kit	Use the startup, budget, estimate, proof authorization, invoice, tracker, and safety pages for every custom order.

CORE GUIDE 01

The Bet



Core assumption that must be true: People in the intended service area will pay a fair markup for a personalized, laser-engraved item over a mass-produced one, because gift-occasion buyers have a steady, recurring reason to buy something personal.

Fastest zero-budget way to test it: If a suitable laser engraver is available [VERIFY], engrave five sample pieces — a tumbler, a cutting board, a dog tag, a keychain, a small plaque — using material scraps or the cheapest blanks available. Post them in a relevant community group and display them at one permitted sales event with a simple “made locally, ask about custom orders” sign. If ten people ask “how much” or “can you do my name” within two weeks, the assumption holds.

Three biggest reasons this could fail before you spend a dollar: 1. Saturation in the wrong niche. Picking soap, candles, or general home décor may put the business in a crowded lane on day one. 2. The production equipment and time commitment are not yet proven. If time, not interest, delays production, a new business line competes with existing priorities for the same hours. 3. Personalization doesn’t scale the way inventory does. Custom orders are one-at-a-time work. A good month of orders can eat a week of evenings. Know that trade before committing to it as a volume business.

BUSINESS LENS	CONTROL
Product	Start with one repeatable item and five samples.
Proof	Approve spelling, design, material, and deadline.
Capacity	Measure production hours before buying inventory.

Who Pays, In Their Own Words



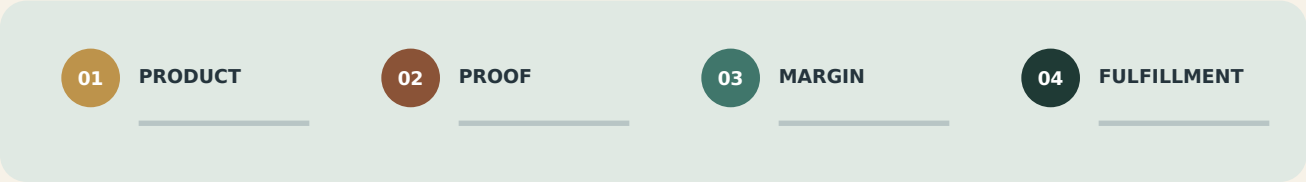
“I want something that says the recipient’s name, not a generic thing off Amazon.” “We’re moving in six weeks and I want to give our neighbors something that doesn’t look like it came from a gift shop.” “I need 15 of these for a retirement celebration and I need them by Friday.” “I saw the one you made for a friend and I want mine to say something different.”

This is a gift-occasion buyer, not a browsing shopper. They’re not comparing your price to a factory tumbler on mass production — they’re comparing it to the emotional weight of the occasion. That’s why personalization commands a premium the base niches on the flyer (soap, candles, generic crafts) don’t.



PROOF APPROVAL | Written spelling, design, dimensions, material, and deadline protect both customer and maker.

The Smallest Version You Can Charge For



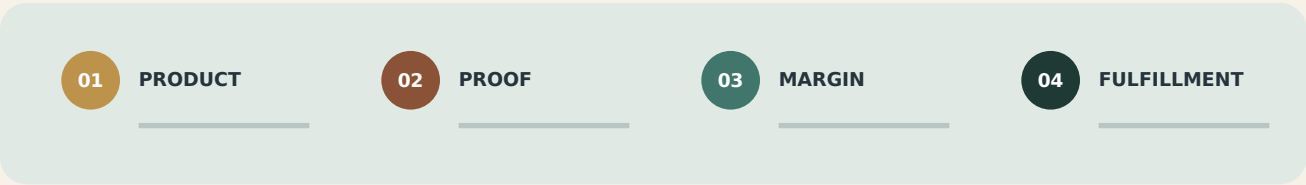
One product, one channel, one price. A laser-engraved 20oz tumbler, sold through one direct channel — no website, no Etsy shop yet. Customer sends a name/text/simple design, the maker engraves it, and the customer picks it up or receives it through the agreed delivery method.

Path to your first paying customer: the five sample pieces from the zero-budget test above. The first “yes, I’ll pay for one like that” at the test event is the first sale — no inventory built ahead of demand.

BUSINESS LENS	CONTROL
Product	Start with one repeatable item and five samples.
Proof	Approve spelling, design, material, and deadline.
Capacity	Measure production hours before buying inventory.

CORE GUIDE 04

What It Actually Takes

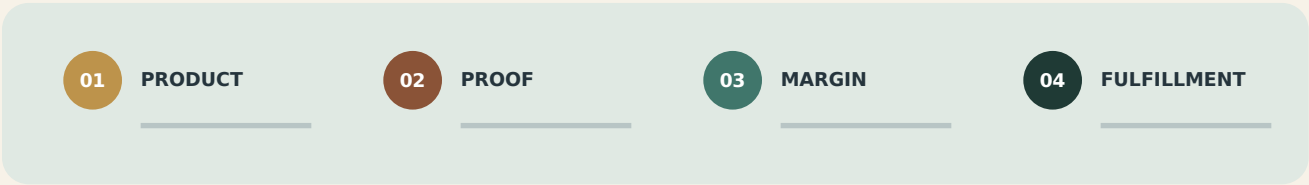


Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

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BUSINESS LENS	CONTROL
Product	Start with one repeatable item and five samples.
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Pricing

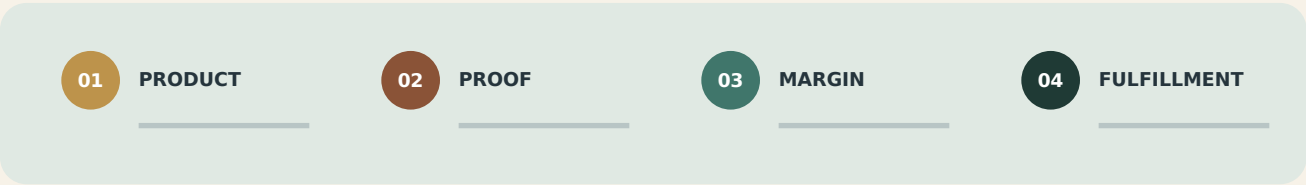


Recommendation: lead with the mid-tier tumbler as the visible, repeatable product at your table — it’s the easiest to sample and photograph — and let the premium plaques come in as word-of-mouth custom requests rather than something you market cold. That matches how the “who pays” language above actually shops.



FULFILLMENT | Inspect, package, label, and close each personalized order against a simple checklist.

First 90 Days and the One Metric



Days 1-14: Make the five samples, post them, and display one at the test event. Track how many people ask for a custom order without being prompted.

Days 15-45: Fulfill whatever comes in from that. No inventory ahead of orders. Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

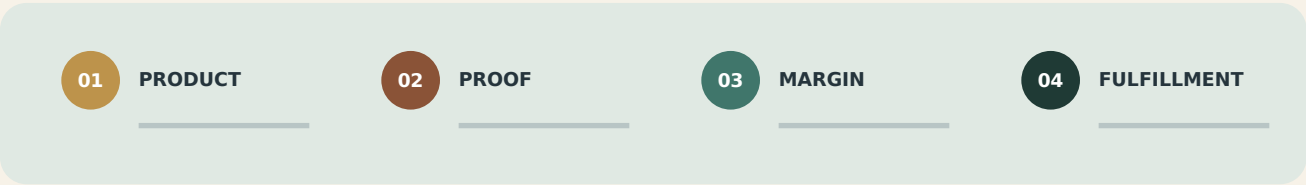
Days 46-90: If you’ve filled 8-10 orders, consider a small standing stock of the mid-tier tumbler (a case of 25) so you’re not turning away buyers who want it same-day.

The one metric that matters: unprompted custom-order requests per event. That number tells you whether this is a real second line or a nice thing you made a few of for friends.

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Product	Start with one repeatable item and five samples.
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Capacity	Measure production hours before buying inventory.

CORE GUIDE 07

Honest Assessment



The idea on the flyer is broader than the focused version developed here — soap, candles, pottery, and general crafts add a new skillset and inventory category. The version to test is narrower: personalized laser engraving, using suitable equipment [VERIFY], sold to gift-occasion buyers through a direct channel. This is a production-capacity decision before it is an inventory decision.

The honest risk is the production calendar. Before buying a single blank, decide truthfully whether the business has the time to build samples, approve proofs, operate safely, fulfill deadlines, and maintain quality.

BUSINESS LENS	CONTROL
Product	Start with one repeatable item and five samples.
Proof	Approve spelling, design, material, and deadline.
Capacity	Measure production hours before buying inventory.

CORE REFERENCE

Equipment and Materials Reference

01

PRODUCT

02

PROOF

03

MARGIN

04

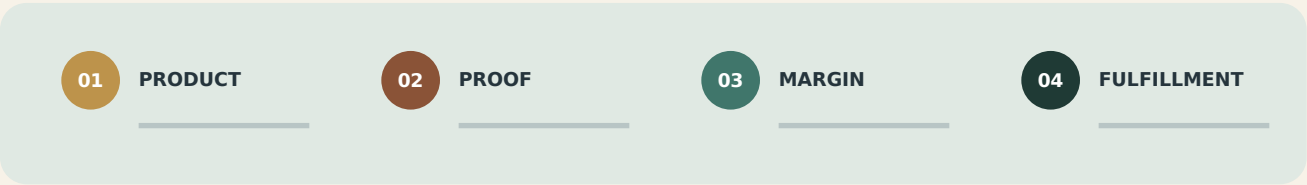
FULFILLMENT

Replace every estimate with quotes that match the chosen machine, material, production volume, and safety setup.

Item	Est. Cost	Planning Note
Laser engraver	[VERIFY]	Price and capability must match the selected materials and production plan
Blank tumblers (case of 25, insulated stainless)	\$75-\$150	Use a qualified wholesale or business supplier
Blank keychains / dog tags (100 ct)	\$15-\$30	Use a laser-supply wholesaler or qualified distributor
Cutting boards / wood blanks (10 ct)	\$40-\$80	Use suitable local lumber or a supplier with consistent sizing
Engraver-safe masking tape / transfer paper	\$10-\$15	Use a laser-supply source
Ventilation / fume filter (if engraving indoors)	\$50-\$150	Depends on engraver model — check manufacturer spec first
Business cards / order-tracking sheet	\$0-\$20	Use a free design tool and home printer or a qualified print provider

CORE REFERENCE

Product Pricing Reference



Use the source ranges as the starting menu, then confirm blank cost, production time, waste, packaging, fees, tax treatment, and required margin.

Tier	Product	Price	Positioning
Low	Engraved keychain or dog tag	\$8-\$12	Impulse add-on at a permitted sales event; low commitment, builds word of mouth
Mid	Engraved 20oz tumbler	\$22-\$30	The core product — visible, repeatable, and easy to sample and photograph
Premium	Engraved cutting board or retirement plaque, custom design	\$45-\$85	For the occasion buyer; highest margin per hour of work

WORKSHEET 01

Startup Checklist

01

PRODUCT

02

PROOF

03

MARGIN

04

FULFILLMENT

DONE	ACTION	OWNER DATE NOTES
☐	Choose personalized laser engraving as the initial lane and avoid unrelated inventory categories.	
☐	Confirm that the laser, software, ventilation, work area, and materials are suitable [VERIFY].	
☐	Make five representative sample pieces using low-cost blanks or scraps.	
☐	Display the samples through one direct channel and count unprompted custom-order requests.	
☐	Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.	
☐	Create a written order, proof, approval, change, cancellation, delivery, and remake policy [VERIFY].	
☐	Calculate blank, consumable, labor, packaging, fee, tax, waste, and rework cost for each product.	
☐	Set a weekly production-hour limit and promise dates from actual capacity.	
☐	Create material settings, test-piece, maintenance, ventilation, fire, and incident records.	
☐	Prepare safe packaging, pickup, shipping, and customer-notification procedures [VERIFY].	
☐	Buy standing inventory only after paid demand is established.	

WORKSHEET 02

Equipment and Budget Worksheet

01

PRODUCT

02

PROOF

03

MARGIN

04

FULFILLMENT



MAKER'S KIT | Organize blanks, samples, measurement, safety gear, masking, records, and packaging around repeatable work.

ITEM	NEEDED	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	NOTES
Laser engraver and compatible software [VERIFY]				
Rotary attachment, jigs, fixtures, and focus tools [VERIFY]				
Ventilation, extraction, filtration, and monitoring [VERIFY]				
Fire extinguisher, safety eyewear, and supervised work area [VERIFY]				
Test material and sample blanks				
Tumbler, wood, tag, leather, acrylic, or other approved blanks				
Masking, transfer material, cleaning, and finishing supplies				
Computer, file storage, proofing, and order records				
Packaging, labels, inserts, and shipping supplies				
Sales channel, payment, market, and delivery fees				
Maintenance, replacement parts, waste, and remake reserve				

BUDGET CONTROL

TOTAL ESTIMATE: _____ TOTAL ACTUAL: _____ CASH RESERVE: _____

WORKSHEET 03

Pricing and Estimate Template

01

PRODUCT

02

PROOF

03

MARGIN

04

FULFILLMENT

CLIENT	SERVICE LOCATION	ESTIMATE NUMBER	DATE

SERVICE OR INPUT	BASIS	AMOUNT
Base product	Blank, size, color, and finish	
Personalization	Text, names, dates, or simple design	
Design or file preparation	Approved scope	
Quantity tier	Units and price per unit	
Proof or sample [VERIFY]	Included or separate	
Premium material or finish	Written selection	
Rush production [VERIFY]	Approved deadline	
Packaging or gift presentation	Per item or order	
Pickup, delivery, or shipping	Method and charge	
Sales tax [VERIFY]	Applicable treatment	
Total estimate		

TOTAL ESTIMATE	DEPOSIT OR AUTHORIZATION	VALID THROUGH

WORKSHEET 04

Custom Order and Proof Authorization

01

PRODUCT

02

PROOF

03

MARGIN

04

FULFILLMENT

FIELD	AGREED DETAIL
Customer, order number, contact, and delivery method	
Product, blank, material, color, finish, and quantity	
Exact names, spelling, dates, unit numbers, and punctuation	
Artwork, font, placement, orientation, and engraving dimensions	
Customer ownership or permission for supplied artwork [VERIFY]	
Proof version and written approval date	
Material variations, engraving contrast, and natural-character notice	
Production sample or first-article requirement [VERIFY]	
Price, deposit, balance, tax, and payment terms	
Change, cancellation, remake, and refund policy [VERIFY]	
Promised completion and pickup, delivery, or shipping date	
Packaging, gift, and care instructions	
Rush status and approved fee [VERIFY]	
Customer-supplied item risk and replacement terms [VERIFY]	
Customer approval and maker acceptance signatures	

WORKSHEET 05

Invoice Template

01

PRODUCT

02

PROOF

03

MARGIN

04

FULFILLMENT

BUSINESS	CLIENT	INVOICE NUMBER	DATE DUE

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	RATE	AMOUNT
Base personalized product			
Additional units			
Design or file preparation			
Premium material or finish			
Rush production			
Packaging or gift presentation			
Delivery or shipping			
Approved additional work			

SUMMARY	AMOUNT
Subtotal	
Tax [VERIFY]	
Credits / adjustments	
Total	
Balance due	

Job Log and Lead Tracker

01PRODUCT

02PROOF

03MARGIN

04FULFILLMENT

DATE	LEAD SOURCE	NEED OR SCOPE	QUOTE	STATUS NEXT STEP

DATE	LEAD / ORDER	PRODUCT	PROMISE	STATUS	HOURS

ONE METRIC

UNPROMPTED CUSTOM-ORDER REQUESTS PER EVENT: _____ ORDERS ON TIME: _____ REWORK: _____

WORKSHEET 07

Laser Production Compliance and Safety

01

PRODUCT

02

PROOF

03

MARGIN

04

FULFILLMENT

Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

CHECK	CONTROL	INITIALS NOTES
☐	Licensing, zoning, tax, home-occupation, temporary-sale, shipping, and marketplace rules are confirmed [VERIFY].	
☐	The laser, enclosure, interlocks, settings, materials, software, accessories, and maintenance follow manufacturer instructions [VERIFY].	
☐	Ventilation, extraction, filtration, air discharge, and indoor-air controls are suitable for every material [VERIFY].	
☐	Only approved materials are engraved; unknown plastics, coated items, and hazardous-emission materials are excluded [VERIFY].	
☐	Fire watch, extinguisher, housekeeping, supervision, shutdown, and emergency procedures are documented [VERIFY].	
☐	Safety eyewear and exposure controls match the laser class and manufacturer requirements [VERIFY].	
☐	Proofs, customer-supplied artwork permission, spelling, privacy, file storage, and deletion rules are documented [VERIFY].	
☐	Production, settings, material, maintenance, inspection, incident, order, tax, and fulfillment records are kept.	

STOP RULE

Do not start a paid engraving run until the material is approved for the machine, ventilation and fire controls are active, the proof is approved in writing, the deadline is feasible, and the order terms are documented.