

## WAIT, DON'T CANCEL THAT WORKSHOP YET!

Good morning everyone. Thank you for having me here today to tell you how my guild has been successful over the past 6 or 7 years filling our workshops. While our workshops aren't meant to be moneymakers, we are now out of the red and well into the black with our workshops. It has always been our policy that workshops are educational and a way to encourage our members to stretch themselves and learn new tips and techniques.

I am a charter member of Orange Grove Quilters Guild and have held many positions over the years from President to Vice President, Secretary, Librarian, Quilt Show Chair, Auction Chair twice and, of course, Workshop Chair (twice – this last time for 7 years). I am currently the Secretary.

Workshop Chair is a huge responsibility. Done right, you will probably spend some time nearly every day working on workshops. You handle large sums of money each month and need to keep accurate records. You are also one of the first people from your guild teachers have contact with. As soon as I receive copies of contracts, I immediately make contact with the teacher and get copies of the supply list and request a sample.

1. **The success of a workshop depends on many factors:**
  - a. **How well known is the teacher?**
  - b. **Is the technique something new and interesting?**
  - c. **Is the workshop geared to all skill levels?**
  - d. **Is the workshop well promoted within the guild?**
  - e. **Is it open to non-members?**
  - f. **Are the workshop fees ones that all members can afford?**
  
2. Explanation on how OGQG handles bookings and signups:
  - a. **Bookings** – more than one person should be selecting speakers/teachers. Present a list of possible classes to Board and get their input. Have a variety of workshops – appliqué (hand and machine), piecing, modern, art quilts, embroidery, quilting (hand and free-motion), and landscapes.
  - b. **Signups** – Members are able to sign up for the entire upcoming year starting in December. Payment is due at the time of signup. This eliminates a workshop seeming full when no one has paid. It is too easy to opt out of a workshop if

- payment hasn't been made. Payment means commitment. Prepare a signup form for the entire year and publish it in the newsletter and on the website.
- c. **Wait List** – Keep track of the number of students each teacher accepts per class. Once that number is reached, start a wait list. If it gets too long (say 10), consider adding a second class. Otherwise, as life happens (and it does), if someone needs to cancel, they can be replaced with someone from the wait list and get reimbursement for the cost of the class.
  - d. **Supply lists** – these are emailed out approximately two to three months prior to a workshop. This gives the class plenty of time to start looking for any supplies or fabric they may need to purchase. At the same time, include the directions to the workshop facility. Not everyone has been there before. Since our guild has gone “green” like most other guilds, we do not supply paper copies of the supply list. Everything is done via email.
3. **Promotion:** I can't emphasize enough the importance of promoting EVERY CLASS EVERY MONTH. A few things I found that work are:
- a. **Display Board** – For each month put a photo of the teacher and project along with a brief bio and class description. This information is usually available on the teacher's website. Begin working on the board as contracts come in and have it ready when signups begin – in our case December.
  - b. Build up the excitement for a class. **If possible have a sample for each class and show it EVERY MONTH.** Not all teachers can send a sample as they are needed for lectures at other guilds. But, usually you can have a nice photo or perhaps a guild member has taken the class elsewhere and is willing to share their work. (At this point, show how not to promote a workshop and then do it right)
  - c. **Suggest** other color ways and uses for a project. Some people just can't get past seeing a project solely in the color of the sample. If the project is small, say lap size or a table topper, suggest making the project larger with more blocks, strips, borders. Or, make it smaller using only a couple of the blocks from the project.
  - d. **Skill levels** – Try to have classes that are for beginners, intermediate and advanced quilters. While some classes are geared to a more advanced skill level, encourage members to get out of their comfort zone and try a technique they may be hesitant to try. This is especially true for a lot of beginners. You will always learn something new in every class you take. Every teacher has their own bag of tips and tricks to share. I cannot tell you how many times a guild member has thanked me for encouraging them to try something new or take a class they are a bit intimidated about.

4. **Cost Effective:**
  - a. **Keep costs within reason.** No one wants to pay a high cost for a class and then need to purchase fabric, supplies, books, rulers and pay a materials fee. I understand that it is important to cover the teacher's fee and this is where having payment due at the time of signup helps. If you charge \$30. for a class and can take twenty in that class and you fill it, you have \$600. Now, a lot of teachers are charging upwards of that amount nowadays, but some are also charging less, So, over the course of the year, you can pretty much cover costs.
  - b. **Share travel expenses with another guild.** While lecture and teaching fees remain the responsibility of each guild, airfares, mileage and other fees can be shared among two or three guilds. Put a section in your contract for the teacher to list any other guilds or shops (and their contact) where she will be teaching while in town for your guild. You can then get in touch and work out a way to share costs.
  - c. **Don't hesitate to change your workshop day to work out a way to share travel expenses.** Our guild meets on the second Wednesday with the workshop usually the next day. We have had workshops on Tuesday to accommodate a teacher's travel schedule or to avoid a "down day" with extra hotel and meal expenses. It is a win-win for everyone
5. **Who is this teacher?** If the person teaching is new to the circuit or to your guild, make it a point to learn all you can about her and what she will be teaching. Talk it up at guild when you give your monthly report at guild meetings and individually at the workshop table. This is also where having a sample really helps.
6. **Open up the workshop to non-members:** If this class is slow in filling, especially in the month prior to the class, open it up to non-members for an additional fee – say \$40. Instead of \$30. Most people will be happy to pay this fee to take the class. At the same time, remind them that if they were guild members they could take all classes at the "member rate" and save money in the long run.
7. **Treats** – ALWAYS put bowls of chocolate candy out at lunch or right after. What woman doesn't enjoy a piece of chocolate or two? And, the caffeine in the chocolate is perfect for an afternoon pick-me-up.

In summary, there are many reasons for having a workshop. It could be purely to satisfy your guild's mission statement – Education.

But **why do members want workshops or why should they take workshops** –

1. **Learn a new technique.** How many of us have been intimidated by a technique until we actually sat down learned it?

Notes courtesy of Marie Blash on her presentation for SCCQG given January 10, 2015

2. A chance to take a workshop from a **famous teacher**. And, the opportunity to have the teacher spend some one-on-one time with you as you learn.
3. **Get to know other members on** a more personal level. Let's face it, if your guild meetings average nearly 200 people at a meeting and workshops have 20 in attendance, your chances of developing new friendships are better at the workshops.
4. And, last but definitely not least, the CHOCOLATE.

**So, please don't cancel workshops.** If they are at least half full, have it. Your members will thank you. And, so will the teachers. If you see that a class is not filling, let the members know. Quite often, they are "thinking" about taking the class but haven't committed. If they know a class is at risk of cancellation due to low sign ups, they won't hesitate to sign up and pay.

Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to me today. I hope that you learned at least one new tip for making the workshops successful at your guild.