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## It's in the Bag

The right shopping bag can carry more than just your business's merchandise.

By Gwen Moran | [Entrepreneur Magazine - September 2008](#)

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Consumers are becoming increasingly eco-conscious and more likely to reuse shopping bags, but bags that look stylish have the edge. Smart entrepreneurs are taking advantage of this trend--and garnering free advertising in the process.

Tonya Hart thought her art glass store's bags looked fine--until she saw someone walking around with one. "I realized it needed a bigger logo and just needed to be jazzier," says Hart, 40, co-founder of [Two Fish Art Glass](#) in Forest Park, Illinois. So Hart and co-founder Cecilia Hardacker, 48, gave their store's shopping bags a makeover, increasing the size of their logo while sticking with the down-to-earth, environmentally conscious look that reflects their business philosophy.

"It makes people feel good when they purchase products they really like and get a fun bag along with it," says Patricia Norins, retail consultant and publisher of *Gift Shop* magazine. "But the bag itself has to have a strong design for it to be 'bagworthy.'" Norins offers these tips for creating a bag to remember:

- **Display Your Identity.** Your logo and web address should be visible on both sides of the bag, says Norins, otherwise you're missing a marketing opportunity every time a bag goes out the door. If you can't afford customized bags, choose a plain bag instead and design a big, beautiful sticker with the store's info to go on each bag.
- **Construction Counts.** The bag should be sturdy enough to be reused. In the case of Two Fish, which expects sales of more than \$1 million this year, Hart and Hardacker designed their bags in four specific sizes that coordinate with the shop's standard gift boxes so as not to waste bags that are too big for their contents. In addition, they opted for bags made of recycled paper to further reflect their commitment to environmental sustainability.
- **Dare to Be Different.** Interesting details--grosgrain ribbon or rope handles, for example--can help your bag stand out. "The biggest determining factor of a successful bag is whether it's a keeper," says Norins.

"Does it make people say, 'I love this bag. I don't want to throw it away'? Those are the bags that people reuse and that keep your store's name and logo out there."

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