

Finding Our Own Unique Niche In the Stamp World

Over the years a few people have asked me about my goals for **VSN**. I think they couldn't understand why I do some of the things I do. **VSN** has been around since 1993, with a solid group of readers and an excellent reputation for gathering a wide variety of cutting edge stamp related techniques, news, and information. Why aren't we bigger? Why don't we publish bi-monthly rather than monthly? Why don't we have 175 pages every issue and three times the number of advertisers? Why aren't we in six hundred stores rather than two hundred? Why don't we have five times the circulation? Why don't we have a booth at every convention? Where are the glossy pages and full color on every page? In other words, why doesn't **VSN** look like everyone else and do things like everyone else?

My answer is a gentle: Why should we? **VSN** has been a shared collaboration among friends since the very beginning. While I try to be professional and business-like in the way I run the administrative side of things, **VSN** really is a homemade effort – literally! Comparing **VSN** to most other publications really is an apples-to-oranges kind of thing.

VSN has a staff of one – me! I write, I edit, I layout the issue. I keep track of subscriptions, store and advertising accounts. I do the ordering and plan future issues. I open every letter, keep up with the email, answer the faxes and follow up on phone messages. I hear the praise and I hear the complaints. The buck really does stop here because there isn't anyplace else to stop it!

The articles and artwork are a combined effort between readers (you!) and myself. There are no professional writers. I have office space in one room of my home where I work to

put **VSN** together. The issues are printed on the offset presses at the [local Sir Speedy print shop and then Stockson Printing beginning in 2005]. When the printing is done, they drop it off, stacking the boxes in the middle of our kitchen floor. Our dining room is often full of the current issue waiting for samples and our home storage room downstairs is full to the brim with back issues. Our living room serves as a staging area for our monthly mail-out. Sometimes the dining room table serves as a drying rack for samples that I create by hand. I sometimes work at the picnic table in the back yard when I have a messy project. When I want to get away from my office for a while, I use my laptop computer and work on the couch in the living room.

I stick in all the samples for every issue by hand. My two children and my mother often help me prepare and stuff the envelopes for the monthly mailing. (I take care of this for the rest of the month.) My husband loads the packed issues into his Explorer and drops it at the post office up the road each month.

My family will tell you that I work almost every day. Around my print deadline and mail-out deadlines each month, I typically work fifteen-hour

days. Since I work in my home and we savor our privacy, I do not have a staff and I do not want to hire one.

With all of this in mind, you may understand why I like that **VSN** is a small monthly publication with a circulation of around five thousand. If our readership was as large as the other stamping publications are, I couldn't produce **VSN** the way I do. It just is not logistically possible to deal with five times the circulation without hiring a staff and moving into office space. I could not keep three times the advertisers and stores happy and I would not have time to put together three times the pages in every issue.

VSN is a small niche publication. I believe **VSN** has the best readers around. I don't think we need to appeal to everyone – just you! My goals for **VSN** have nothing to do with circulation or money. They have to do with creating a handcrafted publication each month that is interesting to read. They have to do with providing useful ideas and techniques that you can really use. They have to do with encouraging you to explore and experiment and have faith in your own creative abilities. They have to do with introducing new companies and supporting the companies and stores who have been serving the stamping community so well over the years.

I am content with my little niche in the stamp world. I think it is an important niche. You don't have to have a huge circulation to have an impact on the stamping community and the flow of ideas. Just like you don't have to be a professional artist to come up with something new. There is no shame in being a little guy. I'm no David to someone else's Goliath. I am just doing my own thing and am glad that you are here to share it!

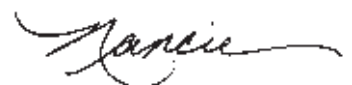


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