



All Decked Out

by Rhianna Mirabello

When I first opened my shop in 1995, I carried just a few tarot decks, and only a select group of customers inquired about them. As the mainstream has been exposed to the wonders of magic through such tales as Harry Potter and *The Lord of the Rings*, fear of the tarot has started to diminish. Our local library now offers tarot classes; parents are buying decks for children's Halloween parties, coming-of-age celebrations, birthdays, and sleepovers.

Not just for the local fortuneteller anymore, the tarot has spread. There has been incredible growth in our tarot clientele, which currently includes serious readers, amateurs, students, beginners, and the simply curious. My store now carries more than 75 tarot decks, and decks can be found at most chain bookstores and on countless Internet websites. With so many places to purchase, the challenge for small-business owners is to offer something more. The way to sell tarot decks is by offering the education, personal service, and hands-on experience not found in the big-box arenas.

Get to know the tarot

The tarot is a mysterious and ominous system that can be quite confusing to new customers. Familiarize yourself with each card and its significance. In the most basic terms, the tarot is a divination

and in the hard lessons they pose. It is good to explain to customers that the images held within this suit are learning tools for using the power of the mind for transformation — their gifts are better communication and clarity of mind.

The Death card especially can raise the eyebrow of an inexperienced tarot querent. This card rarely means the actual death of a person, nor do any of the cards in the tarot. It is usually the death of a certain way of thinking or being, or the ending of a situation, job, or relationship. The Death card symbolizes transformation; it asks us to shed our skin and be reborn like a snake. By addressing these common misconceptions upfront, you can quickly ease any customer tension or trepidation.

Hundreds of tarot decks are available today, for every level of reader and with every interest represented from angels to Zen. Decks have been created to appeal to every age group, from *Gummy Bear Tarot* (U.S. Games Systems, www.usgamesinc.com) to crone-wisdom themes, and in every genre and style that you could imagine. Take a look at a wide variety of decks so you can purchase the ones best suited for your shop. The Internet is a great way to do some of that research. Artists and authors incorporate their own interpretation of the cards into the drawings, which might also include different systems such as the kabbalah, astrology, mythology, animism, and indigenous studies. Knowing the differences between the decks,

Shop owner Rhianna Mirabello shares strategies on stocking and selling the increasingly popular tarot products.

system. More accurately it is a spiritual tool for personal development. It consists of 78 cards: 22 major arcana and 56 minor arcana. The major arcana cards represent the journey of integration and wholeness. They depict the trials and tribulations we encounter along the way. Beginning as The Fool (0), we travel through profound lessons necessary to attain the state of awakening depicted in The World (21). The minor arcana represent the more mundane aspects of life, our day-to-day struggles and events. These cards are divided into four suits — Wands, Pentacles, Swords, and Cups — and are similar to standard playing cards. Each of the suits corresponds to a certain element, such as a season, astrological sign, or planet, which reflects upon our lives.

Cards are open to individual interpretation, but there are traditional meanings associated with each. For example, the Swords suit has some of the most difficult cards in the deck, challenging visually

sometimes even just the subtle ones, will allow you to recommend decks your customer will resonate with.

The most influential tarot deck is, without a doubt, the original 1908 *Rider-Waite Tarot Deck* (U.S. Games Systems, www.usgamesinc.com), illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith under the direction of Arthur Edward Waite. The deck is not very colorful and is actually quite flat, but these qualities are what draw some traditional readers in for a freer interpretation of the cards. Rider-Waite offers the basic images of the tarot system, which other decks have since expanded upon. As a whole, people today are much more visual, and most prefer cards that have deeper and more vibrant color and dimension. Both the *Universal Waite Tarot Deck*, (U.S. Games Systems, www.usgamesinc.com) recolored by Mary Hanson-Roberts, and the recolored Radiant Rider-Waite Tarot decks feature the original images but offer customers the richer visual experience. To give

your customers the best selection, I highly recommend carrying all three versions, as they each offer something different, and offer them in a variety of sizes ranging from a tiny key-chain deck, to oversized cards, to book-and-deck gift sets.

Savvy selling

The best way to sell tarot decks is to offer the hands-on experience not found elsewhere. People want to get a feel for the deck before purchasing. This is where small-business owners have the edge — we can offer the convenience of holding and seeing the deck firsthand.

Purchase full sample decks or carry

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sample cards for your customers. It is very useful to have at least a handful of complete sample decks in your shop. Be sure to check with your distributors about the discount programs they offer — U.S. Games Systems and Llewellyn offer full sample decks at 70 percent off the retail price.

Llewellyn also offers five or six cards of each tarot deck, free of charge, which we have compiled into a Tarot Sample Book. All you need are double-sided tape and a large scrapbook or memory book that has clear plastic protective sleeves that are easy to rearrange. Be sure your book has the capacity to expand so you can add more sleeves as your collection grows.

Our samples are organized from basic to advanced decks, with the erotic decks in back. Customers often remark the sample book is a delight to browse and very helpful in making their decision. The book definitely has increased our sales.

It's very helpful to know the artist's interpretation of the landscapes and images in a deck. Consider offering companion books that speak directly to those metaphors and symbols incorporated into the cards, as most tarot customers purchase an instructional book at some point. Tarot book-and-deck

sets are a great way to offer the pair, and they make an excellent gift.

A few decks I carry specifically for my young tarot readers are *Whimsical Tarot* (U.S. Games Systems, www.usgamesinc.com), *Hanson-Roberts Tarot* (U.S. Games Systems, www.usgamesinc.com), and *Inner Child Cards: A Fairy Tale Tarot* (Bear & Co., www.innertraditions.com), all of which take children's fairy tales and transform them into the story of the tarot. Familiar characters embody the archetypes of the major arcana, creating a magical teaching vehicle for understanding and integrating life lessons, including shadow aspects, without images that can be threatening. These decks

are definitely appropriate for children of all ages! We also have found that therapists and counselors find them useful healing tools for clients.

Care and feeding

Once your customer has chosen a deck, it's helpful to send them home with some "care and feeding" instructions. I advise folks to spend some time with their new deck by sorting through and handling each card. It's important to begin exchanging energy so the cards are enhanced with your frequency and better able to serve intuitively. Some of my tarot teachers recommend sleeping with the deck next to your pillow to allow energy flow during the dream state. To use the tarot as a tool for personal growth and understanding, explore the images of each card, meditate on them, noting your reaction to different images, and maybe start a tarot journal or book of shadows.

Just like cleansing crystals, customers should clear and bless their tarot deck. Smudging with sage and mugwort is a great combination. Mugwort is an herb that assists in opening the third eye, enhancing the dream state and psychic abilities. On days that tarot readers are on hand, we brew

a batch of mugwort tea to serve to clients. We also package loose mugwort and sell it by the ounce.

A tarot deck should be stored carefully and beautifully. The traditional storage technique is wrapping the deck in a silk scarf, so we keep a stack of vibrantly colored silks near the cards. Also displayed in our tarot section are velvet, satin, and silk bags, in a wide variety of sizes and designs, and wooden boxes. Offer bags and boxes with varying motifs and assist customers in coordinating deck themes. Llewellyn now distributes a series of velvet bags embossed with logos of their decks, which are a magical option.

Our tarot sales ebb and flow throughout the year without rhyme or reason. In an effort to spark sales, refresh your tarot displays often and disperse decks throughout the shop. Integrating tarot decks with related themes is a great way to promote sales and pique tarot interest. Place *The Herbal Tarot* (U.S. Games Systems, www.usgamesinc.com) by herbs and potions, *The Tarot of Gemstones and Crystals* (U.S. Games Systems, www.usgamesinc.com) with stones and crystals, and *Animal-Wise Tarot* (Dragonhawk Publishing, www.dragonhawkpublishing.com) with your smudging and shamanic tools. If you host tarot readers in your shop, highlight their preferred decks, as clients will feel an affinity towards them after an inspired reading.

Spread the word

There are so many ways we New Age retailers enrich our community. Offering a safe, positive environment for our customers to explore topics such as the widely misunderstood tarot is just one of the many ways we can raise consciousness and support open-mindedness about various spiritual paths.



Rhianna Mirabello is owner of the enchanted gift shop, The Dreaming Goddess, located in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and in business since 1995. Visit her at www.dreaminggoddess.com.

Do you have ideas or tips for selling giftware in New Age stores? Are there product categories you'd like to know more about? Email associate editor Amy Blackwood at amy@newageretailer.com with your suggestions.

Top Tarot at The Dreaming Goddess



The Rider-Waite Tarot Deck:
Pocket Edition
ISBN 0880793465
by Arthur Edward Waite
U.S. Games Systems
www.usgamesinc.com



The Gilded Tarot
ISBN 0738705209
by Ciro Marchetti
Llewellyn
www.llewellyn.com



Universal Waite Tarot Deck
ISBN 0880794968
by Stuart Kaplan
U.S. Games Systems
www.usgamesinc.com



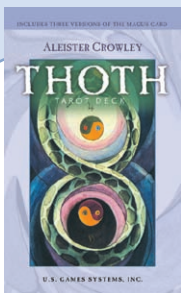
Golden Tarot of Klimt
ISBN 0738707902
by Lo Scarabeo
Llewellyn
www.llewellyn.com



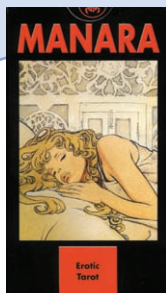
Radiant Rider-Waite Tarot Deck
ISBN 1572814136
U.S. Games Systems
www.usgamesinc.com



The Animal-Wise Tarot
ISBN 1888767359
by Ted Andrews
Dragonhawk Publishing
www.dragonhawkpublishing.com



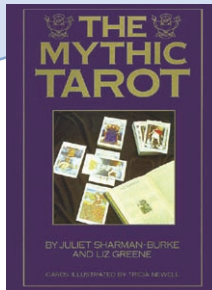
Aleister Crowley Thoth Tarot Deck
ISBN 0913866156
by Aleister Crowley
U.S. Games Systems
www.usgamesinc.com



Manara: The Erotic Tarot
ISBN 0738700223
by Lo Scarabeo
Llewellyn
www.llewellyn.com



Whimsical Tarot
ISBN 1572812532
by Dorothy Morrison
U.S. Games Systems
www.usgamesinc.com



The Mythic Tarot
ISBN 0743219198
by Juliet Sherman-Burke
and Liz Green Fireside
www.simonandschuster.com