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## Merchandise

### 501st Legion Merchandise Rules and Procedures

#### Charter Rules

Per Article VIII of the 501st Charter, the following rules apply to all 501st Legion merchandise (including Garrison, Squad, Outpost and Detachment material):

- 1 - Any items bearing the words "501st Legion", "Fighting 501st", "Vader's Fist" or the 501st Logo are considered representative of the 501st Legion club. Such proposed items are to be submitted to the Legion Commander and administrative staff before being produced. The Legion CO, Legion XO, and administrative staff have final word on approval. [Note: In practice, the Legion CO has granted approval powers to the Legion Merchandise Officer]
- 2 - 501st items must be free of vulgarity.
- 3 - 501st items must be as free of copyrighted material as possible.
- 4 - 501st items must be sold only to club members and at cost.
- 5 - 501st items must not be advertised openly on eBay or other forums to the general public.
- 6 - 501st items must not be tied to any outside commercial entity or venture.
- 7 - 501st items must not misrepresent or misidentify its user/wearer in any role other than as a member or supporter of the 501st Legion fan club. No shirt will bear the label 'Security' or 'Staff' unless created with the full permission of an event organizer and labeled specifically for that event only.
- 8 - 501st items specifying a sub-unit of the club are allowed and encouraged. Such examples would be items promoting 501st Garrisons, Squads, and Detachments. Out of the above eight rules, the one that deserves special note is #4. 501st material should never be sold to non-members of the 501st Legion. The exception to this rule is members of the Rebel Legion, whose status as sister club to the 501st permits sales to those members. The price on any and all merchandise should not exceed the cost of production, distribution, and any transaction fees incurred during the sale of merchandise.

#### Definition of Merchandise

501st merchandise is defined as any item bearing the name and/or logo of a 501st entity produced for consumption by the Legion membership in quantities of two or more. An individual producing their own

business cards, for example, would not be required to seek the approval of the Legion Merchandise Officer. However, if an individual was doing a run of business cards for members of their Garrison, approval should be sought.

### **Approval Procedures**

Before any merchandise is offered for sale or put into production, approval must first be obtained. This ensures that the charter rules are being followed as well as makes sure a merchandise project does not conflict with another project already under way.

All merchandise must be approved by the Legion Merchandise Officer. To obtain approval, simply email a description of the project, price, time table, and sample artwork. Also indicate if approval has been obtained by other necessary parties, if applicable. If merchandise is related to a Garrison, Squad, Outpost or Detachment, the leaders of the respective group also needs to approve the material. For Squad merchandise, approval should be made by both the Squad Leader and Garrison CO.

### **Sales**

Sales of 501st Legion merchandise should only take place in non-public forums and email lists operated by the Legion. Merchandise should not be sold via online public stores, such as Cafe Press, or in any area of a website accessible to the public.

### **Restrictions**

All members of the Legion in good standing are permitted to produce 501st Legion merchandise with the following exceptions:

- Members on disciplinary probation.
- Garrisons, Outposts, Squads and Detachments during their first six months of existence (including any probationary period).

501st Merchandise should not include:

- Copyrighted material that we are not authorized to use.
- References to alcohol or drugs.
- Obscene images or references.

### **Expectations and Responsibilities**

Certain expectations and responsibilities are required of any member producing 501st Legion merchandise. These are:

- Sell merchandise at your cost. Rounding up a little to ensure your expenses are covered is fine, but adding \$2 per piece for your time is not permitted. Time is donated when you choose to engage in a merchandise project.
- Don't spend the money before you pay for the merchandise. In the event that a project falls through, you should have the funds on hand to make immediate refunds.
- Communicate regularly with buyers on their order status.
- Deliver a product that is identical to what you offered the membership. If a change needs to be made, notify the members and allow for refunds if anyone does not agree.
- Keep good records of your orders so mistakes are not made. Always double check sizes and quantities before you place a final order.
- Submit a final photo of the product the 501st webmaster for inclusion in the Memorabilia Archive.

### **Merchandise for Fundraising**

The trend of using 501st merchandise to raise money for charity is becoming more and more common. While commendable, we need to remember that we have rules set forth by LFL about how much we can charge for items. The simple rule is that items need to be sold at cost. They didn't give us any exceptions for charity, so adding \$5 to the price of a patch isn't an option available to us, nor any other amount. There seems to be confusion over this, since I regularly get requests for merch approval with added charity money to the price. So I wanted to take this opportunity to remind all the Merch Officers.

Not only do we need to keep things at cost to comply with LFL rules, I personally believe we need to keep merchandise accessible to as many members as possible by keeping prices down, too. If we allowed price increases for charity, I could see the a large portion of merchandise being used as fundraisers of some kind. We're a group of enthusiastic fundraisers, for certain, but we need to remember that many people are on tight budgets, so we need to keep merchandise affordable to all for the sake of club enjoyment.

How we've been working charity sales for the Legion the past few years is by selling items at cost and then requesting an optional donation in any amount. If a person chooses to not make a donation, they can still purchase the item. We don't want to shame anyone for not contributing, as it's not our place to judge. I usually describe the donation aspect like, "Donation: XYZ Garrison is raising money to support ABC charity, so please consider adding an optional donation to your order to help with the cause. \$2, \$5, \$8...any amount will help!"

I think this method works pretty well, and there's no breaking the rules. I've heard from some sellers that they ended up raising more money than if they had just added \$2 to the price like they had planned, too.

## **How I Handle Merchandise**

The following is a great article by Scott Will - TK/TD/TS/TB/TI/TA/BH-408

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Over the years I've shipped thousands of t-shirts, patches, trading cards boxes and one or two action figures. In that time, only 2 or 3 shipments have gone missing. That's a pretty good average, I think. That's why I scratch my head when I read about other projects where large numbers of shipments go missing. So I thought about sharing exactly how I manage a merch project for those who were interested. There's no single "right" way to do it, of course. The right way is whatever works for you. This way works for me. My main concerns when handling a project are 1) accuracy and 2) speed. Accuracy comes first, of course, so my method must ensure that people get what they paid for first and foremost. After that, I want to do it as fast as possible, and as simply as possible. I have too much going on to be complicated. As a result, I can usually knock out a 100-200 t-shirt project in one evening, after work. Patches take maybe an hour while I'm watching TV. And everyone gets their stuff, which is always nice.

### **Order Tracking**

All the orders I get are through Paypal. To track the orders I use Paypal's "Download Report" feature. The emails that come from Paypal get deleted outright. I pay them no attention at all. The reports I download give me all the information I need.

During the ordering period, I download a new report each day, using the "download since last report" feature. I paste the report into a main Excel spreadsheet. The report will include the buyer's name and address (plus way more information than I'll need). I manually add a column for the order detail and entering that by hand. So in the end, I'll have a spreadsheet with one row per buyer that gives me everything I need to know.

### **Shipping Preparation**

Preparing the orders for shipping is the largest part of the job. First, I get the Excel spreadsheet ready. I usually sort the information into U.S. and international sections so I can keep them separate (they need different postage, and t-shirt packages will need custom forms). I then create mailing labels in Word by doing a mail merge with the Excel data.

Here's where the speed and simplicity come into play. Instead of having three different elements -- order summary paper, return address label, and buyer address label, I combine them all into a single 2" x 4" label. I have my return address small at the top. Below that, I have a separator line. Just below the line, in small print, I have the order summary. If it's patches, then simply just a number so I know how many to put in the envelope. If it's t-shirts, then a size, color and quantity. For example, if someone ordered one black XL t-shirt, it would have "XL BK". No number since I know this is just one shirt. If someone ordered one large navy blue shirt and two medium green shirts, it would have "L NB, M GR 2". And so on. Finally, below this in larger text, I have the buyer's mailing address.

Okay, so now I have sheets of mailing labels that not only have the buyer's address and my return address on them, but they tell me exactly what I need to put in the envelope. No paper reports to cross reference and potentially screw up. I don't put an order summary in the envelope as I see no need for adding the extra work. You know what you ordered, so you don't need that. And I don't need it, since the details are right on the label! So save a tree and your time while you're at it.

From here, I just slap the labels on envelopes before I ever pack them. For t-shirts, I use self-sealing polystyrene shipping envelopes, usually 12" x 15" in size. I buy them in bulk on ebay, around \$55 for 500 envelopes (11-cents each). These are great since they are water proof and the strong. I've jammed six t-shirts in on envelope and they hold tight. After I label them, I'll take the already segregated international orders and apply the custom forms. I figured out how to do a mail merge with the small forms so I don't have to hand fill these in. I only do that if there are a lot of them, though.

Once I have my stack of labeled envelopes ready, I start packing. Again, patches are simple. I can do those just sitting on my couch. Just look at the number on the envelope, count out the patches, stick them in and seal them up. Done. With t-shirts, I go into my living room where I have two couches. I lay stacks of shirts out according to size and color all over the couches. When I did the 10th Anniversary shirts, I had red shirts, white shirts, hoodies, babydolls, and children's shirts. These were all over the couches, the dining room table, and extra tables set up for the job. It was quite the project and thankfully I had help! But usually I just need the two couches to get the job done. I grab an envelope, look at the label for the size and color, grab the shirt, do a quick fold and pack it. If I have multiple shirts, I'll grab the first, lay it on the second and grab that, then fold them together. I always double check the tags to make sure I'm getting the right size. Sometimes I can go into a "shirt trance" and not pay close enough attention, so looking at the tag ensures I'm hitting the right stack.

That's pretty much the "hardest" part of the job. So I try to streamline it and finish it in as few steps as possible.

### **Shipping**

With patches, I count up how many of each "quantity" envelope I have. Those with 1 patch, those with 2 patches, and so on. Then I take them to the post office and figure out how many stamps each need. Instead of having each envelope weighed, I just have one per "quantity type" weighed so I know how many stamps they take, then buy enough stamps. I apply the stamps off to the side and hand them over the counter when I'm done. Pretty fast process.

With t-shirts, I may be a bit lucky here. I have one post office that lets me drop off my boxes full of packages with my credit card and leave. I come back the next day to get my card and the receipt. No hanging around while they get individually stamped. Not every office will let you do this, so you may want to check around. If I didn't have this luxury, I'll probably come up with an system of weighing them and stamping them at home.

That's the basics. Again, I can stuff 200 shirts in about 2-3 hours this way, while the TV is on. And in all this time, only a few packages have gone missing. If I can help with any advice, just ask!

Scott TK/TD/TS/TB/TI/TA/BH-408

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## **10 Easy Steps to Setting Up Your Own Merchandise Run**

The following is from Joel Webne IC-9616

So you want to start a merchandise run for Garrison/Outpost or Legion items?but you start to tell yourself, ?What am I doin, I have never done this before?what kind of Bantha Poodoo am I fixing to get myself into?aren?t there a million things that need to happen for me to do this??? Never fear? Here are 10 easy steps to get yourself going from Interest to Completed Sale:

1. Decide on your logo and/or art that you are going to use on a particular item, and make sure that the art is approved by the Merchandising Officer. If it is something for a major convention or joint operation, the [Legion Command](#).

If it is PR merchandise, then it needs to go to your local CO and PR officer and the 501st. Legion [Public Relations Officer](#) and charity related items need to go through the [Charity Liaison](#).

There is so much out there that can be put on a particular item, and it is great when Garrisons/outposts want to run their own sales for merchandise.

2. Research ? find out as much as you can about the product, whether it be a coin, patch, hat, shirt, pen, button, sticker, etc. The Interest Threads and Current Items Threads are great places to start. See what others have done with their items. These areas are perfect for finding out the companies they have used, as well as the general interest for a particular item. Some things take time and may have dropped off after a while?maybe it is time to resurrect that item, start on a brand new one or do a rerun of an item that has already come and gone.

3. Get pricing Quotes ? Contact the manufacturer that we have used or if you know of a local company that you would like to try and give the business to, by all means, get competitive quotes as well as either hard copy proofs or as some of the major companies do, digital proofs, showing colors, threads, and pricing including and fees for shipping, setup and extra colors. Also make sure that you get information about quantity discounts and what the minimums are. Most places will have a minimum of 100 pieces for clothing, patches and coins, whereas items like pens, stickers, tattoos, etc. will be better off with 1000-10000.

4. Compilation of information ? This is very important?.please make sure that you have all your information together and approved. Double and triple check it. This includes all your costs, PAYPAL info, mailing info for persons not using PAYPAL. All costs MUST BE on a 1:1 ratio, meaning no profit AT ALL can be made from the items. The only allowance that we give is if you need to purchase mailing products for shipping, ie. envelopes, boxes, etc. This cost should be added in to the final cost before mailing and then divided out into the total number of items.

These days, the USPS will provide you with mailing boxes for FREE, which you can order off of their website, [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) or by going into a local branch. For International locations, your local mailing office should have boxes, but if not use this simple formula: Cost of items + any fees(mailing, setup, etc.) + cost of purchased items(envelopes, boxes, etc.) divided by the total number of items being looked at; if it is 100 in the run then divide by 100, if 200, divide by 200, etc.

5. Interest Thread setup ? Once you have all the information under your belt and you have reviewed it against all your options, it is now time to set up the Interest thread in order to find out how many you are going to do the run for. As mentioned in step 3, you will need to get all the pricing for the items, with all the quantity discounts listed.

For example: you are doing patches and 100 ? 200 is \$2.10 per patch, 201-300 is \$1.50 per patch. At this time you should post in the Interest Thread area all the information you have gathered in an easy to read format. There are plenty of threads to model yours after, so don?t worry about having to do one from scratch. Make sure you have all the International mailing costs as well as US mailing, and whether you are using Flat Rate mailing or 1st Class along with insurance or delivery confirmation. Specifics are a key to making sure you get the numbers for the sale to run. Also get your paypal fees in order. The take 3% +.30 out of US sales and 4% +.30 for International.

6. Timing - Make sure that you give yourself plenty of time to get the numbers needed to get the price point that you have specified, and don?t feel like you have to limit it to the 501st. Legion. If you find that you need 50 or so to get to the lower price point, contact the [Merchandise officer](#) on the 501st boards and once the sale starts you can post it over there?we all know that the 501st is a bunch of merchandise hounds, so you will easily be able to get the numbers you need.

**BE FIRM ON YOUR TIMEFRAME!** ? This is very important. You need to set guidelines for your interest thread. If you need to have the sale started by a certain time in order to have the merchandise produced by a certain time, then make that known. If you aren?t in as much of a hurry?don?t be afraid to still set deadlines, or you never know how long the Interest Thread will drag out. Some items it will be difficult to set times on, like shirts, pens, stickers, tattoos and such. But you can still be firm that you would like to get the numbers to

a certain point by X date.

7. The Sale Thread ? Well you have gotten your interest up to where you want it and in the timeframe that you specified?time to turn that thread into a full fledged sale! The easiest thing here is to copy the main information from the Interest Thread over to a new thread in the Merchandise Currently Available area along with all the names compiled with the quantities of the items as well as the sizes and colors if they are shirts or hats or other wearable merchandise. Make sure you include all of your pertinent information if someone needs to mail you their payment and any other information you feel it is necessary to include to make the sale run as smoothly as possible.

**BE FIRM ON YOUR TIMEFRAME! END IT WHEN YOU NEED TO END IT!** This is incredibly important if you are trying to make deadlines for conventions, or if someone perhaps from out of the country will be in the US to pick them up. This part can be a real hassle sometimes and you need to have the patience of a Jedi Master.

While the sale is going on, a major thing you can do it **UPDATE, UPDATE, UPDATE.** The more information you can give, the less questions you will get. If you had planned on opening it up on the 501st boards please make sure that you update there as well.

Also make sure you check your **PAYPAL** constantly. Sometime people say they have paid, but you haven?t gotten a notice. Have them send you the transaction number and such. Emails tend to get mixed up and they might have to resend it. Also if you have been specific, and by this point I know you have, you will have been contacting persons who don?t follow those instructions about mailing addresses and correct amounts.

8. Ordering the Merchandise ? You have made it this far?you can?t turn back. You have taken the funds, closed the sale on the deadline, and now it is time to get all that info and money over to the production company. I cannot be any more clear when I say this?**BE THOROUGH IN YOUR COMMUNICATION TO THE VENDOR!** Production can usually take 10 days to 2 weeks with a week for mailing. Microsoft Excel can be your best friend in this part of the endeavor. Use Paypal to send yourself a CSV file with all the names, addresses, and information regarding the sale so that you can get your quantities correct. There will always be a little margin for error, trust me, I have been there, but as long as you send the company a list for the product with all the specifics you should end up alright. That Excel file will also double as your file for your mailing labels for shipping by using **WORD** to generate the labels. The vendor will usually send you notices about shipping if they use **FEDEX** or **UPS**. Once you get the item in hand **CELEBRATE AND POST!** Take pictures of the stuff?everyone will be happy to see what they are getting.

9. Shipping them out ? As I mentioned, Excel can be your best friend in setting up the mailing labels and tracking what you have sent out. Be timely in sending them out and make sure that you have all the correct addresses from the Paypal payments or if someone has sent a PM or email requesting a different send address. There is nothing worse than taking all that time to mail them out and then getting back one that you spent \$9.00 to mail that you have to send out again. When packaging them up, be considerate of how you mail them?you wouldn?t just throw a challenge coin into a regular envelope and send it off. Wrap it in paper, tape it to the inside of the envelope or such, and make sure that you are using the proper size envelopes for the product being mailed out. As most people have seen, when I sent out the Heroes shirts, they were in a plastic bag inside the boxes with instructions for the care of the shirt. This was to make sure that any damage in transit wouldn?t damage the product.

Once people start getting them, they will respond on the thread. If there are any extras, wait until you are pretty sure that everyone has received them before offering them up for sale.

**10. CELEBRATE!!!!!! CONGRATULATIONS!!! YOU HAVE JUST COMPLETED YOUR FIRST MERCHANDISE SALE!!!** You can have the Merchandising Officer move the sale over to the completed items threads and then you can start all over again with step 1. Wasn?t that fun.

Joel Webne Rebel Legion Merchandising Officer Freedom Base Executive Officer Patriot Command Post Detachment CO IC-9616 Garrison Tyranus

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## Foot Notes

Additions and corrections may be submitted to [feedback@501st.com](mailto:feedback@501st.com)

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