

Salon Leader Version: Discussion questions in dark blue. My comments to you, the leader, are in *[italics]*.

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The Artist's Marketing Plan

3: DEFINE YOUR ART

[To prepare for this meeting, remind everyone to come with their 10-second introduction and description of their art (as outlined in the materials).]

WELCOME!

I will remind everyone of our focus and then we'll go over the agenda for the day. Please help me keep us on schedule and adjourn by the time we agreed upon.

The tenets that will guide our discussions are that we should:

- Be serious about marketing our art. Everyone should come prepared to discuss the subject at hand, bring the materials requested, and share thoughts and ideas.
- Attend all nine sessions (three months of bi-weekly meetings, plus a follow-up meeting one month later). Irregularities in participation will create disharmony and some frustration from other members.
- Participate with positive feedback and support other group members in their endeavors.
- Commit to complete confidentiality when requested. The group must be a safe place for members to feel they can be open, honest, and trusting.

It is very important we continue to remind ourselves of this.

As the salon leader, it is my job to lead and facilitate discussion in a democratic fashion, keeping the needs of every member in mind. That means I will try to keep us on task. If we have time, we can tackle other issues, but we must take care of business first and respect one another's schedules.

Today's agenda is this: *[Insert agenda here.]*

Then, at the end of the meeting, I'll have us go around and say one thing we'd like to accomplish before our next meeting. We do this to make a promise to ourselves and to have the support of the group.

Good marketing calls for performing a lot of small tasks thoroughly and intelligently. Great marketing requires that the tasks be done well, that you have good products and services, and know your customers and prospects better than your competitors do.—
David H. Bangs, Jr., *The Market Planning Guide*, page v.

There is no sense having a marketing plan if you don't have artwork to market. Concentrate on production until you have a body of work that is of high quality and is consistent in style. You have to be proud of it and believe in it! A friend of mine who moved to New York spent at least three years producing new work before he felt he was ready to start approaching galleries. While you are preparing a body of work, however, you should be thinking about what you will do with it and forming your plan along the way. You should be doing things such as building your mailing list, researching venues, and meeting the people you need to know.

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Several frustrated clients have approached me with comments like this: "I do so many different things. It's hard for me to describe my art." My response? **Pick one and get on with it!** You have to do what you are compelled to do, but know that if you choose to market, for example, realistic Western landscapes, colorful abstractions, *and* figurative bronzes, you will have to do three times the work because you will necessarily need to target three different audiences. And you must be able to articulate your goals for all three.

Conveying a clear, consistent message makes your marketing efforts so much easier.

Does everyone think they're okay on this? Or are there group members who are struggling with finding their artistic style? What can we do to help those who are struggling?

When you want to sell your work, you can rarely get by with "I make art." Your words have to be much more descriptive and "user-friendly." **You only get one chance to make a first impression!** If you fumble, it will be hard to correct your mistakes. If you haven't done so already, consider the journaling process available to you in *The Relatively Pain-Free Artist Statement*. You can download the e-book and start immediately by going here:

<http://www.artbizcoach.com/resources/statement.html>



Once you make a deliberate effort to do this, you will be able to use good language on press releases, grant applications, and in interviews and public talks. If you do nothing else, at least begin recording your thoughts in a journal.

Alyson says there are at least three reasons why you should practice what you say about your art:

- **Words stand in for your artwork** when it isn't readily available.
- **Words can reach people** who don't make the initial visual connection to your work.
- **Words help you define yourself** before someone else does it for you. In other words, you guide people to look at your art before they look at it in a way that doesn't make you happy.

If you want to get better, she suggests any and all of the following:

1) **Join Toastmasters.** It's an invaluable tool for helping to organize your thoughts and speak about them in a public forum.

<http://www.toastmasters.org>

2) **Read for information.** Read to discover new language. How are others (historians, critics, writers) writing about art? What words stand out? What words strike a chord with you?

3) **Use writing prompts.** Take a look at the fabulous writing tips and prompts on subscriber Carol Newman's site, *There's an Angel in Your Inkwell®* (She's a subscriber to the ArtBizCoach.com *Do This!* newsletter!):

<http://www.angelinyourinkwell.com>

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pricing your artwork

Obviously, you would like to sell everything you create, right? That's a great goal to have and not one that is unrealistic. But you know that you have to be a businessperson as well as an artist in order to achieve that. In fact, I would go so far as to say that you are presumptuous if you assume the title of "artist" without maintaining good business practices.

How do you establish your prices?

Are they consistent?

Are you covering all (all!) of your costs in addition to paying yourself a wage?

The information on pricing will guide you in determining your prices. It is kind of a pain to keep track of minutia like that on the first page (actual cost pricing), but I think it's important to do it for at least as long as it takes to get a good average. Most people cannot comprehend all of the costs that go into making artwork, which you should be able to articulate to your customers and collectors. You don't want to give them the sense that you are pricing your work without any thought to what it actually cost to make it. I recommend market pricing (page two) while you are gathering the data for actual cost pricing or after you have completed actual cost pricing and you have some sense of what your costs are.

Keep track of your costs and know where the money goes.

two pricing methods

1. ACTUAL COSTS PRICING¹

Step 1: Keep track of overhead costs.

- rent
- rental insurance
- advertising
- utilities
- professional fees
- transportation
- dues & publications
- postage
- documentation (slides, photos)
- materials
- education

Step 2: Figure out overhead costs per each work.

To be calculated on an annual basis:

Overhead Costs ÷ Number of Works = Cost of Overhead per Work

¹ This is a conflation of pricing guides by Caroll Michels and Constance Smith. I think it's useful to go through the exercise, but don't let it drive you batty. Market value pricing is a much saner way of pricing your work. Michels leaves out the 10% profit margin and framing costs in her formula, but suggests you price work at a few hundred dollars over what you actually want for it. Smith suggests you price at least one work, perhaps one you feel most strongly about) well above the others. See Caroll Michels, *How to Survive and Prosper as an Artist* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2001) and Constance Smith, *Art Marketing 101: A Handbook for the Fine Artist* (Nevada City, CA: ArtNetwork, 1997, updated 2001).

Step 3: Calculate cost of individual piece.

Cost of Overhead per Work
+ Labor ²
+ 10% profit margin
+ Commission ³
+ Framing
<hr/>
Sales Price

Has anyone ever tried to keep track of these costs for a month or two? What did you find out? If not, would you all be willing to do so as a group? Maybe we could learn something together from our experiment.

2. MARKET VALUE PRICING

Market value pricing is probably the easiest and most common way to price your work.

Simply research art sales (not just prices, but actual sales) in your area. Look for work similar in size, medium and subject and by artists at a comparable point in their careers. If you are just starting out, you don't want to compare your work to that in high-end galleries. Check out juried exhibits, outdoor art festivals, open studios, and non-profit artist spaces and co-ops.

Just make sure you are actually *making* money. And follow the general guidelines on the next page.

This is why it's so important to get out there and look at art! We have to know what other artists are doing.

Has anyone tried to price your work deliberately below that of your competition? Did it work? I ask because it isn't always best to be the least expensive. What do you think about this?

In General

- **Original** paintings on canvas and sculpture sell for more than works on paper or multiples (prints, photographs, editioned sculpture).
- **Bigger** works command higher prices.
- Works with **more expensive materials** command higher prices.
- **An artist that produces 300 paintings a year** will ask for less per painting than an artist who only produces 10 in a year.
- **You have one price, the retail price, for your work.** You should sell at this price from your studio and have it written in your contract with anyone else who sells your work. Keep a price list on hand at all time so that you don't offer work to someone at one price, then someone else at another price. Yes, this means that you will be getting less if you sell your work through a gallery. You want to ensure that the gallery is also selling at your retail price (thus making sure it is part of your contract with them). If they buy a work at \$500 (your asking price), but can sell it for \$3,000, you still only make \$500! **This is where a lot of artists get into trouble. They sell their work for one price out of the studio,**

² Don't forget to pay yourself! Your hourly wage is something you have to assign yourself based on what you would like to be paid for your work. Multiply it by the number of hours it took to complete the work.

³ Anticipating sales from a gallery, consultant, or other possible source, you should add in the full amount of what a commission would take from a sale, usually 50%. This should never be subtracted—even in sales from your studio. Otherwise you wind up with inconsistent pricing and underselling your dealers.

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and another in a gallery. Any gallery will drop you like a hot potato if you do this! Also, it needlessly ticks off your buyers. Imagine paying good money for a work at a gallery and finding out you sold a similar piece to someone else for 40% less. Not a good way to do business!

- **You are free to offer discounts** for cash payments versus credit cards or monthly installments.
- **Ask for payment for drawing up plans or creating models** for commissioned artwork, even if it is a modest fee. Always have a written contract for your commissions and ask for 50% down and 50% upon delivery.

Does anyone have any other issues pertaining to pricing?
Any other experiences you want to share?

Briefly describe the physical aspects of your art (size, subject, color, medium, etc.):

What is the price range of your art?

Using your answers to the previous two questions, complete this sentence:

I create _____ that sell for \$_____ to \$_____.

This description should be from a business standpoint, not art historical and not philosophical. Be very specific about those things that are relevant: size, color, material, technique, subject matter, and whatever else might differentiate your work. Or you can think of it another way. You can take your description from your 10-second commercial, like this one I developed from the 10-second commercial of my fictional painter, Arthur Jackson:

I create large-scale, colorful, abstract paintings with collage elements that sell for \$3,500 to \$7,000.

Now we'll go around and have everyone give his or her one-sentence fill-in-the-blank answers to this.

How has your work changed recently?

List any new bodies of work, products, or services:

What sells the best and why?

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If you have two or more bodies of work that are significantly different from one another, I suggest you have a separate marketing plan for each one. Why? Because you have a different market for each body of work! For your first plan, just select one body of work. The second plan will be much easier as many of the answers will be similar.

What one thing do you want to accomplish before the next meeting?

BEFORE WE GO

I'd like to take the last 10 minutes and have each of us go around the room. What one marketing project do you want to accomplish before we see each other again?

Remember, it can be anything related to your marketing: spend 30 minutes each day reading about art; spend 30 minutes each day journaling about art; meet five new people.

What's it going to be?

next session: differentiate yourself from your competition

We alluded to it today when we talked about pricing.
Be sure to download this section and go over it before our next meeting.
I'd like for everyone to come prepared to discuss his or her competition.