

The Artist's Marketing Plan

5: DESCRIBE YOUR COLLECTORS

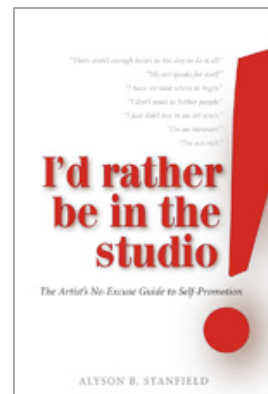
current buyers and collectors

Most marketing plans will have you describe your customers, but I would like for you to begin thinking of them as collectors. It is a more professional term and we hope that they keep buying from you, in which case they truly would be collecting! Here I use both terms interchangeably, because while collectors denotes a certain artworld connection, customers implies that you have to provide a certain level of service and I think it is important to remember that.

Who are your collectors? Are you keeping good records of who buys your art, from which source (where), and for how much? If not, add this as a field to your computer database right now.

Describe your best customers in terms of the following, when appropriate: age, sex, income level, occupation, geography, and education. Add anything else that comes to mind.

See pages 185-212 in *I'd Rather Be in the Studio!* for ideas on building your mailing list and expanding your community influence.



Why do customers buy from you? Is it for personal or sentimental reasons? Are they supportive of artists in general? Are you filling a blank spot over the sofa, a work in just the right colors, or a functional object such as a bowl or plate? What other artists do they collect?

How often do your best customers buy from you? Have you heard of the 80/20 rule? The theory is that 80% of your business will come from 20% of your customers. Wow! That's pretty powerful when you think about it and it means if you're not keeping in touch with your current customers, you are losing out on an opportunity for them to become collectors—big time!

Are your customers asking for any services or products that you haven't, in the past, been able to provide?

Keep updated records on your collectors. Ask them about their backgrounds and interests. Don't act nosy; be sincerely interested. Make sure you mail to them at least three times a year and provide them with excellent service.

Keep better records with customer-manager software. You can look at how some software combines this with databases for your art in the [ArtBizCoach.com Resources](http://ArtBizCoach.com).

niche markets

A **niche market** is one that is specialized. An artist who has a niche market will have an easier time finding an audience because, basically, it is built in. An artist with a niche market *knows* who to target with his or her message.

You probably have a niche market if you are a portrait painter or create garden sculpture or interior corporate installations. You also have a niche if you do golfing or fishing scenes because you can easily appeal to enthusiasts of those activities. You can advertise in their publications and attend their trade shows—an entirely different route than the traditional art gallery.

If you don't think you have a niche market, are you sure? Do you think you could create for a niche market? If so, what might it be? Perhaps not all of your work would fit into a niche market, but there could be a certain aspect of it that might.

If you are interested in serious sales of your work, targeting your audience is the best way to do it. It helps you make a name for yourself while you're getting more for your marketing dollars.

Who is buying your art right now?

What are their demographics? (sex, age, income & education levels, occupation)

Where do they live?

How do they pay for it? (credit card, check, installments)

Why are they buying from you and not from someone else?

Is anyone not currently buying your art that you think might be a good target market for you? If you envision moving into a new market of collectors, describe them here. Why?

If you have a niche market, one that is specialized and can target a very narrow audience, describe it here:

Have you effectively tapped into all of the avenues that could reach your niche market? What are some other opportunities you might be neglecting? (trade shows, publications, direct mail, etc.)

If you don't have a niche market, do you think you might be able to create one for your work? Targeting your message is the most effective way to market. Consider the possibilities of a new niche market and describe it here:

next session: assess and improves exhibition and sales opportunities

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