

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

The Artist's Marketing Plan

5: DESCRIBE YOUR COLLECTORS

[To prepare for this meeting, remind everyone to come with their 10-second introduction and description of their buyers and collectors.]

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 be on the same page!

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.

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.

Maybe we should talk about keeping track of our mailing lists. How is everyone doing it? On the ArtBizCoach.com site, Alyson provides a lot of different software choices for artists, but she says

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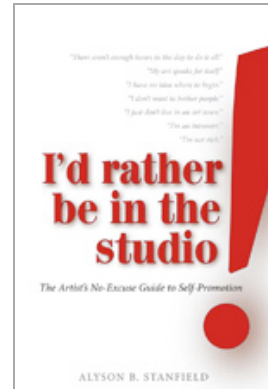
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that she can't tell if one is preferred over the others. In other words, it's pretty evenly divided right now.

According to Alyson, our number one asset is our mailing list and so few artists make good use of theirs. People are much more apt to buy from us if they know us and if we keep reminding them we're here! We should all really focus on this.

How many people are on your mailing list right now?

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



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.

Why do customers buy from you? Is it for personal or sentimental reasons? Are they supportive of artists in general? Are you filling 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? Things like delivering and helping them hang the art? These are excellent ways to provide service that goes above and beyond and distinguishes you from your competition.

Or maybe someone wants you to do a mural. You should only provide the products if they feel 100% right to you. In other words, if you've been asked to do a mural and the thought of starting makes you break out in hives, you don't want to get into that!

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://www.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.

I thought we'd talk about local artists that we think have a niche market and how and what they're doing with it. In other words: How do they take advantage of their niche market. What could or should they be doing differently?

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.

[Probably the best way to talk about this is to go around the room and have everyone give a 5-10 minute (depending on the number of people in your salon) outline of what they've come up with.]

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.)

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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:

Maybe we could spend some time brainstorming about possible niche markets for everyone.

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: learning your new software program, adding 50 names to your mailing list, following up with some buyers you have neglected.

What's it going to be?

next session: assess and improves exhibition and sales opportunities

Be sure to download this section and go over it before our next meeting. Everyone should come prepared to talk about where you're showing your art, where you never want to show your work again, and the dreams you have for exhibitions and sales.