



“A Dreamer’s Guide To Making It In The Arts”

By Adam Ghahramani

Opening Credits

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A large portion of all proceeds from Artpreneurship is donated to Arthritis.org. If you find the contents of this book valuable, please consider donating extra to the charity—consider the donation a “tip” for good service.

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Cast Of Characters:

Adam: It takes a certain type of person so vain as to feature himself as one of the “fictional” characters in his own book. Adam is such a person and plays the artpreneurship “guru.”

Jade: Jade is Adam’s top student, a calm and collected woman who has mastered the delicate link between business and art.

Katie: Katie always means well, but her over-eager nature and relative youth leads to problem after problem. Katie hopes one day to become like Jade, though she’ll face many growing pains to get there.

Boris: Boris is an insatiably curious and detail-oriented individual. He never takes anything at face value and picks every statement apart, looking for an underlying question.

Dr. Spider: Dr. Spider is a former history professor. He pops in on occasion to provide outside context.

PROLOGUE: MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

Opening Letter

Dear Artist (or interested non-artist):

The art world is a dark one where commercial success has little relationship to artistic talent or hard work. As a non-artist looking in, I was horrified to see so many brilliant individuals wandering around in this world without even a flashlight to guide them.



The book you are about to read is entitled “Artpreneurship,” because I think that every artist must be part entrepreneur to survive.

Many artists are socialized to believe that studying business principles is the equivalent of studying satanic literature. This is a dangerous belief. Like your paintbrush, business savvy is a tool that can be applied to a wide range of pursuits; it has no intrinsic moral leaning.

I did my best to make this book fun, accessible, and foundational. They say that if a book inspires one or two ideas, it’s paid for itself. My goal was to inspire dozens of ideas.

One of the first things you should convey in your initial interactions with clients is your credibility. Since I’m a non-artist, you might be wondering what my qualifications are to write a book on artpreneurship. While you shouldn’t view me as a “know it all” guru, I do have a lot to say. I’ve studied business academically, worked at a high profile start-up, worked at a large corporation, published a well-selling art book, founded a mega-popular art website, and generally spent a lot of time thinking about how to apply traditional business practices toward the art realm.

I hope that’s enough to get you to read the first few pages. As I mention throughout the book though, please don’t take everything I say as fact. Criticize constantly and if you really like something I wrote, feel free to innovate on top of it.

There are three parts to this book:

- **Core Principles:** This is a rapid-fire and fun series of business principles tailored to the artist. Because artists typically seek to “integrate” their professional and personal lives, I’ve also included some sections on general self-improvement.

- **Interviews:** This section features four interviews with commercially successful artists. While I stand behind all the principles in the first part of this book, I wanted to give you the benefit of other perspectives.
- **Coaching Session:** I held a coaching session with a young, up-and-coming artist. This section has a transcript of that session, so you can see how to practically apply the principles of this book to a real-life situation.

I'm honored that you're giving me your time and I know that you won't regret it. If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback, please drop me an email. I didn't write this book with profit motives in mind, so hearing from readers is one of the only rewards I expect. My address is: Adam@Velegant.com.

Take care of yourself—

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Ghahramani". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a horizontal line.

Adam Ghahramani

PS: If you ever write a letter to a client, consider including a PS to re-iterate your main point. It adds an element of personality to the correspondence and studies have shown that it's actually the first thing most people read. Not recommended for corporate clients.

PPS: Onward!

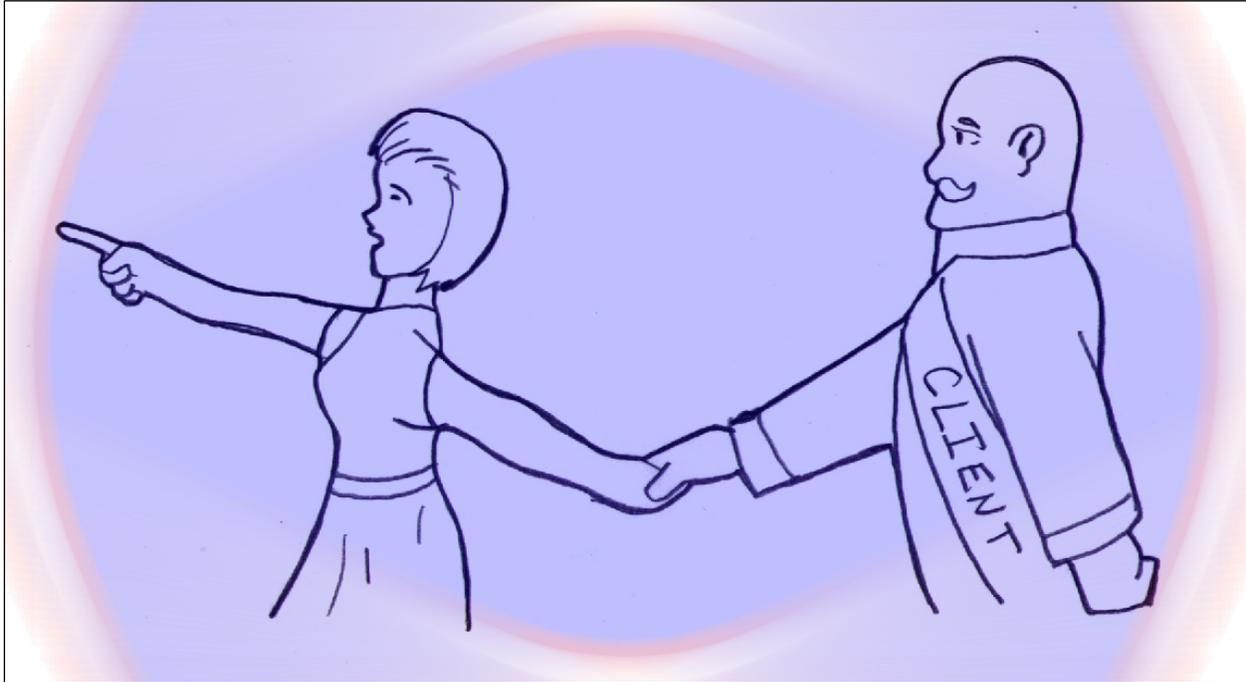
PART ONE: CORE CONCEPTS

Table Of Contents (Core Concepts)

Lead Them By The Hand	9
“You’re A Sell Out!”	12
Make A Bundle	14
Stay On Target	16
Hold Your Position.....	18
Segmenting Your Audience	21
Know <i>Thou</i> Self	22
Family First.....	24
Stay Away From The Cookie Jar	26
It’s About You, Not Your Art.....	28
Focus, Focus, Focus - The Menu Problem	29
A Recipe For Art	31
The Point Of No Return.....	33
Once Upon A Time	35
Don’t Be A Commodity	36
On Advertising	39
How To Build An Audience	42
What Are You Fighting For?	44
One Foot In Front Of The Other.....	46
Fire In Your Belly	48
Anchor Ahoy.....	49
Your Environment Matters	51
Success Loves Company	53
Intelligent Collaboration	54
How to Properly Negotiate	55
Measure Everything	58
Don’t Put Them To Sleep	60
Lunch Is The Most Important Meal Of The Day	62
Play The Expert.....	63
The Synergizer Bunny.....	64
Finance 101: Introduction	65
Finance 101: Money Ages	66
Finance 101: One Egg Per Basket Is Difficult To Carry	68
Finance 101: Risk-Return Opportunities	69
Finance 101: Bottom-Up Versus Top-Down Planning	70
Shine Unique	71
Death By A Thousand Paper Cuts	73
Evolve Yourself	75
A Positive Science	77
The Pareto Principle	79
Stop Waiting For Permission.....	80
Can Artpreneurship Be Taught?	81
Never Give Up (But Morph Your Losses Wisely).....	82

Sell To Groups	84
Good Artists Copy, Great Artists Steal	85
Competition 101	87
Quality Not Quantity	89
Brainstorming	91
Artpreneurship Skill #1: Seeking	93
Artpreneurship Skill #2: Opportunity Focus	95
The Busier The Better	96
Without Exception	97
Love To Say No.....	99
On Excuses	100
Escape Your Comfort Zone.....	102
So-And-So Told Me You Were Awesome	103
Don't Permit Extremists To Dictate Your Actions.....	104
I Highly Recommend	105
I Bet That Testimonial Is Fake	107
Power Naming.....	109
Creating Your Own Solutions	111
How Much Am I Really Spending?	112
Just In Time! The Inventory Problem	114
How Much Do I Charge?.....	116
Where Does The Time Go?	120
"I Didn't Come Here To Read!"	121
Upgrading Yourself	123

Lead Them By The Hand



Over-explain both your artistic and business processes to clients. A percentage of people will always err on the side of caution and if you leave anything vague for them, they'd rather flee than summon the courage to request clarification. Don't assume that your clients will understand your offerings intuitively and don't assume that they'll "just ask" if they have any questions.

One way to anticipate sources of ambiguity in your offerings is to put yourself in your client's mindset and then assume a posture of cluelessness. Walk yourself through the client's perspective, role-playing and asking every possible question, no matter how silly. If you have trouble with this exercise, grab a trusted friend to role-play for you—just make sure it's a friend who's not afraid to give you blunt feedback.

As an artpreneur, feedback is crucial to understanding your market and refining how you present your work to that market, so it's your job to create an environment where all feedback, even the negative or inconsequential, is valued. Have you ever presented an idea only to have it shot down? If so, odds are you didn't say a word after that. People are at their most vulnerable when they offer you their ideas or suggestions, so tread softly in how you respond.

Everyone has questions. Your goal isn't to anticipate every possible question, but instead to anticipate the most common questions and then ensure that they're answered immediately without your client even having to ask them.

Jade And Katie At A Convention:

At fandom conventions, I love walking around the “artist’s alley,” a nook occupied by artists who sell their prints to the convention-going public. These artists pay to reserve a spot in the alley and can invest up to three days setting up and manning their table. Given this fact, it’s remarkable how hard some of these artists work to scare people away!

Most spend their time drawing, eyes downward. They’ll have a pile of prints on their table with nebulous, hand-written pricing guidelines on strewn-about note cards. Here’s an anecdote from one of these artists:

“Hi...uh...Katie, is it? Do you do commissioned work?” I ask carefully.

The artist looks up and nods: “Sometimes” and then turns away

“Uh...how much does it cost?”

The artist ignores me for a few seconds, sighs, and hands me a sheet of paper from under the table with commission pricing details.

At this point, still filled with questions but too annoyed to ask them, I put the paper back on the table and leave.

Ugh. Now here’s what would happen if Jade, my top student, was (wo)manning the table. It starts with an introduction...

“Hi! I’m Jade, what’s your name?”

“Adam”

“Nice to meet you, Adam. Here’s a quick tour: The binders on the left feature the works that I have for sale, \$5 each. The binders on the right have some personal artwork that’s not for sale, but if you enjoy my style you can feel free to browse. And if you’re interested in hiring me for a commission, I’m doing quick sketches here for only \$10!

Let me know if you have ANY questions.”

At this point, Jade starts to lightly doodle, giving me time to browse and make a decision.

In addition to the superior customer service, note how well the artist guides the potential client and keeps things simple. There’s no ambiguity about the table, where everything sits, or what the artist is offering.

If a customer had any questions for Jade, he or she would be much more eager to ask and she’d be even more eager to answer. This is because answering questions is an opportunity for her to show off what’s special or unique about her artistic process. For example, if I asked: “I love the coloring, how do you pull it off?” She could respond: “That’s actually one of my specialties. First, I start with the absolute best markers...”

Boris Is Lost:

You're walking along the sidewalk of a busy street. A befuddled tourist, Boris, stops and asks you for directions to his hotel. He offers you a \$1,000 reward if your directions are perfect.

In this circumstance, would you wave north and say "I think it's that way, you'll figure it out" or, incentivized with the \$1,000, would you draw a map so detailed as to make a cartographer spin his globe in envy?

Treat your clients the same way!

Boris' Q&A:

Q: After you've anticipated some of your client's questions, can you give a specific example of how to answer those questions before they're asked?

A: You can borrow one example from the web world. Most websites have a "frequently asked questions" (FAQ) page, which lists visitors' most common questions and then posts answers to each one. Why not print out a personal "FAQ and give it to your clients on their first encounter? I'm a big fan of welcome packets.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates..."
- William A. Ward

“You’re A Sell Out!”

Why is it “selling out” to receive compensation to pursue your passion? Or to work a corporate job during the day, but spend your nights creating art? I find it amusing that the artists who make the “sell out” claim are either from wealthy families or work menial jobs, paychecks handed to them by corporations anyway (if they’re lucky!).

Why is it more glamorous to be a waitress during the day (earning \$10/hour) and an artist at night instead of being an accountant during the day (earning \$50/hour) and an artist at night? The accountant will be more relaxed (waitressing is stressful!) when she gets home and might even create more interesting art because of her unique perspective.

I’ve only included this concept because a lot of your peers will inevitably call you a “sell out” once you start succeeding with your artwork. Don’t let them dissuade you—their feelings most likely stem from personal insecurities. If your dream is to make a living from your artwork, you must be business-savvy, and that’s not being a sell out, it’s thinking realistically.

Some of the most cut-throat and ruthless people I’ve met haven’t ever set foot inside corporate walls. I used to spend a lot of time with hardcore literary types—talk about competitive! If one of them was published, the rest would swoop in like vultures, trying to find out how and why that person got published. Then they’d speak badly about the person behind his or her back, making up excuses for their success. It was disgusting, especially from a group that espoused the doctrine of art for art’s sake.

The tougher the field, the tougher the competition. Art is an area where only the strong survive, so you’re guaranteed to face criticism from the weak. My advice is to stay self-focused, surround yourself with positive people, and don’t let the claims of “sell out” bother you.

Katie In The Film Industry:

Before turning to an art career, Katie had tried to break into the film industry. Her films were quite eccentric and she made no effort to learn the ins and outs of the movie business. Needless to say, she couldn’t find a single distributor for even her best work.

Eventually, with bills piling high into the sky, Katie was forced to turn her artistic eye toward directing TV commercials. This made her miserable; she’d spend all day editing footage from forgettable commercials and when she came home, she didn’t want to go anywhere near a video camera. One day, she decided to leave it all and become a painter.

Jade In The Film Industry:

One of Jade's dreams is to go into the film industry once she's established herself as an artist. She asked me for advice on applying the concepts of this book to Hollywood. I told her that the same concepts apply, but the important thing to remember is that she should strive to work from a position of power.

Rather than fighting hard to keep the artistic integrity of her films at the start, she should be willing to compromise a little to get those first big wins out of the way. Once she has those wins, she'll gain the leverage necessary to create more artistic works. Some film makers, I told her, will alternate between making Hollywood-style movies and independent films. The Hollywood movies fund the independent ones. That's artpreneurship!

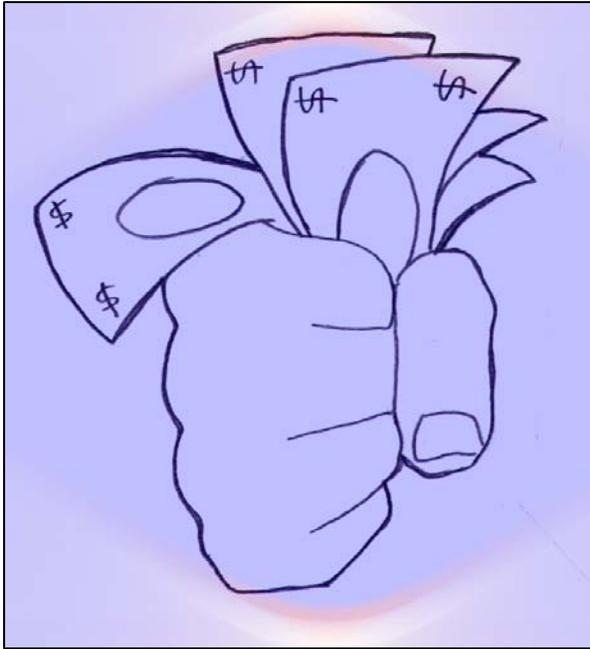
Jade's Double, Divided Life:

Jade double-majored in Economics and Art in college. She's now working a leisurely 9-5 job at a corporation and is taking sculpting classes at a renowned night school. She has a beautiful apartment, with plenty of space to practice, and has set aside a room to feature her best works.

She loves how she can use both sides of her brain during a typical day. Jade is also hosting a party to show her works to a group of high-powered co-workers. She hopes that selling a few pieces will be the start of a new income stream. If it doesn't work out though, she'll try again later with a new approach.

Jade knows that if she worked full-time as an artist, she'd have to spend a lot of time marketing her art anyway, and that would mean longer hours with less pay. Plus, what would she do to relax if she created art all day? Life becomes much more fuzzy when it's not divided.

Make A Bundle



Make it easy and desirable for your clients to buy more of your product or service at one time. When a client is about to buy something from you, they're at their most willing to buy something else. Once their wallet is open, they're just as happy to give you \$5 as they are \$50; easing the wallet open in the first place is the hard part.

Do you ever notice how, when you're at a grocery store, the aisles leading to the cash register are crammed with tabloids and candy? Those are impulse buy items. The grocery store knows that your wallet is already open (since you're waiting in line), so they rack up extra sales by subtly prodding you with guilty pleasures. It

works, too! The vast majority of tabloids sold off-the-rack are sold in supermarkets.

When you have your client's wallet open, don't let them close it without asking yourself two questions:

- "What upgrades can I offer?" Fast food restaurants are famous for this; the moment you place your order, they ask if you want to upgrade (or "supersize") it. Since the upgrade is so painless to accept the consumer often relents. If you sell sketches for \$10 each, why not offer your customer the chance to laminate the sketch for an extra \$2? The cost for you to laminate is almost zero, so that \$2 is pure profit. Just make it easy for them to upgrade.
- "What similar products can I offer?" If you're selling two products for \$5 each, offer them bundled together for \$8 and watch your average dollars per order leap. If you only have one product, find a way to offer two (or three!). If you're selling a service, why not partner with someone who offers a similar service? People love bundles. Artpreneurs love bundles. Everyone loves bundles!

Bundles are especially powerful if you're selling online, since shipping two products incurs the same shipping and handling costs as only one. Be creative!

Just don't overdo it. Prod, don't push. Even though it might sound strange, clients don't like options. If you give them too many options, they'll start to worry about choosing the wrong one. Also, guard your reputation well with how hard you recommend upgrades. A recurring theme throughout this book is that you are the brand, not your art. Artpreneurship is balancing boldness with caution.

Jade's Wedding:

When Jade married, she had an artist friend paint her wedding portraits. After the wedding, Jade asked me to offer her friend some tips for expanding her business. I hosted a call and Jade's friend literally dropped her phone to the floor when I mentioned the concept of bundling.

After regaining her composure, we brainstormed three different ways to bundle with her wedding portrait business.

- She could build a list of other people who perform wedding services (music, catering, photography) and refer her clients to them, procuring a commission from the vendors. Even without a commission, if she worked out a bartering arrangement with these vendors, it could easily lead her to attract more clients, i.e., "you refer me if I refer you."
- She could offer a deal to sell multiple commissions at once, either multiple portraits for the bride and groom or portraits for other key members of the wedding. To pull this type of offer off though the successive discounts should be rather steep.
- She could offer one or two packaging upgrade options for her wedding portraits. Maybe one option offers a monster-sized canvas.

A few months later, I talked Jade and asked how her friend was doing. She smiled, "She's doing well...business is going great for her now."

I like to think my brainstorming session had something to do with it.

Katie Over-Does It:

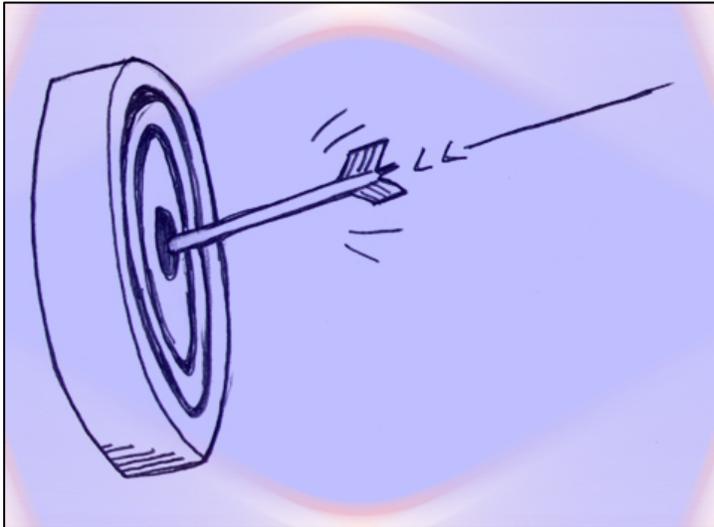
A little learning is a dangerous thing. Someone told Katie about the concept of bundling and she went mad with it.

Katie offered so many upgrade options and pushed each one so hard down her client's throats that most left in a frustrated panic. No repeat business, no referrals, and as for buying any of the upgrades or complementary products: no thank you!

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

The concept of upgrades actually originated with movie theatres. A certain theatre tried to persuade its customers to buy more food with "buy one, get one free" promotions. They found, however, that people didn't like buying more than one of the same food item: it made them feel like gluts. After some trial-and-error, the theatre discovered that people would gladly double the volume, not quantity, of their order if presented that option. Apparently, having a huge bag of popcorn is less guilt-inducing than two smaller bags, even if the number of kernels is the same in both options.

Stay On Target



You've probably heard the phrase "target market" or "target audience" before. It just means identifying, to the most specific degree, what type of clients you want to focus on with your offerings. Attributes of your target audience can include:

- Their age range (e.g. "18-22")
- Their gender (e.g. "female")
- Their geography/location (e.g. "people in my neighborhood")
- Their interests (e.g. "people who love sailing")
- Their income (e.g. "\$30,000-\$40,000 a year")
- Their profession (e.g. "farmers")

Once, when I asked an artist about his target market, he shrugged and, after a pause, bellowed: "everyone!" That's a common mistake.

It's natural to assume that if your audience is everyone, you'll have the biggest sales potential. However, if your audience is everyone, then effectively your audience is no one. You won't be able to position your product to that audience and you'll spend a fortune on general and untargeted advertising, which isn't effective. Even Wal-Mart, the biggest company in the world, has a specific target audience: Price-conscious, quality-agnostic folks in the suburbs.

Pick a target audience you're comfortable serving; your art should already lean toward a certain type of person anyway. Also think about whether your target audience will realistically spend money on art. Just because your town has the highest percentage of single mothers in the state doesn't mean that you should focus on single mothers - they might be so busy and value-conscious that art will never be on their agenda. I recommend assuming that only people who have purchased artwork in the past will purchase artwork from you. Never assume that you can convert people who have never purchased art into art patrons.

Finally, spend the time to research and investigate whom the competition is targeting. Maybe they're ignoring a specific group of clients or maybe they've found an amazing audience but are doing a poor job serving them. The presence of competition is often a good sign: it means the audience they're serving is a desirable one.

Don't put too much pressure on yourself to describe your target audience perfectly in the beginning. Once you start marketing your work, you can refine this definition as you learn more. Heck, maybe you thought your audience was a certain group of people, but then find out that another group is more responsive.

One of my old marketing professors recommended making a collage of your target audience by clipping photos from magazines and the Internet. It sounds silly, but it was actually powerful—tape that collage to your wall and it'll remind you again and again on whom to focus your efforts.

Jade Goes Urban:

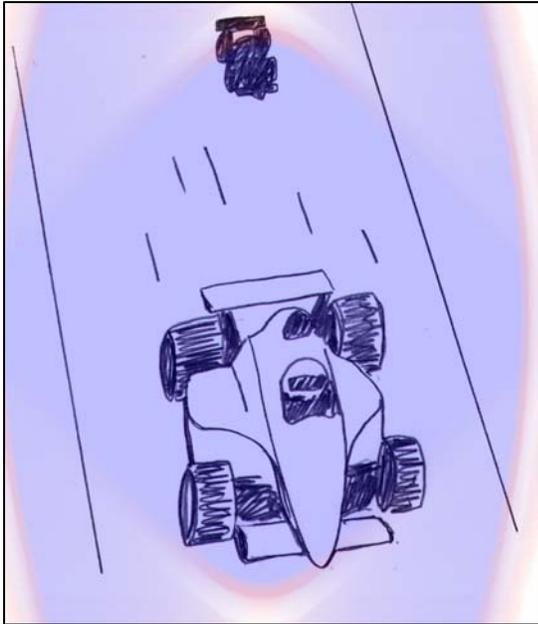
Jade grew up in the inner city. As such, much of her art is reminiscent of the gritty side of urban life. Her first instinct when deciding whom to target was to choose people who resided in the places depicted in her art. After some thought however, she realized that such people might not earn enough money to spend on her work.

Jade eventually decided to target older "bohemian" intellectuals, who crave the arts, love the city, and have the financial ability to purchase her work.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"You cannot depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus."
- Mark Twain

Hold Your Position



Positioning is one of the most important concepts in brand marketing. Positioning will help you manage even the toughest competition. If you're inferior to the artist-next-door in every measurement, positioning will help you carve out a niche and achieve some degree of success.

...So how does it work?

Clients have an abundance of individual wants. Some clients want to save money, so they'll never buy expensive artwork. Other clients are concerned about quality, so they're willing to spend any amount to acquire the finest artwork. Then there are clients who want to collect art and clients who want it for a

specific purpose (e.g. for a company logo).

In addition to wants, clients also respond differently to various ideas, images, and values. Some clients are more conservative, some like to think of themselves as "gangsta," and some are closet artists themselves.

Positioning means to first scan your potential pool of clients and your competition and then ask yourself: "OK, what are my potential clients' wants and values and which of those wants and values are my competitors emphasizing?" With these questions in mind, you calculate whether you want to go toe-to-toe with your competitors or whether you want to adopt a different strategy.

One of the great features of positioning is that you can always position yourself differently from other artists and avoid butting heads. Another great feature of positioning is that your offering can be exactly the same as someone else's and you can still position it differently. How? Through the power of association. Here's a three-step process for building a positioning strategy.

- Define your target audience.
- Brainstorm the words, images, ideas, and symbols that make your audience smile. Also consider your audience's wants, whether they want quality or affordability, for example.

- Visualize the step-by-step experience someone has when they buy something from you and make a list of the words, ideas, and images that come to their mind at every interaction point. Think about how you present yourself, the type of art you create, your personal logo, the feel of your website...everything!

If there's a significant difference between the results of your brainstorming and visualization exercises, you have some work to do.

Don't view positioning as compromising in any way. You don't have to change your artwork to adopt a positioning strategy; you just have to change how you present that artwork.

If your art is mellow and features natural scenery, you could position yourself as the artist for older women. You'd create a mellifluous name, a feathery logo, and a brochure that's colored in pastel...Oh, and don't forget to wear conservative clothing.

If you're targeting goths, stock up on leather boots and black lipstick—also, why not write a blog post about your favorite underground band?

Jade's Clone:

They say that everyone has at least one clone in the world. Thankfully, with over six billion people, the odds of you actually meeting your twin are rather slim. Imagine Jade's surprise then: while selling her art at a street festival, she spots a mirror-image of herself around the corner, selling near-identical artwork.

If Jade doesn't change her positioning strategy, she risks dividing her customer base in half. How will our hero handle this unusual and potentially event-ruining obstacle?

First, Jade re-focuses on a new target audience. Scanning the street fair pedestrians, she notices an unusual number of hippies. "That's it!" she yells and bolts home, asking a friend to watch the table in her absence. At home, she covers herself in beads, frizzes her hair, and stretches on an old tie-dye shirt. When she returns to her table, she hides all the artwork inappropriate for her new hippie target audience and showcases only the most colorful pieces.

Even though Jade's sales were below-average that day, by positioning her artwork to hippies, she was able to differentiate herself and salvage the event.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: Don't you think it's deceitful that Jade, in your above example, wore a hippie outfit just for the sake of targeting hippies?

A: You almost caught me there. I'd never, ever advocate pretending to be someone you're not just for the sake of a sale. You should always strive for authenticity and honesty in all of your client interactions.

If you look very closely at my example, you'll see that Jade is only highlighting the hippie elements of her personality. You have to assume that because she has a tie-dye shirt at home, dozens of beads readily available, and some artwork that appeals to hippies, she's either a former or part-time hippie herself. Positioning isn't about lying, it's about **highlighting**. After all, people are multi-faceted.

Positioning Explained Another Way:

When Jade was in middle school, she had a deep crush on a boy in her science class. As is usually the case with such things, Jade wasn't the only one with eyes on him...that boy was hounded by four blondes who tried to out-dress one another to draw his favor.

Jade, a green-haired girl with little disposable income, could either compete directly with the girls, dying her hair blonde and getting a part-time job to afford nicer clothes, OR she could instead flaunt the uniqueness of her g hair and position herself as more concerned about books than superficial pursuits.

"You're not like any other girl I've met," he says to her one day.

Segmenting Your Audience

You can always find audiences within audiences (“subgroups”). The process of identifying these subgroups is called “audience segmentation.” It’s a powerful concept and is significant because it understands that everyone is, in fact, different.

Let’s say that you currently target men between the ages of 18 and 24 and are interested in segmenting that audience. By paying close attention to your visitors (and by talking to them) you might unearth that a portion of them are college students and another portion are young, working professionals. Voila! You now have two subgroups.

You can stop there or keep going. Maybe a portion of your college student clients purchase art for themselves and another portion purchase art for others. Then within the group that purchases art for others, maybe there’s a segment that purchases art for their parents and a segment that purchases art for their significant others.

I could keep going, but you get the point. You can always find subgroups within subgroups, within subgroups. For practical purposes, you don’t have to drill down too deeply.

Once you’ve successfully identified a subgroup in your audience, you have four options, assuming the subgroup is a significant size:

- **Ignore the Subgroup:** You can ignore the subgroup and continue to treat everyone the same. It makes sense to do this when the subgroup isn’t a lucrative one.
- **Divide and Conquer:** Rather than market yourself the same way to multiple audiences, you can market differently to each group. This can be time consuming, but will yield the best results. For example, for each subgroup, you could use different advertising.
- **Trim the Fat:** You can focus your offerings to only serve one of your subgroups. This is actually a bold and potentially lucrative move, just as long as the subgroup is sufficiently large and has a lot of buying power.
- **Side Dishes:** You can create side offerings that appeal to specific subgroups. This is a good method to test the existence and appeal of newly identified subgroups.

Audience segmentation is a powerful technique that’s practiced in marketing departments around the globe. Philosophically, I like audience segmentation a lot because it emphasizes that not all clients are the same. People are unique and have to be treated as such!

Know *Thou* Self

Once you've defined your target audience and finalized a positioning strategy, it's time to brainstorm how to reach that audience.

Chisel a pencil and dust off a pad of paper. Close your eyes and visualize yourself as a member of your target audience. Mentally walk the new you through a typical day, from morning to night. What time do you wake up in the morning? What magazines do you read? What websites do you visit regularly? How do you feel after work? Why do you like artwork? What are your hopes? Your fears?

Write down as much as you can and then review. By the end of this exercise you should have a very good idea about the personality and routine of your next client.

If you need help or slam into a mental brick wall, buy a few magazines that cater to your target audience. What types of advertisements are in the magazines? What kind of articles? What questions are in the "Ask the Editor" section? Chances are, both the advertisers and the editorial team of the magazine went through this exercise already, so you can just piggy-back off their hard work.

Oh, and don't forget to actually leave the house and talk informally to people in your target. Most are happy to tell you everything about themselves, so stay quiet and listen.

You want to know your audience better than you know yourself. Doing so will help you select the best channels to reach them. It will also help you define and refine your offerings.

While it's certainly not required, it's ideal if you yourself are in your target audience. Then you can create offerings that you enjoy, knowing that others similar to you will enjoy them as well. Even if you target an audience with a personality completely dissimilar to your own, try to empathize with them as much as possible.

Adam's Book Blunder:

When I was writing the sales letter for *Art of Otaku*, one of its big tag lines was that the book will teach its reader how to draw anime quickly. After doing the above exercise, I realized that it was a terrible talking point. Many artists enjoy the process of drawing and don't want to rush through it. Knowing this, I changed the tag line to something a little more appropriate: *Art of Otaku* is fun and will last a long time (both true, of course). The change had a positive impact on sales.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

“Know people for who they are rather than what they are.”
- Anthony D’Angelo

Family First

There are two types of clients: past clients and future clients. It's best to rephrase these types as "easy clients" and "difficult clients," respectively, because it's much easier to convince a past client to buy something from you again than it is to attract a future client.

Past clients trust you and know what to expect from you. They probably like you too and are more understanding if you make a mistake. Future clients are suspicious and think you might rip them off. They also yell, on occasion.

Invest the time to build relationships with past clients. Keep up with them via an email newsletter or send them a postcard a few months after the transaction. Holidays and special events are a good time for this. Imagine if you bought a set of prints from an artist and later received a surprise postcard on your birthday from that person. Wouldn't you tell at least a few people about the kind gesture?

My idea of the perfect business is one where you don't need new clients. You can do a good job creating and selling offerings to the "usual suspects." Just remember, no one ever wants to do business with someone who served them poorly. Spoil your clients.

Adam's Side Rant:

I think the title of this concept lends itself to another point. How do you allocate your extra earnings if you become a huge commercial success? I believe in the "family first" maxim.

First, you benefit yourself, since your own productivity and happiness is most important to your ongoing success. Second, you benefit your team members and family, since your success is a direct result of their support. Third, you benefit your clients, since you have to love your clients and they deserve it. Fourth, if there are any leftovers, you benefit society as a whole.

Jade Loves Her Clients:

On the first of every third month, Jade sits down and brainstorms how to bring a smile to her existing clients' faces. She has most of their information on record, so it's not difficult for her to reach them.

This month, Jade writes a cheery letter about a small success in her personal life and includes a two-minute sketch on the back. She also includes an updated copy of her business card. She considers each of her clients mini-pen pals.

Over-Eager Katie:

Not again. After reading this section, Katie takes things to an uncomfortable extreme, causing more damage than if she had done nothing at all. First, she presses her clients hard for their personal information. This either scares them away or makes them hesitant to return for repeat business. Second, in the unlikely event that a client relents, she overwhelms them with correspondence: “Buy this! Buy that! Buy this! Buy that!” You always want to give more than you take. If you see some Katie in you, stop immediately!

Boris' Q&A:

Q: Can you explain a bit more why potential clients are worse than past clients? After all, I'm sure there are some past clients who've invoked headaches and some future clients who are as pleasant as a hug.

A: Here are three more reasons:

- New clients have more questions than existing clients. While it might seem trivial to answer questions, it can be a drain on your time and energy.
- New clients need more direction and take longer to find what they want. If you have a website, a new client has to click around more often than an existing client. This increases the odds that they'll become lost and leave.
- New clients are expensive, in both the time and money you spend attracting them.

Q: How do you obtain a client's personal information?

A: The key is to be upfront and undemanding. If you take orders online, include a field for your client to type their email address. Promise you'll never sell or rent their email to anyone and highlight the fact that you'll occasionally contact them with special discounts and offers. The great thing about doing business online is that you also get the person's shipping address if they order something physical from you. If you sell face-to-face keep a pad of paper on hand for them to write down their information (purely optional!).

Above all else, tread carefully. One wrong email or one wrong letter could damage your client relationship forever.

Stay Away From The Cookie Jar



¶ The more successful you become, the more opportunities arise to “cheat” a little and swindle a few extra dollars in the short term. Run away from these opportunities at all cost, even if it kills you to do so. It’s better to die an honorable business death and start something new than to crawl along covered in slime.

Your goal should be to create a sustainable long-term enterprise and that means you have to run your venture with absolute integrity. Don’t tint your eyes green, envying that “other artist” who seems to be doing well with sub-par ethics. Trust me, life for them isn’t much better than yours and they always have to look over their shoulder, wondering if the karma police are on the chase.

You want to be a superhero in every situation, so go above and beyond what a normal person might do. You’re not a normal person, after all, you’re an artpreneur, and that means you have to fight for your reputation.

Adam Turns Away Money:

With theOtaku.com, I could probably double our revenue if I placed spyware ads on every page, created a paid service that allowed people to illegally download anime episodes, encouraged visitors to click on advertisers' banners, accepted advertising dollars from Hong Kong bootleg stores, and sold member email addresses to spammers.

So why don't I? There are hundreds of websites that use practices like these. My advice to the people who run those sites: Good luck. Their problem isn't just being immoral, it's taking shortcuts. Rather than spending the time to build a sustainable enterprise (and to be sustainable, an enterprise must be honest), they try to "get rich quick." And when their house of cards collapses, they can't even pat themselves on the back for a good run.

Business has a negative reputation in some circles because of a damaging minority that follows the "get rich quick, take shortcuts" mentality. This minority might even be the reason why some artists didn't buy this book. Let's change that.

If something feels wrong, please, stay far away. Again, I have been presented with hundreds of opportunities to cheat a little business-wise. I don't regret not taking a single one.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: What if you're supporting a family with your artwork and things are going very poorly and you stumble upon a legal, but morally gray area that could give you the money to kick-start things again?

A: Do your best...that's all. If you can weather the storm without resorting to gray areas, you'll end up a lot happier and with a greater sense of accomplishment than if you "cheated."

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not."

- Oprah Winfrey

It's About You, Not Your Art

A percentage of your clients won't understand your art, but will feel satisfied supporting you as an artist. This just emphasizes the importance of making you, and not your art, the brand.

You don't want your clients to think that they're buying Piece X or Piece Y. You want them to think that they're buying Piece X and Piece Y from you. You want to follow-up with them from time to time and give them VIP access to you whenever they need.

If a client's friend sees an art print in that client's home and asks where he or she purchased it, you want them to talk, and talk, and talk...about you!

You should spend just as much time promoting yourself (with tact and subtlety) as you do promoting your artwork. Just think of how many people buy famous works of art not because they particularly like or understand the art itself, but because it was drawn by someone of note.

Put your photograph on your website. Talk about your personal life. Maintain a blog. Create a simple brochure about yourself and hand it out to all potential clients. Collect client email addresses and host a newsletter. Just remember to keep interactions positive and authentic. Avoid "hype" language at all costs and, no matter how bad your day went, keep it out of your blog!

There's a reason why companies pay celebrities to endorse their product. If people feel good about the celebrity, they'll feel good about the product. In the same vein, if people feel good about you, they'll feel good about your creations.

It's sad that few things in life really sell themselves. If life were fair, the best art would attract the most attention. Instead, it's often the artists with the strongest balance between talent and business savvy that do well.

Adam's Bookcase Discovery:

I was rifling through my mother's bookcase when I stumbled upon a small art print she had purchased in Australia. After admiring the design on the front, I turned it around and was surprised to see both a picture and a mini-biography of the artist. Now that's an artpreneur!

Focus, Focus, Focus – The Menu Problem

Just as you must focus the definition of your target audience, you must also focus your offerings to this audience. It's natural to assume that the more options you present a client, the more your odds will increase that they'll purchase something, anything. Simply tacking on new offerings however will lead to what I like to call the "menu problem."

Here in New York City, we have thousands of restaurant options. One of my favorite is a hole-in-the-wall that specializes in one food item, that Middle Eastern delight, the falafel. This restaurant not only survives with its limited menu, it attracts a long line every afternoon that bends around the block. What's the secret behind their success? Focus. Just think about the benefits the restaurant enjoys from focus:

- The cooks become skilled at making extra-delicious falafels. If you create one thing over and over again, pretty soon you become the best out there at making it.
- The cooks become fast at making falafels, for the same reason as above, practice. Their speed keeps the wait time short and the customers happy.
- The manager can purchase falafel ingredients at a discounted rate. With almost any supplier, you can negotiate discounts for buying in bulk. This lets the restaurant pass on the savings to customers, resulting in a cheaper falafel. They're not only the best in quality; they're also the best in price!
- The falafels evolve with less effort. By focusing on only one food item, the cooks can test different tweaks for improving their offering. One day they could fry the chickpeas a little longer. Another day, they could bake the bread so it turns out a little crispier. Most of the time these tests will fail, but only a few successes are needed to stand out and increase sales.

Through specialization, this unassuming falafel restaurant becomes the leader in price, quality, speed, and ongoing improvement. Focus is powerful, indeed.

On the opposite end of the spectrum rest the diners. These restaurants have roughly 25,000 pages of menu items and just as many problems.

Diners have trouble keeping costs and prices low because they try to do everything at once. It's impractical for diners to purchase supplies in bulk because they have so many different recipes, which use so many different ingredients. Diners also waste a lot of time training their cooks to prepare items that only a few customers will ever order. Even worse, when those customers order an obscure entree, the cooks are more likely to mess up the order or resort to frozen, pre-made food.

As you can tell, I hate the diner model. Why don't they just chop off the bottom 80% of their menu and focus on their strengths? The only thing that I think is worse than a diner is a restaurant without a menu. You walk in, sit down, and the waitress asks: "What do you want? We can make anything."

If you hear that, run!

As scary as the idea of a restaurant without a menu sounds, I bring it up because a lot of artists do business in this way. They expect the customer to sit down and simply tell them what they want. Then they make up a price off the top of their head and have trouble changing the price around as the customer changes his or her mind.

It's integral that you put aside some time and decide exactly what you're offering and at what price. Then define the process for how you'll create that offering and streamline it. You can have a couple offerings and specialties, but the more you can focus, the better.

Adam Seeks An Icon Artist:

Running websites, I'm often in the position where I need graphic design work. Once, I needed to find an artist who could create compelling icons. Let me tell you, it was hard.

I found quite a few artists who said they could probably create icons "if they tried." For an important project, this wasn't very re-assuring, so I continued the search. I eventually found an artist who specialized in icons. He did great work, but was expensive.

The icon artist was an artpreneur. Most artists would balk at the prospect of only creating one type of art, but by doing so, this one was able to excel and charge extra. I know that I said specializing lets you pass on discounts to clients, but if you're the best or one of the only people with a certain offering, you can charge a premium for it! The word "premium" is a sacred word in business.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: Focusing seems a lot easier said than done. Freelancing and working on your own is TOUGH as it is; how on Earth can someone afford to do it with just one or two offerings? The demand for those offerings might not be there.

A: You're right, at first you might need to branch out into a dozen offerings just to stay afloat. However, after some time, you might notice that only a few of your offerings are leading to the majority of your sales. Once you can afford it, start dropping the worst-performing offerings and start strengthening the best-performing ones.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"A man with a watch knows what time it is. A man with two watches is never sure."
- Segal's Law

A Recipe For Art



Whenever you create something, there's a logical step-by-step process hidden in the background. If you're cooking a meal, you're following a recipe, even if that recipe only exists in your head and even if you always adlib part of the way. If you're painting your next masterpiece, you're following a recipe too, though instead of mixing eggs with butter, you start by mixing paint colors.

I advise you to sit down and document as many of these background processes as possible. You can use diagrams, recipe-style formatting, bullet points...whatever you're most comfortable with!

Outlining your processes can help in three ways:

- First, outlining helps you see where you can make improvements. Maybe some steps are redundant and can be dropped. Maybe one step is slowing everything else down.
- Second, outlining helps you teach others more effectively. If you ever add someone to your team, all you have to do is hand them a list of your processes and they're caught up.
- Third, outlining helps you market your offerings. Print out your process or publish it on your website. It impresses clients when they know you have a formal process in place for creating your art. Plus, you can emphasize how much energy each step of the process takes, making them understand the amount of love that goes into each offering.

Some organizations have manuals hundreds of pages deep, containing every process in their entire organization. You don't have to go that far, but it's something to think about.

Jade's Commission Process:

Jade was attending a convention and wanted to do some quick sketch commissions at her table. While she wouldn't charge a lot of money for them, she thought it would be a clever way to attract people to her table and find potential clients for her prints.

Before getting started, she threw together a quick outline of her commission process. Here it is, in her own words:

- I tell the client that I only create three types of portraits, by size: Small, medium, and large. All portraits are in black and white, I don't do color. Small is \$5, medium is \$7, and large is \$8.
- I roughly sketch the outline of the client's face. I then show the client this outline for approval. If they want some minor changes, I do them quickly. Otherwise, I proceed to the next step.
- I go over the sketch in ink and erase all excess pencil marks. This gives the art a cleaner and more lasting look.
- I sign the art with a smile and ask my client if they'd like to join my mailing list to keep up with my art. I also tell them that since they're a client, they're entitled to 20% off any of my prints.

See how easy that was? And it only took her ten minutes, so you have no excuse.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: Doesn't it stifle artistic innovation to write down so many processes? A lot of the best art comes from chaos, not routine.

A: I won't comment on how recording artistic processes can impact the creation of art, though I'd suggest giving it a try to see if the results are worthwhile. What I can comment on is that, in terms of anything business related, recording processes is powerful for many of the reasons mentioned in this section.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"Learn as much by writing as by reading."
- Lord Acton

The Point Of No Return

I like to mix in pertinent economics concepts, even though economics is a social science and this is a book about artpreneurship. There are three reasons why: First, that I'm rather well-versed in economic theory. Second, that economics is flexible and its foundational concepts apply well to a variety of disciplines. Third, that very few people study economics, which is a shame.

In economics, there's a concept called "diminishing returns." It's a fancy way of saying that, as you consume more, each additional item you consume will satisfy you less. Diminishing returns usually occurs at a measurable point.

One of my favorite economics professors described diminishing returns in terms of chicken nuggets. If you're eating chicken nuggets, the first few will give you the most satisfaction. However, as you keep eating them, each chicken nugget will satisfy you less and less. Eventually you'll reach a point where the satisfaction becomes negative (your belly will start to ache). Your friends couldn't pay you enough to eat another nugget!

What do chicken nuggets and diminishing returns have to do with marketing your artwork? Plenty.

If you decide to spend money on advertising to promote your artwork, it's important to realize that the more you spend the less effective each additional dollar spent will become at generating sales. If you spend \$100 on advertising and generate 10 sales, that doesn't mean spending \$1,000 will generate 100 sales—instead you could only end up with only 15.

Also, when creating art, don't overburden yourself. You're most productive in the beginning and that's when you'll do your best work, so don't work for too long and take lots of breaks. If you hit a problem or obstacle, your first instinct should be to go outside and take a long walk. This will give your mind some time to process the problem and formulate a solution.

I once listened to a speech by Jack Canfield, the founder of the successful "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series and he stated quite firmly that down-time is the single most important part of his routine. According to him, ideas drive you forward and you can only find these ideas by taking breaks.

Katie Works Hard, Jade Works Smart:

Katie and Jade are trying to master a particular art technique. Katie is obsessive and kills herself 18 hours a day practicing it, with little time for anything else. Jade, on the other hand, understands the concept of diminishing returns and practices in one hour increments. She takes lots of breaks—real breaks that involve going outside—and even naps mid-day (sleep has been scientifically proven to aid learning).

Who will master the art technique faster? It'll be too close to call, but Jade will have a lot more fun doing it. Remember to work smarter, not harder!

Once Upon A Time

If you enjoy a good story, you'll love this section. The concept of "telling a story" has pervaded the business landscape in recent years. Some managers even receive training from actors and writers on how to tell more effective stories.

People are bored by facts, figures, and diagrams. We can't help but equate facts with work and work is the last thing we want to think about when deciding how to spend our money. As much as we dislike facts though, we are captivated by stories. That's why the best brands often have a story behind them, one that's interesting to hear and fun to spread. As an artpreneur, you need to transform yourself into a brand, which means you have to refine your story.

Don't inform clients that you're "just another art student," because that's not true! Every artist is different. What inspired you to study art? What do you hope to accomplish with it? Why do you draw with your particular style? Be honest, but interesting, and try to weave in a personal mission. Maybe you come from a long line of artists and strive to honor your ancestors.

You should also have a vivid story ready to recount for every single piece you draw. It's free to you and adds value to the work in your client's eyes.

Stories are especially powerful when they are consistent with the stories that clients tell themselves. A businessman, for example, might have his shoes polished every week, not because they're dirty, but because while growing up he always wanted to be the type of person important enough to have such a privilege. There's no doubt that some of your clients will buy art because it makes them feel like an art benefactor. Keep this in mind and help your clients role-play!

Jade Does It Again:

An art patron is browsing Jade's print binder. He stops at a piece he likes and considers it for a moment. Jade interjects:

"That's actually my favorite work. I was going through a period of really bad luck and to counter it, I decided to paint someone who just looked very lucky. I hang it up on my wall and whenever I feel unlucky, I imagine that I'll soon be the person in the drawing...doing well! You can have it for free if you purchase two other prints. Or if you just want it alone, it's \$10."

Don't Be A Commodity

☞ walk along the streets of Manhattan. At every corner sits an artist selling me the chance to commission a \$5 caricature. I sadly wonder if any of these artists are classically trained and now must restrain their talent, instead mimicking the style of their peers. It's a waste.

If one of these caricature artists asked me for help, my first suggestion would be to stand out. Art is an expression of oneself, so it has to shine unique. You want your art to be such that anyone who looks at it and is familiar with your work will immediately know you as the creator.

Imagine a caricature artist who draws people in the style of a traditional Japanese artist, or who uses watercolors instead of the same charcoal pencils everyone else carries. How about an artist who draws your likeness on a t-shirt instead of a flimsy sheet of paper? There are many ways to stand out, you just have to step back and brainstorm.

Fortunately for you, people who stand out are the exception and not the rule. Here are four reasons why:

- **Teacher-Student Complex.** We're taught from an early age that there's only one "right" way to do something and that you need a teacher and a textbook to learn it. This mentality means that if we see a group of people who are successful, we naturally want to learn what they're doing and start copying.
- **Fear.** Standing out is scary. Other artists will criticize you, some clients will laugh at you, and there's a real chance of failure.
- **Time Constraints.** It takes a heck of a lot more time to innovate than it does to simply follow someone else's path. If you're painting portraits and shadow a successful portrait artist, that person can show you where to buy the canvases, the frames, and the paint. If you're on your own, you have to exhaust a lot of time searching for these business-oriented resources.
- **Inertia.** You achieve some degree of success. Then you become acclimated to that success and your lifestyle adjusts accordingly. People start to copy you, but you do well enough that it doesn't matter. Standing out seems too expensive and you don't want to risk your lifestyle. If it's not broken, why fix it?

Standing out is hard, indeed. However, the benefits of doing so often dwarf the risks. If you stand out and do so in a way that the market appreciates, not only will you

command a higher price (maybe \$20 instead of \$5), you will also make it easier for people to talk about you.

At the core of artpreneurship is innovation. You must innovate your art style and then you must innovate how you present that art style. I'm not teaching you to be lazy with your art and aggressive in your marketing; you must improve and grow at both.

Katie Sits Down:

Katie is hired by an advertising agency to illustrate a character for an upcoming magazine ad. Her contact at the agency shows her a few drawings from other advertisements and asks for something "similar."

Katie grows conflicted. She has a distinct and vivid idea in her head for what the character should look like, but she's terrified that it will be too radical. Should she turn in a cookie-cutter character or go with her heart? Under a tight deadline, she follows the easy route. Was this the right move?

Tough call. Corporate clients don't leave much room for creativity because real money is at stake. If she draws something unique and bold, she risks ruining her relationship with the company, but if she draws something boring, she turns herself into a commodity artist (though if they're happy with the outcome, it can lead to more work).

In this situation, I'd advise Katie to position herself as a bold and daring artist from the start, that way she could better manage her client's expectations. Next, I'd tell Katie to work feverishly to come up with both a traditional mock-up and a more radical mock-up. Yes, the hours will be hellish, but if the client likes the radical mock-up, it will further her career far more than if she went the safe route. And even if the client hated the radical mock-up, she can always keep the design in her portfolio or save it for a future client.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: You state four reasons why so many people, and not just artists, would rather follow the crowd than innovate. Those four reasons seem pretty convincing, so why should we ignore them?

A: For the teacher-student complex, I think that learning on your own is very important, since it's driven more by need than by what someone else thinks you should learn. Learning on your own helps you better retain knowledge and you can cover a lot more ground than going through a chapter-by-chapter course. Plus, the simple process of coming up with your own solutions can yield unexpected and potentially revolutionary results. Not to mention that it trains your mind to think more like an artpreneur.

I don't want to denounce the importance of teachers. You'll need them when you have specific problems or when you want to smooth out your rough edges.

In terms of fear, just remember that you want to make as many mistakes early on as possible. You don't want to make those mistakes when you're completely dependent on your artwork for your livelihood, you want to make them when you don't have much invested and can afford failing over and over again. It would be impossible for an old man to learn how to walk for the first time; if he fell once he'd break every bone in his body. Babies, in contrast, are so low to the ground that they can fall and stand, fall and stand, ad infinitum until they're walking. Get those falls out of the way while you're still young!

I won't touch on the bullet point about how standing out is time-consuming, since that's pretty self-explanatory, but for the point about not standing out if you're doing well already, the problem is that in business you have to pay a lot of attention to your outside environment. Just because something works for you in a given place and time doesn't mean it'll always work. People start to copy you, your clients' interests will change, and economic factors can affect how much money people want to spend on artwork.

On Advertising

Advertising is a tough industry. I'm a supervisor at a large agency in Manhattan that handles the advertising for many Fortune 500 companies. Even with a huge budget and a team of highly trained professions with decades of experience, we've still had campaigns that failed to generate a return on investment.

Advertising is even more difficult for the individual artpreneur. You can spend a fortune on it, quickly, and receive nothing in return. A successful advertising campaign requires planning, testing, a strong message, and luck.

People often confuse advertising with marketing; they're completely different. Advertising is when you literally buy advertising in a media outlet, while marketing is more strategic and involves defining your audience, clarifying your image, constructing your brand's values, setting your prices, and choosing where you want to sell your products and how.

There are at least six different advertising avenues available for the artpreneur:

- Posters and flyers
- Classified ads and freelance services
- Magazine ads
- Online graphic ads
- Online sponsored search
- Buying a table at a convention or event

Before you decide where to spend your money, remember to keep three factors in mind: (1) the number of people in the outlet, (2) how targeted the people are in the outlet and (3) how expensive it is to advertise in the outlet.

Your ideal is an advertising outlet that reaches a mass of highly targeted people at a low cost. If you can find such an outlet, pocket its gold before the leprechauns come running.

Here are some thoughts about each of the advertising outlets listed above.

- On posters and flyers, the big question is where you'll distribute them. Start by brainstorming: given your target audience, what type of places would they most notice a flyer? Maybe an art store, a record store, or an

antique store. The good news is that many stores allow you to post a flyer for free or at a nominal cost.

- Classified ad services are often worth a try. These services enable people to post “help wanted” art ads on a project basis. Just invest the time to write authentic and benefit-laden responses to these ads. Don’t invoke hype language with tons of exclamation points!!!! Demonstrate to the person posting the ad that you’ve read their description. Also, custom-tailor your resume or portfolio to show yourself as the best candidate for that particular job.
- Magazine ads are too expensive. Unless you have tens of thousands of dollars to burn and sell high-end, artistic furniture, stay away.
- Online graphic ads can work if you have a professional website with a specialized menu of offerings, available to order online. Three rules of thumb: First, always negotiate how much you pay websites to run your ad, as most mark up their rates by at least 50%. Second, hire a professional to design your banner ads, since the performance difference between amateur and professional ads is significant. Third, start small and work your way up if the website performs well.
- Search ads are a tad easier. You create an advertiser account with either Google or Yahoo!, choose keywords relevant to your art, write up a brief text ad, and you only pay when someone clicks the ad. I’d recommend testing search ads before you run display ads. If you’re not getting a return on search ads, you definitely won’t get a return for display ads.
- Buying a table at a convention or event is a great idea since you’ll meet clients face-to-face. These meetings can lead to new insights about your target audience. Convention attendees are also highly targeted, since most are on the prowl to buy a souvenir or gift. Don’t forget to pay attention to what other artists are doing; this can spark new ideas.

Before you experiment with any type of advertising, always calculate your break-even point. If you sell prints at \$10 profit each, then the max you should spend per sale is \$10. Thus, if you spend \$100 to place an ad on a website and that ad only generates 5 sales ($\$100/5 = \20 per sale), you’re losing money. Knowing your break-even point will quickly tell you when an advertising outlet is or isn’t working, and most won’t work.

Of course, it gets even trickier because the outlet could be fine, it’s just your offering or ad that’s flawed. Even worse, if you’re running ads in multiple outlets at once, it’s very hard to track which one is referring your sales. I’m of the opinion that advertising is for people who are already successful and have a lot of money to burn testing to find out what works and what doesn’t.

If you're going to spend money on advertising, start as small as possible. Only spend a lot of money when your tests start to generate a return. Otherwise, spend your time and money on your art, your offerings, and building an audience online.

How To Build An Audience

As I've stated to exhaustion, your goal is to build relationships. Life is so much easier when you're dealing with friends versus strangers.

Finding clients is hard work and finding clients who are willing to build a relationship with you is even harder. That's why you need to first build an audience of fans. The odds of a die-hard fan turning into a customer are high and when they do buy from you, the odds of them staying in touch are even higher.

Generating sales isn't the only reason you need fans. You also want fans because of their ability to provide you with honest (and free!) feedback, saving you from misguided efforts. Plus, in more intangible ways, having an audience will keep you motivated, since you know people are watching and appreciating your efforts.

Before the advent of the Internet, I honestly don't know how commercial artists built an audience. My guess would be that they either didn't or fought very hard to win contests, gallery showings, and friends in high places. Thankfully, these days, you have the Internet at your command.

With the Internet, building an audience is only a few steps away. Here's how to do it:

- **Invest In A Professional Website:** You need a professionally designed website with its own .com name, hosted on a fast web server. Remember the lessons of positioning, it's important to control your client's perceptions of you at every interaction point. If your art is wonderful but your website is self-made and resides on a free web host, you've lost some value in your client's eyes. Post information about yourself on the site too: it's about you, not your art.
- **Invest In A Method To Gain Traffic:** There are numerous websites online that enable you share your artwork for free. Most of these services let you link that artwork back to your personal website. This is the cheapest and best way to attract visitors and build an audience of fans. A more time-consuming method of gaining traffic is to write a series of interesting articles or tutorials on art and then working hard to get the articles noticed. The most direct method to gain traffic is to point everyone you come in contact with to your site. Print business cards, write a detailed email signature, and wear a t-shirt with your personal logo.
- **Invest In A Method To Retain Traffic:** Most artists' websites fail miserably in this regard. They'll feature the artist's portfolio, a short biography, a link to the artist's email address, and nothing else. The problem is that there's no incentive for the visitor to return. Attracting visitors is only half the

equation; the other half is convincing them to keep coming back. To do this you must post regular updates on a fixed schedule (new works of art or blog posts) and maintain a newsletter.

I know it's intimidating. Books longer than this one have been written for each of the steps above. That's why I recommend you invest your time and money, not in advertising, but in building a first-rate web presence.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"If you are out there, you have fans."

- Jamison Stafford

What Are You Fighting For?

You can rephrase the above title as “What’s your dream?”, though I prefer the verb “fighting” because it captures the pragmatic essence of artpreneurship. Artpreneurship isn’t about dreams; it’s about struggling and loving that struggle.

As an artpreneur, you should fight for two things: What you want to create and what you stand for. Fighting for what you want to create is straightforward: You have an idea for a work of art or offering and that idea burns so hot that nothing will stand in your way of creating it. The “fight” will carry you through the rough times.

What’s not so straightforward is what you want to stand for. Behind every large corporation is a set of values beyond making a profit. This came along in part from a series of studies proving that companies with a defined moral purpose outlast those without such a compass.

Don’t just fight to create an art gallery, fight to create an art gallery that will change the world. The simpler you can keep your value-driven dream, the louder it will resonate.

As an artist, your brain is more visually slanted than the common person. So use that feature and visualize the ideal end result of your fight, in as much detail as possible. Imagine yourself on CNN, being interviewed about your artwork. Imagine yourself greeting visitors to your gallery. Visualization is best when it’s put on paper and reviewed every night before you go to bed. You want your brain to strategize toward your ideal outcomes while you sleep.

Adam Loves Hot Dogs:

I pass by people every day in Manhattan who drive hotdog carts. Some are very happy doing it, their dream stops there and that’s perfectly fine! These vendors enjoy brightening their customers’ day, spreading the fame of the NYC dog, and keeping a sense of autonomy. Other hotdog vendors are only doing the job until something better comes along and that’s OK too.

But some hotdog vendors have bigger dreams and greater ambitions.

They envision saving money and buying their own hotdog cart, rather than working for a corporation that rents them out. They envision hiring a few friends and providing them with hotdog carts too. They envision expanding to other states, franchising, and creating bold new hotdog recipes. Ultimately, these hotdog vendors want to make the NYC hotdog bigger, tastier, and even more well-known to the world. That’s their value-driven mission.

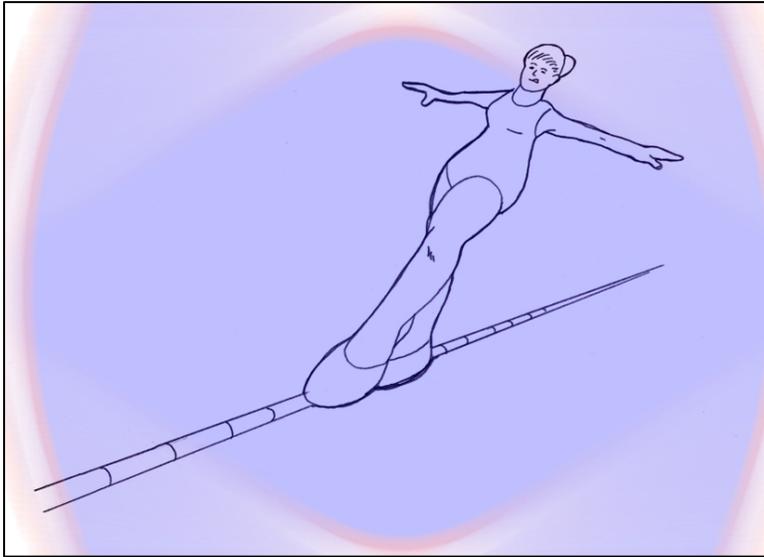
Jade's Simple Dream:

Jade has a lot of fight in her. She fights to put the images in her head on paper. She fights to show the world that she can become commercially successful without compromising her work. On a grander scale, Jade fights for a moral purpose: To inspire others with the scenes depicted in her paintings.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

“Never go to bed mad, stay up and fight.”
- Phyllis Diller

One Foot In Front Of The Other



Success is intoxicating and haze-bordered images of a utopian future can blind you to the ditch only a step away.

One of my ironclad rules in life is never to celebrate until the cause for that celebration is finalized. Until you receive payment, for example, don't think about how you'll spend the money and don't brag about the windfall to everyone you know. The more you dwell on what looks like a sure-fire

win, the more it'll sting if it falls through.

Artpreneurs must remain calm and cool in the face of both great news and terrible news, because both are really two sides of the same coin.

When something terrible happens, it will often give you the chance to do something bold and new, which could grow your offerings exponentially. Don't panic, just take a step back and keep a cool head. Doing nothing and waiting to see what happens is often a better strategy than overreacting and causing bigger problems for yourself down the road.

When something great happens, remember the cliché, "easy come, easy go." Just like terrible news can bring about great news, great news can bring about terrible news. This is because you might over-estimate the effect or duration of the great news. Stay paranoid and work feverishly to prevent successes from turning into disaster.

Katie Soars Into The Sun:

I was reclining at my computer when the red lights on my phone blinked on: Katie was calling. I picked up and listened. It took me a moment to understand what she was saying; she was out of breath and squealing.

“Adam! I received two more sales this month over last month! If I get two more sales the next month, and then two more the month after that, I can quit my day job!”

I calmed her down and told her that there’s a natural cycle in business. Few businesses grow linearly forever and her increase in sales could as much be a factor of the weather as a factor of her own selling ability. I advised her to expect the worst next month. Otherwise, if her sales go down and she’s expecting another gain, she might end up forecasting herself homeless.

Adam’s Silence:

When I was running a popular gaming portal, I was guilty of stepping ahead of myself in forecasts. I fought hard to grow our traffic, but whenever we made progress, I’d go mad imagining that growth would last forever. Of course, it never did. Whenever we had a growth spurt, something would inevitably go wrong to take it away. Now, I work hard to minimize our cycles, going for slow and steady growth versus fast and unsustainable.

Fire In Your Belly

It's critical to expand your horizons beyond the art world. Buying this book was a solid first step in that, so congratulations.

In business theory there's actually a technical term for expanding your horizons: "benchmarking." Benchmarking is when you place yourself in an unfamiliar environment and try to apply everything you learn from that environment to your business pursuits. For example, a fast food restaurant manager might visit a NASCAR pit to see if he can apply the lessons of automobile rapid repair to burger assembly. Artpreneurs can take benchmarking one step further and apply the learning from unfamiliar environments to both their art and business pursuits.

All skills have some degree of overlap with one another. Likewise, they also differ from one another in many ways. The net effect of these characteristics is that the more skills you learn (assuming some overlap between them), the easier it will become to learn even more skills. It's a powerful cycle.

If one day you grow inspired to learn a language, go for it! Even if it'll take practice time away from your art, in the long run the new language will add something new and interesting to your work. Heck, I've gleaned valuable business knowledge from books that spent half their length trying to convince me that business was a waste of time!

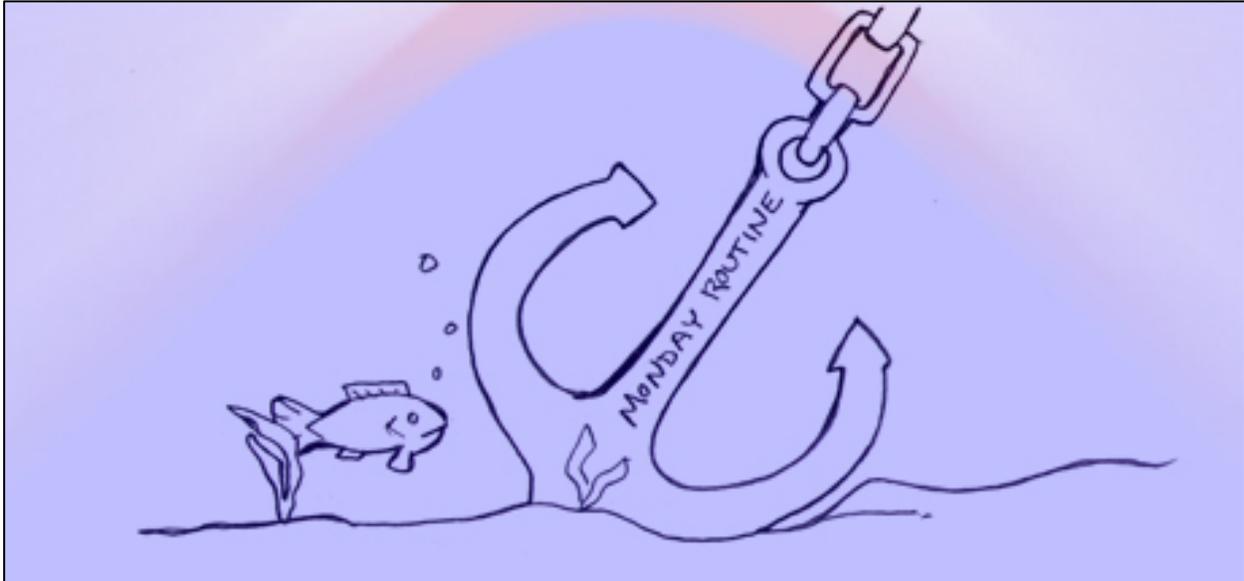
Just remember: Your drive to learn a new skill should stem from an inner fire of inspiration. It's hard to learn if you jump in from a purely rational perspective. Once you have that inner drive, put it to paper. Draw a picture of yourself at the end of your ideal outcome. If you want to learn piano, draw a picture of yourself playing piano to a cheering crowd. This picture will constantly remind you of what you're fighting for.

Jade's Poetic Pursuits:

Jade decides to enroll in a haiku class to expand her artistic horizons. The previous day she stumbled upon a beautiful haiku in an old poetry book. This kindled a fire in her belly: "I want to create something like that!"

The first day of class, Jade's teacher encouraged everyone to study painting, because the skills gained from painting a landscape help to write more visually aware poetry. Jade leaned back grinning, who'd have thought she'd enter a haiku class as a painter and yet have a natural advantage?

Anchor Ahoy



If you want to stick to a routine over a long period of time, you need what I like to call "anchor points." Defined, an anchor point is a point during the week where you're anchored to a task. Rain or shine, no matter what, you perform that task.

Here are a few examples of how anchor points can be applied to various routines:

- **Exercise.** If you force yourself to go to the gym every Monday, your body will be more receptive to gym travel the rest of the week.
- **Relationships.** If you go on a guaranteed date every Saturday with your significant other, that person will never accuse you of neglecting them. It will also keep your mind keener to take them on additional dates during the weekdays.
- **Art.** If you set aside all Sunday afternoons for experimental art, you will keep improving and differentiating your style.

People can fall into laziness despite sincere intentions to the contrary. The most effective way to combat this laziness is with anchor points. Anchor points also work best when you have external factors that lock you to the task and cause a penalty for missing it. This is why some people take classes to learn things instead of trying to teach themselves: Classes you paid to attend are harder to excuse away.

Whenever you want to tackle a long-term task, the two questions you should ask yourself are: When should I set my anchor points and what external factors can I leverage to force me to stick to them?

Jade Goes Digital:

Jade wants to keep up with the “digital revolution” in art. While she’s largely self-taught with graphic design software, she also attends a once-per-week seminar. This seminar anchors her routine and holds her motivated throughout the rest of the week. The seminar was also expensive to join, so she makes sure never to miss a class.

Your Environment Matters

Your environment has a profound effect on your productivity, and by “environment” I don’t just mean your physical environment, I also include your social environment. As an artpreneur you must strive to mold your surroundings into an optimal state.

If you perform most of your work in a cluttered, dark apartment, you’ll be more prone to depression, more subject to mood swings, and your productivity will fall to the wayside. If you hang around people who are generally unmotivated, constantly depressed, and assume you’ll fail in whatever you do, same thing.

Take the time to clean up your workspace and make it inviting. Remove depressing posters and listen to classical music instead of punk rock. You want to look forward to work, not dread it. Make sure your space is uncluttered and full of light. The best is when your desk is bathed in natural sunlight and you can gaze outside at a pleasant view.

In both personal and business dealings, be stingy with whom you befriend. Some people always have an event to complain about; or they’re always asking you for advice on the same topic, again and again, and never actually listening to it; or they’re simply dishonest and lack integrity. My advice is to spend as little time with such people as possible; they’re dragging you down with them.

Make the effort to spend your social time with positive people. People who are honest, work hard, and do magnificent things with their time. Human beings are social sponges in that they absorb the traits of those around them. Scott Adams, the author of the Dilbert series, has a theory that just being around great people will make you more likely to do great things yourself. Why? Because in the back of your head, you think: “If she can do it, then why can’t I?”

It’s easy to grow so caught up in work that you leave your place a mess and stop hanging around others altogether. Over time, this will kill your productivity, so be careful!

Katie’s Dilemma:

Katie doesn’t have many friends and the friends she does have are the epitome of pessimism. If she stops spending time with them, she’s alone. What should she do?

Katie’s in a tough spot, nobody wants to be alone. However, I think that just knowing this problem exists is good enough. Eventually Katie’s subconscious mind will push her toward a more positive friend and that can be the start of a new social group.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: You mention how your physical and social environment can affect your productivity. My question is, can it also affect your creativity?

A: A really cluttered workspace might actually be more conducive to creativity than a sterile one, and hanging around completely crazy people might inspire new directions to take your art. However, I'm concerned about your health and well-being above all else, so let's brainstorm how you can keep a positive workspace and social sphere without making yourself miserable.

First, you can constantly re-decorate. Change the colors of your place, move furniture around, and change the lighting. This should keep your mind from acclimating to your surroundings and should inspire new artistic directions.

Second, if you start to feel a mental block, you can take day trips to museums, concerts, and other interesting locations. When you do this, I also recommend not thinking about art. Push those thoughts to your subconscious, enjoy your time, and take in the sights. Eventually an alarm should sound and your block will vanish.

Third, if you're really interested in crazy or very negative people...you can read about them in psychology or literary books. This should be safer than actually bringing them into your life. Be careful though, as even reading about such people can have adverse effects.

While there might be a tension between staying positive and being creative, I strongly believe that you can do both with a little effort. It's worth it: The end results will be a happier and more productive you.

Success Loves Company

What's amazing about life is that the rich do truly grow richer, and not just from a monetary perspective, from every perspective. Better yet, one doesn't even have to be rich at the start. Let me elaborate:

Let's say you try 10 different approaches to marketing your artwork, and let's say you fail nine times but have one success. Forever forward, you have that one success under your belt and you can try to leverage it toward more successes. If you leverage that success well, then you have two successes, and so on.

The big idea is to keep trying for wins and to record them all along the way. Enter contests, try new approaches, and, if things don't go as you planned, ask yourself why they didn't go as planned and try to learn from the failures. That learning will be a valuable asset down the road.

I love building wins and it's always worked well for me. So try, try, and try some more to get those initial successes out of the way.

Related to this is the concept of "economies of scale." As you grow bigger, you can create more efficiently and at a lower cost. For example, if you're painting 100 commissions a month on canvas, you can buy a set of 100 canvases at a much lower cost per canvas than an artist who has to buy them one at a time. This means you can pass the savings to clients or simply improve your profit margin.

Win Once, Get The Second Win Free:

Jade wins second place in a small art contest. She then sees a project job opening in the classifieds for someone to paint a landscape for a company's office. She applies and mentions she was runner-up in this contest. That gets her foot in the door and she eventually secures the job. She now has two items to get her in the door at other places. Wins build on wins.

Intelligent Collaboration

This is a concept that I'm going to steal from the world of international relations. The technical term for it is "comparative advantage" and it will help you devise a strategy to more intelligently collaborate with others.

Let's say you want to partner with another artist in your business or artistic pursuits. What's the right way to divide the work so that you can make the most out of the partnership? Intuition might lead you to say "equal partners, equal work," but that would be the wrong approach.

If theory holds, both you and your partner should each specialize in the areas you're strongest in, respectively. This will lead to both individual and overall improvement. For example, if you focus on drawing and your partner focuses on coloring, you'll both eventually grow practiced at your respective functions and the end result will be greater than the sum of its parts.

What's counterintuitive about this concept is that even if one partner is better in all regards, it's still worthwhile to collaborate. While there's a lot of math that proves why, the practical example below should be good enough.

Katie And Jade Collaborate:

Jade is great at drawing and good at coloring. Katie is bad at drawing and OK at coloring. (Did you notice that Jade is better at both functions than Katie?) They're trying to decide whether they should collaborate. Using the concept of comparative advantage, Jade should spend all her time drawing (what she's best at), while Katie should spend all her time coloring. While Katie isn't as good as Jade in the coloring department, she's a lot better at coloring than she is at drawing.

By specializing both Jade and Katie will improve individually and their co-created art will grow beyond if Jade did everything herself. As a bonus, collaborating like this will also lead to faster creations.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"The strength of the team is each individual member...the strength of each member is the team"
- Phil Jackson

How to Properly Negotiate

There are plenty of books and articles featuring personal opinions on how to negotiate. However, as with brainstorming, common and personal perceptions tend to land far away from reality.

Consider this section a treat. One of the best seminars I attended in business school was on what academic researchers nailed down as the tenants of good negotiating technique. I've personally used these techniques over the last couple of years to great success.

Here are the seminar's take-home points:

- **Always Negotiate:** In your artpreneurship career, someone will most likely offer you money to do something unexpected. If the offer seems fair, you might be tempted to scream "yes!" and close the deal. However, this is the wrong course of action for two reasons: First, research demonstrates that people who make an offer and get it immediately accepted end up wondering if perhaps their offer was too generous. Second, people won't respect you if you accept their offer right away. You'll seem over-eager and like you'll say yes to anything. They might then treat you like a lapdog, with ridiculous expectations. The process of negotiating builds rapport and goodwill between people; it forms a bond. Because I advocate building relationships with clients, I advocate doing at least a little negotiating.
- **Importance of the First Offer:** You always want to make the first offer and it should be a little ambitious, since you'll probably negotiate down from there. The reason for wanting to make the first offer is that negotiations are framed by the first number stated. If, for some reason, you're not able to make the first offer, then immediately counter-offer. This will reset the other party's perceptions of the situation.
- **BATNA:** Before you enter a negotiation, gather as much information as possible, both on your position and the other person's position. During this information-gathering stage, define a BATNA as specifically as you can. BATNA stands for "Best Alternative to No Agreement." If you walk away from the negotiation, what will you do instead? This will make it easier for you to rationally decide while you're negotiating whether to stay or leave. **NEVER REVEAL YOUR BATNA.**
- **Reservation Price:** This is the absolute minimum you'd accept to say "yes." Always define this, because otherwise you might be tempted in the heat of negotiating to take an offer below your reservation price. **NEVER REVEAL YOUR RESERVATION PRICE.**

- **Win-Win or Walk Away:** Good negotiators create value for both parties. They never try to exploit the other person because, while that might yield short-term gains, long-term animosity will follow. If you can't create value for both yourself and the other party, walk away!
- **Define an Aspiration Price:** In addition to knowing your best alternative and knowing your minimum, you should also set a goal for yourself. The goal, like your first offer, should be quite ambitious.
- **Don't Fib:** Fight the sirens' sweet songs. Telling the negotiatee that you're in talks with another party is a favorite tactic. Please don't resort to this. First, you make it more difficult to reach a creative solution. Second, it's not a very classy thing to do and can annoy the other person, causing them to leave the table entirely. Third, lying will always catch up to you!
- **Don't Talk Too Much:** Spend most of your time listening to the other person, trying to drill down into what they really want, which isn't necessarily what they say they want. Also, it's worth repeating; never reveal your BATNA or reservation price! Talking too much is a weakness in negotiating.

Negotiating is scary! Even if you've done all the research and know exactly what you're going to say, it's easy to make a mistake in the heat of talks and to concede too much. Don't be too hard on yourself and always keep your long-term relationship with the other person in perspective. You want to walk away from the table with a mutual respect with the other party and a new friend that you can continue to negotiate with for years to come.

Jade And Katie Negotiate On Price:

Katie is in a meeting with a client. After showing the client a list of her offerings, he asks the most important question of the session: How much for a simple commission? Katie shrugs and asks how much the client is willing to pay. The client replies: "How about \$50?" Katie counters: "Hm...\$60?" They settle on \$55.

Jade is meeting with a separate client that same day and by sheer coincidence, the client asks about Jade's price for a simple commission. Jade responds quickly, making the first offer: "\$150. It's a little more expensive because I use very high-quality materials and I guarantee everything I do." The client was expecting a price closer to \$50, but two things led him higher. First, Jade explained why her price was what it was. This made the client feel that the price was fair. Second, Jade opened with a very high price. This caused the client to doubt his initial estimate and also psychologically made it impossible for him to counter with a price much lower, since it would seem insulting to Jade. In the end, the client offers \$125 and they settle on \$135.

Assuming everything was equal between Katie and Jade, Jade made \$70 more just by making the first offer and backing it up with a solid reason. However, both Katie and Jade deserve some credit for negotiating in the first place, since some artists would have accepted the first offer without a word, losing respect in the client's eyes.

Measure Everything



An interesting show of magic: everything you measure will improve. This is wonderful because everything is actually measurable, whether it's a process or product. The three most common measurements are quality, quantity, and speed.

The reason why measurement leads to improvement is that it first leads to awareness. When you start measuring something, you transform abstract notions about it into concrete numbers. Eventually, your awareness of those numbers leads to action, either on a conscious or subconscious level.

If you pay attention to how much money you spend on art supplies every month, you'll start to become more efficient with what you buy and how often you buy it. If you record the amount of time it takes for you to draw a commission, your hand will start to move at a faster clip. If you ask your clients to rate your commissions on a scale of 1-10, you'll start to aim for higher scores.

The sister of measurement is testing. You can only improve so much before hitting a plateau. That's why you have to start testing new approaches on the side. Eventually, after some trial and error, you'll hit an approach that eclipses your last one, leading you to exponential gains.

Fly, Adam, Fly:

I was reclining against a building on a busy sidewalk, watching a desperate street worker pass out comedy club flyers. He had the same catch-phrase, which he repeated every minute: “You dropped your sense of humor, check out our comedy club.”

If I was him, I’d do two things:

- **Start Measuring:** I’d start to measure the percentage of people who heard this phrase and accepted the flyer. For example, if 100 people passed by and 10 took the flyer, that’s a 10% “conversion rate” (the percentage of people who converted from pedestrians to potential customers).
- **Start Testing:** I’d constantly test new phrases and see how they affect the conversion rate. For example, for the next 100 people who passed by, I’d say: “Hungry? These comedy club flyers are made of chocolate.” I’d even test how I said the same lines. Maybe I’d test saying them with a British accent.

It’s not unheard of to double or triple your conversion rate with the right tweak, so spend a lot of time measuring and testing; small changes can make a big difference.

Don't Put Them To Sleep



People who create dwell on features, while people who consume focus on benefits. This is an important communication gap to narrow.

If you're painting a watercolor, you'll know all the microscopic details of that work. You'll know what brushes you used and why; you'll know what colors you mixed together and why; and you'll know exactly how much time you spent on each part of the piece.

It's great that you know all these artistic nuances, since this knowledge will help you create better work, but all the points I listed above are

features. Your clients don't care about features, they care about benefits.

Benefits are the logical extension of features. They answer the question: "so what?"

If you vitalized your painting with bright colors, that's a feature. Now, put yourself in your client's head: "So what? What's the benefit to me that this painting has bright colors?" Here's where you brainstorm and reply:

- "Bright colors will cheer you up on rainy days."
- "Bright colors will look great on that festive corner of your house."
- "Bright colors will match your bright personality and help you better express yourself."

It takes some practice to become adept at describing benefits. Always remember the "so what?" question. Just keep answering it until you can't dig any deeper. If you've defined a target audience, you should also put yourself in that audience's frame of mind when answering this question.

By knowing the distinction between features and benefits, you can avoid a huge pitfall, which is stressing features that your client doesn't care about.

A Contrast In Conversations:

Have you ever had a friend who was passionate about a topic that you couldn't care less about? Did you sit there while they droned on about it? That's what it's like to emphasize the features of your offering. When you emphasize features, people click off their brains. Just listen to Katie:

"This piece is 8 by 11 inches. I used pencil, ink, and watercolors. It took about three hours..."

Even if your potential client is interested in your work's features, they won't buy it unless they can mentally connect those features to tangible benefits. You need to hold their hands and connect the dots for them. Just listen to Jade:

"This piece is 8 by 11 inches SO you can fit it comfortably inside your school binder TO entertain you while studying. I used watercolors, SO it will make you feel relaxed and happy while looking at it..."

Katie emphasized features, while Jade emphasized benefits. Did you see the difference?

Lunch Is The Most Important Meal Of The Day

While reading books, articles, and blog posts on a regular basis has taught me a lot about business, I get the most “bang for the buck” during intimate lunch sessions. Whenever I meet or read about someone interesting, I’ll ask that person to lunch. A lot of people don’t respond, of course, but a surprising number are actually flattered by the opportunity.

During these lunch sessions, I sit down and shut up. I’m there to learn, not to talk exhausted about myself. I also keep my ears sharp for opportunities to help my guest, since it’s through both giving and receiving that friendships are born. After the lunch, I follow-up with a sincere “thank you” and make sure to fire off an email every few months to check in.

I haven’t yet walked away from a lunch session without at least one good idea. In addition to the learning benefits, they’re also a lot of fun!

Boris’ Q&A:

Q: What if you don’t like the person you take to lunch? Isn’t it sleazy to follow up with them?

A: Don’t feel obligated to keep up with someone you don’t like! It’s not right to build a relationship with a person you’re averse to, for whatever reason. The purpose of this exercise is not to “use” people; it’s to find remarkable people that you can naturally turn into friends and mentors.

The term “networking” is a dirty word in a lot of circles. I myself even cringe when I hear someone use it. It conjures adjectives such as “fake”, “phony”, and “over-ambitious.” That’s why it’s best to think of this lunch exercise as simply meeting interesting people.

Play The Expert

Quick! What are your three greatest strengths and your three most glaring weaknesses?

I hated this question when I was on the interview circuit for my first job. Obviously I'm going to list three strengths related to the job and three weaknesses that have nothing to do with it. Like many other interview questions, it was just too easy to dance around and didn't offer much practical insight into my personality.

The question of strengths and weaknesses is, however, an important one to ask yourself. The key is to stay honest and not to stop at just three; write as many as you can. The main thing to remember about strengths and weaknesses is that you can rank them both against each other and against other people.

My first boss used to state that it doesn't matter how strong you are in a given area objectively, you just have to appear a tiny bit better than someone else to play the expert in that person's eyes. This is important because your clients will expect you to be an expert in many different art disciplines.

Ideally, you'll target your artpreneurship strategy to your strengths and try to minimize the role of your weaknesses. Don't waste too much time improving your weaknesses, since that time is much better spent reinforcing your strengths or developing new skills that can become strengths later. Your unique style will stem from exceptional strengths, not from strength-weakness parity.

If you have a weakness you can't overlook, try to find a creative solution so that you won't have to expose yourself to that weakness. You could find a partner that complements your abilities, for example.

What's amazing is when a person can turn a weakness into a strength by simply taking what's unique about that weakness and spinning it to their advantage. One of my heroes on this is Woody Allen, who created an empire based on his anxious personality and frumpy looks, two features that anyone else would consider visible weaknesses.

Adam's Caveat:

If you make an egregious mistake with a client, don't rush to spin that mistake into something positive. That's just dishonest and if your client sees through the attempt, you've lost a lot of credibility in their eyes. Often, it's better to appear grim and say "My apologies. I screwed up. However, I'm going to do everything I can to make you happy, because you deserve it." Clients can be forgiving, if they know you want their forgiveness. Otherwise, they can be the rudest people below the sun.

The Synergizer Bunny

It takes a lot of time and energy to pursue a new skill or develop a new offering. That's why before you start such an undertaking, it's important to be cognizant of whether or not you can leverage the learning and output of that undertaking for multiple pursuits. This is the whole "kill two birds with one stone" adage.

As an artpreneur you'll face no shortage of opportunities. The downside to having so many is that it becomes difficult to prioritize them. My advice is to always keep the "kill two birds with one stone" maxim in the back of your head.

Using this technique, you'll be able to separate the opportunities with the potential to branch out with the opportunities that lead down one-way roads. Of course, it often makes sense to pursue one-way opportunities, so always keep other factors in mind, too.

Adam's Warehouse:

Art of Otaku, the "how to draw" book I published in 2005, was released in both digital and CD format. For the CD version of the book, I needed to devise a way to store and ship over 100 discs. The simplest but also most annoying idea was that I could put them all in my closet and run to the United States Post Office every time an order was placed.

After some research, I found a warehouse that let me store and ship all the CDs through them for a flat monthly fee plus a commission per shipment. I chose this route because I saw a lot of synergistic possibilities for having a warehouse at my disposal: I could sell any tangible product with the monthly fee subsidized by the CD sales.

Jade Is Multi-Talented:

Jade, feeling somewhat bored, decides to sign up for a class. She narrows the list of possibilities to two: Yoga and calligraphy. After some thought, she opts to sign up for the calligraphy class, since she could imagine applying elements of this method of writing to her artpreneurship.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"With the right combination, one and one can make three."
- Steven Kumble

Finance 101: Introduction

First, a confession: I hated finance in college. I always preferred the classes with direct application to start-ups. Finance was corporate-oriented and forced me to learn a lot of mathematical theory I couldn't apply anywhere else (at least at the 101 level).

Ironically, I entered college as a finance major. After attending my first finance class, I immediately switched concentrations to economics, a subject with more practical and far-reaching uses. I knew that a solid grasp of economics would serve me well not just in the corporate world, but in both the liberal arts and start-up worlds as well.

With my natural aversion to finance stated, there are a few points in financial theory that I think are important for the artpreneur to understand. If someone who hated finance as much as I did found these concepts useful, you should probably pay attention.

The four concepts I'm going to go over include: The time value of money, the importance of diversification, the trade-off between risk and return, and the distinction between bottom-up and top-down planning. These four concepts stuck with me in part because of their universal applicability.

The next time you're in a setting that you think is an absolute waste of time, whether you're at a party you don't want to attend, a class you think is useless, or a movie you find utterly stupid, at least try to keep your eyes keen. Who knows, maybe something in the setting will spark an idea you can apply elsewhere. Though I hated my finance class, I'm happy I was able to walk away with a few lessons from it.

Finance 101: Money Ages



The “time value of money” is a finance phrase that can be restated as: “a dollar today is worth more than a dollar tomorrow.”

If a client offers you the choice between \$100 today and \$100 in one year, always go with \$100 today. Why? Because you could put that \$100 in a bank and, with a 5% annual interest rate, recover \$105 a year later. Easy enough, but what do you do if your client offers you the choice between \$100 today and \$105 in one year?

If you don't have an immediate need for the \$100, you're supposed to be agnostic between the two options. At least that's what financial researchers tell you. I'm going to deviate from accepted opinion though and say that, even if you're

offered the choice between \$100 today and \$150 in one year, please go with the \$100 today. Who knows, maybe an accidental fire will torch all your art supplies. If that happens, having \$100 in cash could be a life-saver. Or maybe you stumble upon an irresistible opportunity that could transform a \$100 investment into \$1,500. Liquidity, or access to cash, is crucial.

Another reason you need cash on hand is that most vendors will expect you to pay your bills to them quickly. If you're caught without the funds, it damages both your reputation and any chance you have of working with the vendor again in the future. Think long-term about strategy but think short-term about cash. Liquidity is king.

Somewhat related, never sign long-term contracts that obligate you to a single vendor. I've never signed a multi-year contract and not regretted it at a later time. Both your business and your business environment will evolve and change rapidly and you don't want to tie yourself down in any regard. That's why you have to work out month-to-month deals with vendors, even if they offer you a discount for signing up a year or two in advance.

Big companies are concerned about the time value of money because they deal in transactions hundreds of thousands of dollars large. If a client owes a big company \$200,000, every month it takes that client to pay off the debt is thousands of dollars

in lost interest. You're not a big company though, so your practice of this concept should be toned down in favor of survival and building relationships.

Get paid quickly, pay your bills quickly, don't tie yourself down in any regard, stay debt free, and keep a lot of cash on hand.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: It's interesting that you advocate paying your bills quickly. Most finance classes I've taken state that you should instead put off paying bills as long as you can. Then you can earn interest on the proceeds.

A: The math does lend itself to such a strategy, but I strongly recommend getting them over with to build long-term relationships with your vendors. Having a history of on-time payments can be a valuable asset down the road. Reputation > Interest.

Lessons In General Finance:

If you manage to save a little money every month for your retirement, the best place to put it is in a passive index fund. I recommend and use Vanguard's S&P 500 fund. The stock market, over the long haul, will always pay the highest interest rates and passive index funds have such low overhead that you'll get to keep more of those gains compared to other services.

Finance 101: One Egg Per Basket Is Difficult To Carry

Financial theorists wield a lot of math to prove that it's always better over the long term to invest in a myriad of stocks and assets. Advertising theorists encourage clients to spread their advertising budget over multiple media channels. There's no doubt that diversification is important in a corporate setting, but how does it apply to the life of an entrepreneur? To answer this question, let me first step back and define diversification.

Diversification simply means not putting all your eggs in one basket. This is because external events, completely out of your control, can come along and lay waste to everything you invested your time and money into. To reuse the egg analogy, a storm could surge and blow that one basket out of your hand, shattering all the eggs against a tree.

The downside to diversification is that if you've diversified too much, you're spread thin. It thus becomes difficult to manage all the different areas you've diversified into and achieving truly spectacular results becomes almost impossible.

I don't recommend diversifying when you're starting out. Diversify your life, yes, make sure that if your venture doesn't do well that you're still at least somewhat protected. But don't diversify the venture itself. I want you to really go for it and focus, creating offerings that ignite a 'wow' factor with your audience.

When you progress to the stage where things are going well, then I want you to think about diversifying. Experiment with new offerings or maybe even a new target audience.

Finance 101: Risk-Return Opportunities

There are scant opportunities in life where you can reap great rewards with a low level of risk. Such opportunities are called “arbitrage opportunities” in the financial world and discovering them is like finding the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.

It’s difficult to understand what an arbitrage opportunity is in theory, so let me explain with a practical, art-centric example:

Imagine you live in Town A and you notice a store that sells sketch pads for \$1 each. Later that day you visit Town B, located minutes away from town A, and meet an artist willing to buy sketch pads for \$10 each. This is an arbitrage opportunity because you can simply keep traveling between Town A and Town B, buying and selling sketch pads at a \$9 no-risk profit.

The problem with arbitrage opportunities is that they rarely last. Eventually the artist will grow tired of buying sketch pads and reduce the amount he’s willing to spend for each. The store’s manager too will start to wonder if perhaps she should raise the price she charges for each sketch pad, since you are buying so many.

I bring up arbitrage opportunities because it highlights the risk-reward framework for artpreneurship. Imagine if being an artpreneur had no risk associated with it: any artpreneur who can’t create value gets all the money they spent refunded by the government. With these conditions, who wouldn’t want to be an artpreneur?

Instead, artpreneurs face great risks to attain financial independence. They often work longer hours than their office friends; it can take them years to get anywhere with their offerings; they can lose all their money; they must often live paycheck to paycheck, and they can alienate their significant other, who feels neglected. If you’re not prepared for these risks, then don’t become an artpreneur!

Finance 101: Bottom-Up Versus Top-Down Planning

This is a concept that jumped out at me between naps in finance 101. My friends couldn't shut me up about it afterward, not because the concept could help me pick stocks, but because I could apply it to both business and life topics. The concept I'm talking about is the distinction is between "bottom-up" and "top-down" planning.

When picking stocks you have two approaches at your disposal: You can either buy stocks for companies you like (bottom-up), or you can strategize and say "I want 30% of my portfolio to be made of transportation stocks, 50% of food stocks, and 20% of energy stocks." The latter method is top-down since you don't really care what companies fall in those faceless percentages.

Some people are rigidly top-down in their approach to finding a significant other. They might coo: "I want a boy who's at least six feet tall. He has to have emerald green eyes and blonde hair. Oh, and he has to have gone to private school and graduated with honors. And pampering too! He has to pamper me constantly, all the while maintaining that gorgeous smile of his."

Others, however, might prefer a bottom-up approach, simply keeping their eyes open and letting themselves fall in love with someone they would have never otherwise expected.

Both top-down and bottom-up approaches carried to an extreme will yield unfavorable results. If you're rigidly top-down, you close off a lot of options, while if you're rigidly bottom-up, you have no structure to eliminate options.

Artpreneurs have to find the right mix between bottom-up and top-down planning. You have to be top-down in that you must create a plan of attack, but you also have to be bottom-up in your willingness to take unexpected turns. You must stay agile with a strategic focus. It's a hard balance to maintain, but knowing that this tension exists is often good enough. Now you know!

Shine Unique



Many artists stay far away from the corporate world because they don't want to lose their individual identity and become a "cog" or a "suit" in a vast business machine. While it's true that some people in business do end up as cogs, the most successful ones often possess the most unique personalities.

Having a unique personality allows you to stand out and approach difficult problems in a tangential way. It also helps you build a more lasting impression on your peers

and gives you the freedom to hone your specific strengths. While you should endeavor to a certain level of professionalism with your clients, don't forget that you don't have to compromise your personal quirks to do so. Let your unique personality shine.

Two of the most interesting entrepreneurs of our age are Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. Steve Jobs, the founder and CEO of Apple Computer was anything but a suit when he started the company. He was vulgar, a college drop-out, and more an artist than engineer. While these traits got him into trouble from time-to-time, they helped him create a company with one of the most passionate audiences in the world.

Bill Gates, on the other hand, is famous for his uber-nerd persona that has inspired a legion of caricatures. He is certainly not the type of person you'd expect at the head of a boardroom table in a major corporation. As he was growing Microsoft, he embraced his nerdy self and became a celebrity for it.

When both Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were starting their companies, few business executives took them seriously. However, by remaining true to their own personalities, they were able to elevate themselves to the point where the business establishment still falls over itself to this day to unearth the secrets of their success.

When looking at great entrepreneurs, it's easy to say "Oh, if I had a type A business personality, I'd be just as successful." This isn't the case. Entrepreneurs are successful because their personalities deviate from the norm.

The take-home point is simple: be yourself and be quirky! In fact, if you aspire to become an artpreneur, quirkiness goes double for you. After all, you not only want to stand out in the business world, but you have that whole art thing to worry about too.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

“Do not be awe struck by other people and try to copy them. Nobody can be you as efficiently as you can.”

- Norman Vince Peale

Death By A Thousand Paper Cuts



Ouch, that sounds painful.

I'm a huge proponent that, while the big picture is important, details hold the difference between "wow!" and "why?" Over the course of your artpreneurship, you'll face numerous opportunities to compromise your vision. Maybe you had an innovative idea for a flyer, but printing in color ended up being much more expensive than you thought. Maybe you wanted a certain feature on your personal website, but your programmer said the feature would cause browser compatibility issues. It's easy to throw your arms up in the air and say "you win; let's go with a compromised solution." However...

If you keep compromising on those small details, the end result will be mediocre at best. Rather than settle for something that's mediocre, my advice is to fight for the details. You might not win every fight, and it's handy to know when to relent, but never accept a compromise at first glance, very rarely is it the only option on the table.

My rule of thumb: If the only way to push a detail through is through an unhappy compromise, then it's often better to kill that detail and move on than to create something confusing, bloated, or mediocre. If you can't print your innovative flyer idea in color, then come up with a new idea, rather than printing it in black and white.

Why Is Boris So Curious?:

Boris wasn't always concerned about the details; there was once a time when he never asked questions and just dove in, with a big-picture focus guiding him along. How did he transform into the careful, deliberate, and always-questioning Boris of today?

One Christmas, long ago, Boris was in charge of cooking the family feast. Not to be bothered by the details, he didn't measure the ingredients for his recipes exactly and he substituted ingredients with others that he thought would be OK. In short, he compromised almost every step of every recipe. While each individual compromise in isolation wasn't unreasonable, combining them in tandem created an end result that was almost inedible. Boris failed his family that day and he vowed never to skimp on the details ever again.

Evolve Yourself

Evolutionary biology is one of my favorite academic subjects. If you haven't read Richard Dawkins' The Selfish Gene, you're in the dark about much of the world around you. As with all my interests, one of the reasons I enjoy the subject is because of its applicability to other areas in life.

For this section I'm going to outline how you can apply the process of evolution to designing your commercial offerings. Let's begin with a rough overview of how evolution works:

First, there's a degree of variation among a certain species. One member of the species might jump a little higher than average while another might be a little more tan in color.

Second, members of this species interact with their environment. By "environment," I mean other species, the weather, and the landscape. During this interaction, because there's variation within the species, some members of that species thrive while others die out. If the landscape is sandy, then it's not surprising that the tanner animals have a better chance of survival, since they blend in so much easier.

Third, surviving members of this species create more offspring, who inherit their parents' unique traits and so possess a greater chance of survival. After countless generations, we're left with a highly evolved organism—a species where almost every single member possesses sand-colored skin, for example.

The beauty of evolution isn't so much in the dog-eat-dog process as it is in the elegant outcome: a species that matches its environment perfectly. Much has been written about the beauty of our ecosystem; you want that same sense of "wow" to pervade your offerings. To accomplish this, I recommend a technique called "rapid prototyping."

Rapid prototyping is where you throw together a quick prototype, spend time with it, have other people look at it, keep the best, drop the worst, and start again. Do this a few times quickly, and you're left with a really cool end product. Compare rapid prototyping to if you just spent a lot of time upfront creating something with no feedback. Even if you invested 10 times the energy into the latter method, the rapid prototyped version will probably be superior.

Evolution should be an ongoing process. When you have an offering, constantly gather feedback, take notes, and prepare for the next iteration. Never stop improving!

Jade's Calendar:

Jade decided to craft a calendar to feature her artwork. In addition to creating a promising new offering, she also saw this calendar as an opportunity to test the concept of rapid prototyping.

The first step in rapid prototyping is to throw something together very quickly. Jade took twelve 8x11 sheets of paper and stapled them together at the top. She pasted a different piece of artwork at the top of each page and then scribbled in date boxes and the names for each month. The result was an ugly, but tangible representation of a calendar. Armed with this prototype, she engaged numerous people for feedback. Eliciting feedback was easy because she had something physical to give them.

Jade discovered that most people didn't think the art she chose for the spring months worked well. Time for prototype number two! She flung together a new calendar that featured new artwork for the spring months. Again, she engaged people for feedback and again, she was driven to create yet another prototype.

This process lasted a few weeks. Finally, when everything was set, she simply carried her finalized prototype to a local printer and had them create a professional calendar from it. The end result was breath-taking; who knew it all began with 12 8x11 sheets of paper and a few scribbles?

A Positive Science



While I've expounded at length about the different forms of competition, I want to re-emphasize that artpreneurship is not a "you versus everyone else" battle; it's a "you versus you" battle.

As an artpreneur you have to fight longer and harder than your peers. You have to fight to stay motivated, fight to keep your feelings

of doubt at bay, and, central to it all, fight to remain positive. Science can help you.

Positive Psychology is a fascinating new field of study popularized by Dr. Martin Seligman, a University of Pennsylvania researcher. It's a practical discipline with the goal of exercising your mind to think more positively.

Every day both good and bad things occur. The type of person you are dictates which type of events will catch your attention. Positive psychology trains your mind to focus on the good, and this is powerful because it'll not only make you a better artpreneur, it'll culminate in a better life.

Here's my favorite positive science exercise, summarized:

Every night, before you go to bed, recall all the positive things that went well that day and why. For example: "I finished my first watercolor painting, because I was persistent and never gave up."

I personally use the time right after brushing my teeth and before washing my face to look myself in the mirror and complete this exercise. The first few days I did it I had trouble recalling specific events, but after a few days I could rattle off a list of 10-15 positive things easy, and the next morning I'd feel more upbeat than normal.

Another effect of this exercise is that you'll start focusing on the good events that occur in a typical day and you'll grow to realize that good things are caused and don't just happen at random. This should make you more pro-active in bringing about positive change.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: I don't get it, throughout this book you talk about "being yourself," but now you're telling me to be more positive. Please explain.

A: Being positive isn't about changing your personality; it's about giving you the confidence to express the nuances of your personality to others. It will also give you the fortification needed to survive the hard times. Artpreneurship is difficult; you have to do everything in your power to strengthen your resolve in anticipation.

The Pareto Principle

80% of the learning you'll take away from this book will only come from 20% of the material, and 80% of your sales will only come from 20% of your clients. If you look for it, you'll find this 80/20 division everywhere, and you can thank the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto for coining the percentages. (The 80/20 rule is better known as the "Pareto Principle.") Whether you're charting the amount of time you spend across clients or analyzing what fraction of your offerings drive your sales, dig for the presence of an 80/20 division.

Assuming the Pareto Principle holds true in your endeavors, there are a plethora of things you can do to take advantage of it. If 80% of your sales go to 20% of your clients, then doesn't it make sense to treat those 20% like rock stars? If 80% of your sales go to 20% of your offerings, then doesn't it make sense to put those best-sellers front and center in everything you do? Of course it does!

If you're particularly bold, it might make business sense to drop the bottom 80% altogether. Is this impractical? Maybe, but it's also something to think about, if only to emphasize the importance of focus, focus, focus.

Stop Waiting For Permission

As you progress as an artpreneur patience and planning become increasingly crucial, but to get started, you have to get started!

Getting started often means being a little stupid, being a little daring, and suffering growing pains. Don't spend an eternity planning. If you can keep your investment low, it's far better to ignore the red tape and dive in than to delay yourself with excuses. We're conditioned to believe from an early age that in order to learn something, we have to take a class, acquire a certificate, or gain years of experience. Humbug!

While I can't disparage the importance of textbook learning, it's essential that you leap into situations on your own. That way when you run into a problem, you'll be super-motivated to solve it and will have to figure out quickly whether it's best to come up with your own innovative solution, to seek and find a resource to help you, or to sidestep the problem altogether.

When you run into a problem while working through a textbook, what's your motivation to solve it? The possibility that you might someday run into a similar problem in the real world? This isn't nearly as fulfilling as when you're solving a problem with real money at stake.

Try to get started as soon as you can. Remember that you're not just working for yourself, you're working for yourself five years from now. You want the future you to have learned as many lessons and have as many professional relationships as possible. If you're going to war, who would you rather have on your side: Someone who spent five years in bootcamp or someone who spent five years in actual combat?

Can Artpreneurship Be Taught?

☞ won't lie to you; talent plays a part in the success of an artpreneur. Some people are just born with an intuitive sense of artpreneurship and some people aren't. Panicking? You shouldn't be, because the exact same thing can be said of anything, even art.

The goal of this book isn't to make you the Bill Gates of the art world, it's to make you the best artpreneur that you can be. Chances are, if you have no background in business theory, you'll learn a ton by reading this book regardless of how naturally the practical application comes to you.

What's difficult about artpreneurship is that you have to be part business-minded and part art-minded. If you don't have a strong and unique style in your art, but you're intensely business-minded, you're an entrepreneur and not an artpreneur. On the flip side, if you're strong as an artist but haven't done any homework in business (or don't have a business-studied partner), then you're probably undervaluing yourself. Here's a rough formula for success in artpreneurship:

Success In Artpreneurship = Natural Talent In Art + Natural Talent In Business + Practice In Art + Practice In Business + Studying Art Theory + Studying Business Theory

Assuming you have all the artistic talents and even if you don't have much natural talent in business, you can still accomplish great things by studying business theory and putting those concepts into practice.

The bottom line is that artpreneurship can be taught, though you have to remember that books like this will only provide half the teaching. The other half will come from you putting the theory into practice. After some obsessive, hard work, you'll finally be able to ignore those pesky genes.

Katie Creates A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy:

Katie sees the formula above and frowns. "I wasn't built for artpreneurship," she starts, "How can I study business theory when I suck at business and can't even open a business book without falling asleep?"

Research has shown that your behavior is a function of how you view yourself. If you tell yourself that you "suck at business," then you're creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Trust me; if you can learn how to paint a landscape, then you can learn enough about business to succeed as an artpreneur.

If you're having trouble motivating yourself to read business books, then you're picking the wrong books. Choose something pertinent to your current circumstance. If you're having trouble marketing a new offering, then find a book on entrepreneurial marketing. Every chapter should spark ideas and keep you reading. If that still doesn't work, then ask around to find the smartest business-minded person you know and recruit them as a mentor/resource/partner.

Never Give Up (But Morph Your Losses Wisely)

You decide to sell postcards featuring your artwork. Understanding the 80/20 rule, you select your most popular works of art to emblazon on the card prints. After an extensive search you locate a reputable printing company and then spend hundreds of dollars to create the postcards. You put them up on your website for sale, and wait.

Nothing happens.

“Oops! That sucked.”

So this postcard pursuit didn't quite work out the way you intended. What now? You could trash the postcards, tell all your artist friends that no one buys postcards, and then send me a long-winded email venting and pleading for advice. Or you could flex those creative muscles and brainstorm how to morph this loss into a win. You always have to think long-term; in the artpreneurship world things are never binary, never “succeed or fail.” Here's how I'd approach this calamity:

First, I'd deal with the inventory on hand. I spent a lot of money printing postcards and now I have to figure out a way to recoup at least some of that investment. Here are a few example techniques I could use to turn my postcard inventory into cash (or goodwill):

- I could slash the price of each postcard to see if that will move them.
- I could offer postcards as a cheap bundle upgrade with my other offerings.
- I could give a set of postcards away in a contest designed to generate goodwill with my existing clients.
- I could give each new client a free postcard as an incentive to jump into my offerings.
- I could mail a postcard to each of my existing clients with a note about my next great offering.

Once I've settled on a way to get rid of my inventory, I'd try to extract as much learning as possible. Not everyone can pull off creating a beautiful set of postcards, and while the postcards might not have sold well, the skills and education gained from creating them will last forever.

Here are a few sample ways I could leverage the learning:

- If I was drawing an expensive commission for someone, I would casually tell them that, for an extra fee, I could create postcards of that work.
- Since I have experience working with a high-quality printing vendor, I could investigate printing other things, like posters or calendars.
- I could try again with the postcards, but invest a little less in them and print them specially for a holiday, like Christmas or Valentine's Day.

Whenever you have a failure, you want to follow this rough template of first stepping back and asking yourself how to minimize the damage of the failure, and then asking yourself what kind of learning can you extract from the failure. Do this, and you'll always succeed, even in your darkest hour.

Sell To Groups

My first boss would often proclaim that selling to companies and organizations is far preferable than selling to individuals. Companies place bigger orders, possess more money, and require less ongoing support. Companies are also more predictable in their wants and if you attract only a few of them as clients, that's all you really need.

The downside? Getting your foot in the door with organizations is hard, especially for anything art-related. Keep this difficulty in mind, but don't let it discourage you—just spend a little time now and again brainstorming on how you can position your artwork for organizations.

If you know anyone that works in an organization, ask them for help. In order to sell to an organization it's crucial that the relevant decision-makers know who you are. For example, imagine that a company's communications department is producing a flyer and needs an artist to do some illustrations for it. If the person in charge of the flyers remembers meeting you, you'll be the first one they'll call.

Adam's Preference:

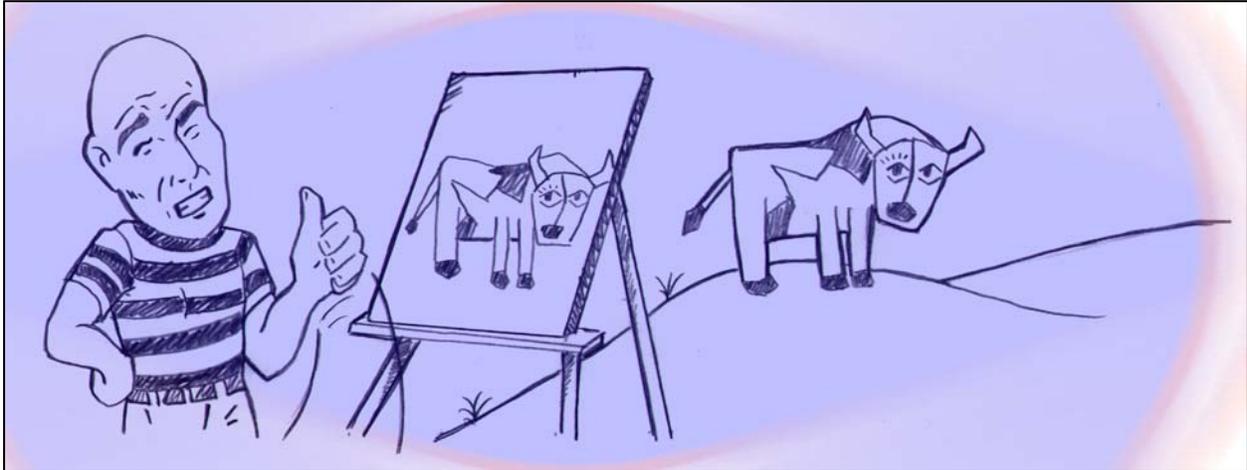
I have to admit that I personally love serving an audience of people more than an audience of companies, so interests also play a part. However, with Art of Otaku, it was quite cool to get an order for 100 copies from a single company (even if each copy was deeply discounted).

Jade's Group Rates:

What's the easiest way to sell to a group of people versus an individual? Group rates! A local organization wanted to commission a portrait for each of its founding officers, five in total. The portraits would adorn the walls of the organization's entrance hallway.

Those in charge of finding the artist to paint the portraits stumbled upon Jade, who advertised a deeply discounted group rate. By selling this group rate, Jade was able to secure five commissions with only one client.

Good Artists Copy, Great Artists Steal



Believe it or not, the title above is a quote from the one and only Pablo Picasso!

If you think about it, in art, everyone steals and everyone plagiarizes. Not obviously and not completely of course, but to some degree. Every time a writer reads a new book, they've absorbed the author's writing style. Every time a painter ponders an innovative work of art, their perception of what art is gets reshaped.

The distinction to me between copying and stealing is one between blindly mimicking and grabbing root of what's new about a work and then applying that to your own unique style. I definitely agree with Picasso that the latter kind of theft requires vastly more talent than merely "copying."

As an artpreneur you want to keep your eyes open for opportunities to seize inspiration and apply it to your own style. You want to do this for both your artistic and business pursuits. If you stumble upon a great idea from another artpreneur, don't be embarrassed to start thinking about how you can apply the core of that idea to your own offering. Heck, it doesn't even have to be from another artpreneur! If you're really talented, you can start "stealing" good ideas from all over the place.

Jade's Video Game "Theft":

Jade is playing a video game and is stunned silent when she sees how surreal and gorgeous the grass in the game appears. She immediately stops what she's doing and tries to figure out how to make the textures in her paintings have a similar feel. The combination of her own style with this inspiration produces work that is quite remarkable.

Katie Doesn't Steal, She Copies:

Katie decides to create a website to house her art portfolio. Untrained in web design, she copies another artist's website source code and then makes a few subtle changes. "It's different enough that no one will notice," she thinks. After launch, the first email she gets from a visitor has a hyphenated subject line: "Rip-Off." Katie decides to start again from scratch.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

I'd chime in, but the title of this section is itself a famous quote. Not fair!

Competition 101

I don't want you to adopt an offensive posture and seek to "destroy" the competition, the taste of blood in your mouth. That's unhealthy and ultimately counterproductive. Instead, I want you to improve your artwork and spend your time mastering yourself. That's the essence of artpreneurship. Despite what you may have heard about competition, it's actually a great thing and you should welcome it!

Competition helps spur new ideas. If your competitor releases an offering that's innovative, it can set your mind on a tangential path, leading you to discover something else that's innovative. Competition also wards off laziness, providing constant, external motivation.

Lest you think that all forms of competition were created equal, there are three different types that exist:

- **Monopoly:** You're probably familiar with this form of competition. It's when only one person or organization thoroughly dominates a field. If you're the only caricature artist on the sidewalk, you have a monopoly on that sidewalk. To become a monopolist, I advocate taking an inside-out approach. Push yourself hard and create unique art. If you play your cards right, this should build an audience so passionate that you'll have a monopoly even in the presence of competition. The advantage with this type of monopoly is that you won't be tempted into laziness with it. Instead, to keep competitors at bay and to keep your audience loyal, you'll have to grow and improve, always.
- **Oligopoly:** This is the form of competition where a few very large players share the field amongst themselves. Oligopolies can be frightening because each player becomes competitive and responsive to the moves of every other player. It's a giant multi-player chess game. If you're trapped in an oligopoly situation, utilize positioning to its utmost.
- **Perfect Competition:** You never, ever want to be in a perfectly competitive environment. Perfect competition implies that there are a lot of players and there's no difference between their offerings. In the presence of perfect competition, people buy on price alone and because of this, the price you can charge falls to an absolute minimum. Imagine if you're at a convention table selling prints and there are 100 other artists with prints almost identical to yours, also for sale. Pretty soon you'll have to slash your price to only a few cents above what the prints cost you to make! That's no way to earn a living and demeans your artwork. Thankfully, by reading this book and understanding concepts such as positioning, you can avoid this trap.

If you remember anything about competition, just remember to forget those “other artists” and focus on yourself. Only then can you become a self-sufficient artpreneur.

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

“Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is power.”
- Lao Tzu

Quality Not Quantity

“I want more food”

“I want more money”

“I want to sleep more hours”

People are often deathly focused on quantity, for a number of reasons. More is easier to recognize, easier to measure, and easier to show off. We’re trained from an early age to pursue quantity of life versus quality of life. The rich are admired, not because they’re necessarily smarter or harder-working than the rest of us, but because they can afford more things. More pervades our culture, but the secret to artpreneurship isn’t in more, nor is it in less, it’s in better.

There are two problems with more. First, it’s a never-ending path. You’ll earn more money, for example, and when you become acclimated to it, you’ll need to earn even more to satisfy you. The second problem with more is that it requires maintenance. If you purchase 10 cartons of eggs, it becomes a task to keep up with the expiration dates of each one.

As an artpreneur, while you should appreciate the merits of quantity, it’s often better to spend your time pursuing quality. One well-crafted offering is easily more valuable than 10 ill-conceived peers. The great things you do will drive you forward both personally and professionally while the mediocre will keep you locked in place.

Take a second and read the first three lines of this concept again. Then, move on to these three:

“I want satisfying food”

“I want enriching things to spend my money on”

“I want to sleep easier at night”

What a difference, right?

You can also apply the idea that quality one-ups quantity to your audience. If you own a website that allows a visitor to request a portrait commission, which type of visitor would you prefer on a typical day:

- 1,000 random Internet visitors.

- 1 wealthy art lover who is shopping intently for an artist to do her portrait and who was given a strong recommendation to visit your site.

Even though the quantity of the second option is 1,000 times fewer than the first, it's probably 10 times more valuable. The chance that the wealthy art lover will ask you for a portrait is high, probably in the double digits. The chance that anyone in the random sampling will ask you for anything is practically null.

Don't fall into the trap of mistaking quantity of audience for quality of audience (untargeted versus targeted). You can live a comfortable life by just serving a few high-quality individuals or companies on a regular basis; there's no need to kill yourself for volume.

Adam's Lackluster Semester:

Katie gets a phone call from a company promising 10,000 visitors to her website for only \$20. Katie's website sells her unique art prints. She starts to salivate at the possibilities:

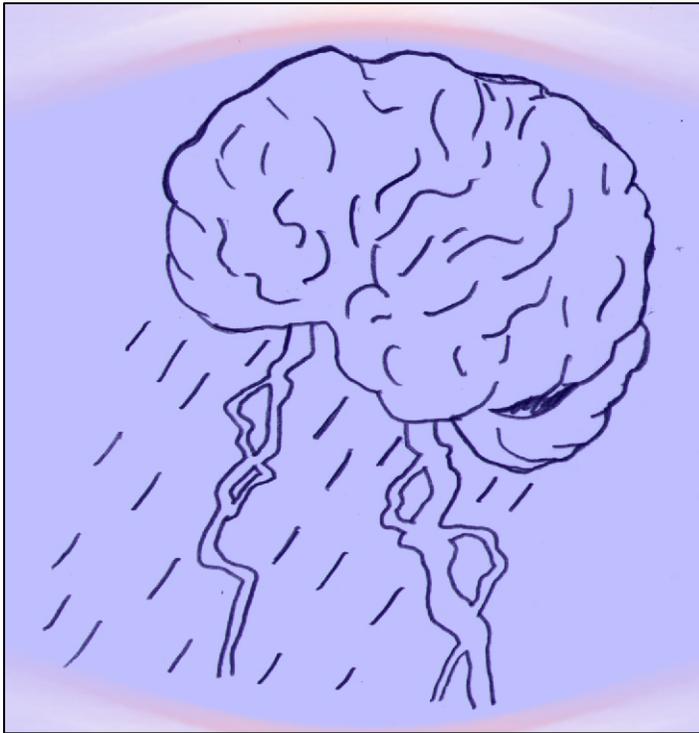
"If only 1% of those 10,000 visitors buy my prints, that's 100 sales! If each print makes me \$5, that's \$500!" Katie buys the \$20 deal and waits patiently for the money to start fluttering through her window. It doesn't. The 10,000 visitors arrive at her site and each of them leaves seconds later: Not one sale.

Note: A lot of companies offer these types of deals and I advise you to stay far away! Most of the visitors they give you aren't really even people, they're computer programs refreshing your website over and over again.

Jade's 50 Referrals:

Jade persuades one of her artpreneur friends to email each of his clients asking if they'd be interested in her work. Even though her friend only has 50 clients, five end up ordering one of Jade's pieces!

Brainstorming



There are a lot of popular notions about the “correct” way to brainstorm. The media often defines brainstorming with the vision of a few people in a room, standing around a white board, and yelling their ideas at a designated writer. Together, they come up with a list and then debate the merits of each item.

Unfortunately, the populist perception of how to brainstorm is much different than the academic reality of it. Brainstorming is a huge part of artpreneurship, so it’s important that you know how to brainstorm effectively.

According to business researchers, if you’re brainstorming toward the answer to a question that only has one solution, then the method described in the first paragraph works best. However, if you’re brainstorming to generate a list of alternatives, options, or ideas, then the best method of brainstorming is actually to have each person, on their own, come up with a separate list privately. Then, once each person has a list, the group goes around and makes a master list of everyone’s ideas.

Brainstorming private lists and then sharing them will generally lead to a longer and higher-quality output than if the group was completely collaborative. Here are a few reasons why:

- People take more ownership in their ideas because they write them down ahead of time.
- People are less reliant on others to come up with all the ideas.
- People who are more reserved receive an equal share of voice with people who possess more dominant personalities.
- People present bolder and riskier ideas, since they have a little more time to think of how to defend them.

- People have more time to reflect on the question or problem at hand. This leads to better quality ideas.

In addition to knowing the “correct” way to brainstorm, it’s also important to hand-pick the people you invite to your brainstorming sessions carefully. You want positive people who are diplomatic and won’t hurt one another’s feelings. You also want smart people from a diversity of backgrounds, since they can offer insightful and varied perspectives.

Artpreneurship Skill #1: Seeking

Here are two skills I want you to master: the art of seeking and the art of opportunity focus. Mastering these skills will help you solve any problem that comes your way and will train your mind to think less like an artist and more like an artpreneur. This section covers the art of seeking.

Seeking is the first step you should take when tackling a difficult decision. This decision can relate to anything: what offering you should produce next, what vendor to work with, or even what art supplies to purchase.

When I tell you to become a good seeker, I really mean that you need to become methodical about how you search for solutions. One of the differences between a good artpreneur and a great artpreneur is that the great one, with the same resources, finds better solutions for their incoming needs.

Let's say you're looking for a company to print Valentine's Day cards that feature your artwork. You could kick open the yellow pages, close your eyes, and randomly select a vendor in the "printing services" section. This should take less than a minute. On the flip side, you could call and interview every single printing company within a 500 mile radius. This should take somewhere between one and two years. Ideally, you land somewhere in the middle with your approach and spend more time seeking on important decisions and less time on ones that have no bearing.

I recommend investing a lot of time seeking when you're trying to find an outside vendor. Knowing reliable companies and having experience working with them is a valuable asset that will serve you well down the road. There's also a huge difference between the worst, medium, and best performers in a category. Typically, I like to work with individual people or small businesses over big companies, just because they can be more flexible and I have quicker access to the head decision-makers. There are times though that I do go with larger companies if they're clearly superior and if it's critical for me to have the best solution.

I spend a lot of my time seeking. Problems come up and I have to either solve them intelligently or find an expert to solve them for me; both paths require seeking. After I find a solution I always make a record of that solution and, if any outside parties are engaged, I jot down their contact information. History tends to repeat itself.

I'm sure that even with your own art you've had to do a lot of seeking. You've had to scour your area for art stores, find websites that let you upload your art, or even secure books that help you understand the business needs of artists (grin).

The big question: How do you become a good seeker? The first step is to understand the importance of seeking. I hope what I've written so far convinces you of that.

The second step is to leverage existing contacts. One of the first lessons that hiring managers learn is that people who are referred into a company by existing employees make the best hires. Leverage this fact for your seeking. If someone you trust recommends an art store, a vendor, or a piece of software, then weigh that recommendation strongly. Recommendations and referrals can come from the people you least suspect, so ask everyone you know for help.

The third step is to leverage online communities. There are dozens of message boards out there waiting to be scoured. Search them to see if there's been a thread discussing what you're looking for. If not, simply register an account and ask! The benefit of this is that, if your post is popular, you'll receive a lot of different ideas and perspectives.

The fourth step is to start "googling." Just don't stop when you find an option that's enticing. Instead, jot that option down and keep searching. A useful but little-known tool on Google lets you search just the companies who pay to use Google advertising. If you're looking for a vendor, this can help narrow your search to more serious prospects. The URL for this tool is:

<http://www.google.com/sponsoredlinks>

Rather than finding more information-oriented sites, this tool will help you find actual businesses.

The fifth step takes place after you've made a list of options and alternatives. If your list has a few potential vendors on it, search online to see if that vendor has positive reviews. Try to search for the keyword "review" or "scam" or "sucks" next to the vendor's name. For example, if you're evaluating "Adam's Art Store" search Google for "Adam's Art Store scam" and see if anything comes up. You can never be too careful.

(This has literally saved me time and time again, especially while apartment hunting. Don't give anyone the benefit of the doubt!)

As you practice seeking, you'll become faster and better at it. One quick note though is to trust your gut. If a particular vendor shines on paper but you have a strange feeling about them, stay away! Instincts are there for a reason.

Happy seeking!

Artpreneurship Skill #2: Opportunity Focus

For better or worse, it's amazing how the human mind can filter one's perceptions of the world. If you keep thinking about a certain number, you'll see it everywhere: On signs, in the elevator, and on mailboxes. If you're interested in a particular car, you'll notice dozens of them on the road: "Where did all those Hummers come from?" If you have a crush on someone, you'll interpret their every action as to having to do with them liking you.

As an artpreneur, you want to train your mind to see the world as a fountain of opportunities, because the more you think about opportunities, the more opportunities you'll in turn see (and sometimes create). This is beautiful because the more opportunities you see, the better the odds that you'll pursue the right ones.

Having an opportunity focus can help you design new offerings, improve existing offerings, and attract clients. That said what can you do to nurture an opportunity focus?

As with Martin Seligman's positive psychology exercise, I think you can build an opportunity focus by simply taking time out of your day, every day, to think about all the potential opportunities that occurred. The key is not to limit yourself to opportunities within reason—be outlandish! If you meet an astronaut on the bus, write down at the end of the day that it was an opportunity to test your idea of selling art to NASA. If you read in the newspaper that gas prices are the highest they've ever been, record that as an opportunity to create artistic t-shirts to mock the event. The importance of this exercise isn't the physical list you create, it's the training you give your mind to quickly spot opportunities.

I personally attune myself to spotting opportunities within three categories: people, news, and trends. So pay extra attention when you meet someone new, when you read the news, or when you see a trend blooming.

The Busier The Better

It's counterintuitive. You'd think that productivity and free time would be positively related. The more free time you have, the more time you can spend on your work, the more time you have to refine it, and the less likely you are to burn yourself out. Yes, in theory it sounds like you should strive for as much free time as possible. However, in practice I've found the opposite to be the case.

I'd assert that there's a negative relationship between free time and productivity. The less free time you have, the more productive you'll become. The busier you are, the better all your work will turn out. Why is this so? I can only speak for myself, but...

I find that when I have a lot of things going on in a typical day, it forces me to focus on each task in a rapid-fire way, killing any thoughts of procrastination and even rising a late-sleeper like myself out of bed early. Of course, I don't go overboard and balance periods of intense work with periods of intense relaxation. That's one reason I hate the motto "work hard, play hard"—it sounds tiring! My motto is "work hard, relax soft."

As a bonus, relaxing soft will also enable you to take a step back and see the bigger picture. All the test preparation courses I've taken give the same advice when tackling a difficult problem: take a step back first! If you jump on a raft and paddle hard without scouting the river, you could end up rowing toward a waterfall.

Adam's Lackluster Semester:

I did very well seven out of my eight semesters in college. The one semester where I performed poorly was when I decided to take a small break. I took the minimum number of credits and scheduled all my classes for the afternoon. What ended up happening was I put everything off until the last minute because I always felt like I had a ton of free time to catch up. I also slept until noon at the earliest and was generally unmotivated.

Boris' Q&A:

Q: Is there a contradiction here? First, you advocate taking a lot of breaks. Now, you advocate keeping as busy as possible. How do you reconcile these two pieces of advice?

A: Just because you strain your shoulders with work doesn't mean you can't take breaks often. Indeed, regularly scheduled breaks will help you rejuvenate and you'll plow through your work pile better and faster with them than without. Take short breaks while working on a project and long breaks in-between projects. Reward yourself for a job well done, you deserve it!

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"If you want something done, ask someone who's busy."

Without Exception

In management theory there's a big no-no called "management by exception." While you might not know what the phrase means, you've certainly encountered the concept. Picture yourself...

- In a classroom. Your t-shirt is moist and your fingers snap a little too often. Last week you handed in your best self-portrait yet and are awaiting its safe return. "Here you go" your teacher mutters and drops the piece on your desk, face-up. A bold, red "95%" reflects your relieved smile. You snatch the drawing with both hands and start to scan. "Elbows too skinny," "eyes too wide," "proportions off," "lips generic," and so on. Despite the fact you received an almost perfect grade, there's not a single word of positive feedback. What did you do well that you should do again?
- In a work environment. You're thrilled when a new client calls you on referral and agrees to your commission terms without delay... The project starts off well enough, but stalls after the client keeps changing his mind. "I don't know what I like, but I do know what I don't like" he'd often say. Four weeks pass. You finally finish and the client is happy with the piece. Do they compliment you? No: "What took you so long?"
- With your significant other. Your significant other loves you, and it's for a good reason. You perform 90% of your relationship duties with diligence, wit, and flair. Why is it then that 90% of his or her time is spent nagging you on the few things you do poorly?

When someone is in a position of influence over someone else, there's a tendency to want to institute change. Change by itself is fine, as long as it's kept in perspective. The more you focus on negative things in another person, the more nitpicks you'll find. Soon you'll completely ignore all the person's positive traits and will freak out at the smallest grievance.

Here's a golden rule: If a person is performing 90% of their duties well, then 90% of the feedback given them should be positive!

There's nothing better than positive feedback. The recipient feels exhilarated afterward, they're more receptive to constructive feedback, and they'll keep doing what they're doing. Negative feedback on the other hand, tends to aggravate people and it hardly ever works in the long-run. Most importantly, negative feedback never helps to build relationships.

You should strive to manage others without exception. More importantly, you should strive to manage yourself without exception. How many times do you kill yourself over one failure in a sea of successes?

Love To Say No

✍️ I don't remember the source, but I read an interesting article about the simple correlation between confidence and the ability to say no. While there's little doubt that confidence in business is essential, the ability to say no has value in itself.

Again and again, you'll be asked to perform services related to your craft but outside your menu of offerings. The million dollar question is whether or not to pursue these side opportunities.

If you're an artpreneur-in-training and have no shortage of spare time, I'd say to go for it. Who knows, maybe this quirky assignment will lead you down a new path. At worst it will give you some valuable experience and a new client whom you can sell other offerings to in the future. Notice how I ignore the money from the assignment? Learning and building relationships are far more valuable.

If you're established as an artpreneur, I recommend focusing on your core menu and politely declining extracurricular requests. While it might seem strange to turn away business, you can't underestimate the importance of focus...

Focus allows you to relentlessly work to improve your core offerings. It communicates to your client that you're serious about your work and can afford to turn him or her away. It also keeps you from diluting your offerings. The more you focus and simplify what you do, the better you'll accomplish those things and the better you'll do overall.

Jade Is No Push-Over:

Jade is a "no" machine! Listen to her go...

Client: Jade, I love the portrait you painted of me. I just adopted a beautiful puppy, could I convince you to paint a portrait of her too?

Jade: I'm flattered you asked. However, I want to do the best job I can for you and painting pets is outside of my talent set. Why not try Katie?

Client: Ah, all right. Do you still sell those lovely calendars? I remember they were \$30, is there any chance you could give me one for \$15?

Jade: I wish I could, but \$30 is actually a "preferred customer" rate and I can't go any lower than that without dipping into my costs. Would you still like to buy one?

Client: Fair enough, maybe another time. Say, are you free for dinner tonight? I'd love to take you out.

Jade: (Blush) Oh, I'm not really on the market, thanks though.

On Excuses

I absolutely hate excuses. Both the excuses I make to myself and the excuses other people make to me. As an artpreneur, you should hate excuses too.

I'm not trying to fashion you into a heartless and cold businessperson, I'm just trying to instill some realism. Excuses are just rationalizations. They're the mind's way of making up a story, like any other fictional story, to explain why you made a mistake. These stories usually have nothing to do with the real reason behind the mistake.

If you're chronically late, you probably tell yourself a different excuse for every single instance you're late. The first time, maybe you ran into traffic. The second time, maybe you stayed up too late the night prior and didn't wake properly to your alarm. The third time, maybe you were kidnapped by a UFO. And so on. (Hint: I'm chronically late to almost everything ...no excuses though.)

While these are nice stories, they don't address the underlying reason you were late: A lack of motivation. Think about it, would a motivated person ever not want to be early? If you won the lottery, but had to arrive at 9 AM sharp to pick up your check, wouldn't you do everything in your power to arrive at least an hour early?

Dealing with your own excuses are only half the battle, the other half is dealing with others' excuses. As an artpreneur, you'll run into a lot of scenarios where other people break plans or fall short of what you've asked them to do. For the most part, ignore their excuses and focus on their actions. If someone can give fictional excuses to themselves, imagine how much more likely they are to give excuses to you.

Don't be naïve in giving people second chances. The single best predictor of a person's future behavior is their past behavior. That's not to say never give someone a second chance, but be stingy with them. If you lent someone money and they never paid you back, then asked for more money six months later, would you give it to them? Ask the same question for any second chance you offer.

Where Did Katie Go Wrong?

Katie stared sadly out her bedroom window. She was commissioned by a client to illustrate a poster and had relied on another artist to ink and color her drawings. She promised the client that she'd complete the project by April 30th. She completed her part of the project in March and asked her fellow artist to finish his part by mid-April. It was April 29th, 15 excuses later, and still no progress. The client will hold Katie responsible.

Jade's No-Nonsense Maneuver:

It's April 29th and Jade is celebrating with another artist at a local sushi restaurant. They had just completed a major project for a big-name client. It wasn't always sake and green tea ice cream for Jade. A few weeks ago she was on the verge of disaster when her original partner missed his initial deadline. The moment it happened, Jade asked him to see all the progress made thus far, which was very little. In response, Jade spent the entire day searching and calling around to find a replacement, one who could provide strong references. She found the replacement and is celebrating with her right now.

Escape Your Comfort Zone

If you perform a task a thousand times, you'll grow to own that task. However, the more you perform that task, the less you'll learn from it. As an artpreneur, you want to push yourself to grow, in both your artistic and business pursuits. To grow, you can't afford to spend time super-improving individual tasks; you have to focus on growth and learning, which means experimenting and escaping your comfort zone.

While I want you to focus and strengthen your core offerings, since the importance of focus can't be overstated, I also don't want you to spend all your time doing that strengthening. You're not a robot! You should balance core strengthening with audacious undertakings that will take you far outside your comfort zone.

The more uncomfortable your situation, the more you'll learn from it. Go wild and in random directions with your art. You might stumble upon something great. Maybe you'll find a new style, maybe you'll discover a new technique, or maybe you'll become inspired to create a new piece. Also, go wild and move in random directions with your business ideas. Just remember to keep these undertakings as "side" undertakings. You should focus most of your time on your core, or else you risk diluting yourself.

Adam's Favorite Company:

Google is one of my favorite companies, both from a business and consumer-use perspective. One of Google's most interesting innovations is what they call "20% time." Each of their engineers is allowed to spend one day per week (20% of their time) working on whatever they want. This freedom to experiment has led to a number of product innovations. It's said that almost half of Google's new products are the result of this 20% time. I think that every artpreneur should implement a similar policy for themselves.

Jade Takes A Step Back:

Jade had been sketching eyes the same way for years, since her high school days. She always used the same motions, the same brand of pencil, and the same type of paper. After talking to me, she decides to set aside one day a week for general experiments. The first such day, she tried a new approach to drawing eyes and came away with—gasp—a better method.

So-And-So Told Me You Were Awesome

If you ever want to meet someone or “infiltrate” an organization, this is the section for you. If you’re trying to get in touch with a specific person, try to find a contact who knows that person in some way. If you’re trying to infiltrate an organization, find a contact who knows a relevant decision-maker in that organization. For both scenarios, the contact doesn’t have to be a friend of yours and doesn’t even need to actually introduce you. The point of the contact is to serve as a signal to the person you’re contacting, telling them that you’re not a complete stranger.

With the contact’s name in hand, your emails become exponentially more powerful. Just include, before the body, a brief message that states: “So and so referred me to you, I was...”

...And wham! You’ll get a response the next day. Well, not always, but most of the time. I know that when someone emails me using this technique I become a lot more responsive. I think one reason is because if I don’t respond, I’m making the person who referred the contactor look bad.

Metal Gear Adam:

For years I tried to convince a certain advertising network to broker advertising for theOtaku.com. Again and again, they kept denying me, citing that they had no need for an anime site. Finally, with nothing to lose, I decided to invoke a little ingenuity.

I asked around and found out that an acquaintance, let’s call her Sarah, knew a salesperson at the network. I emailed that salesperson and told her that Sarah referred me. Two days later, the network accepted my site. I was stunned. Just like you’d never walk into a cave without a flashlight, never try to contact someone blind. Always have a name at your disposal.

Katie’s Fib:

Katie wanted to showcase her art at a local gallery, but couldn’t find anyone to refer her to the gallery’s curator. She was desperate and eventually contacted the curator, fibbing that “another artist” referred her. The curator’s first question: “Great! Which artist?”

Don't Permit Extremists To Dictate Your Actions

There will always be a minority of your audience or clients who are a total pain to deal with. I call these people the “extremists.” They might be rude, they might ask too many questions, they might make incredible demands, and they might even steal from you.

You've probably dealt with extremists in either your personal or professional life. The most important rule with them is to not allow them to shape your overall policies. It's better to treat everyone, including the extremists, with a high degree of trust and kindness than to create a low-trust environment that hinders your best clients.

If you're at an exhibition and an extremist asks you a thousand questions about your artwork and then leaves without even accepting your business card, don't hang a sign that yells “ONLY TWO QUESTIONS PER VISITOR” or assume that everyone who stops to talk to you will behave the same way. The great thing about extremists is that they're just that, extreme cases. For the most part, both your audience and clients will be normal, so just laugh the next time you stumble upon one of the exceptions.

Adam's Examples:

Where to start on this... I have so many personal examples.

When I first created Art of Otaku, people thought I was crazy for offering a no-questions-asked refund guarantee and for packaging the book in plain PDF format with no copy-restrictions. “Everyone will either pirate or refund the guide,” they'd say.

I always trust all clients by default and thus far, 99% of them have lived up to that trust. I'm sure a few people have taken advantage of our refund policy, but I probably gained a lot more sales by having it. As for the copy-protection...YIKES!

Copy protection schemes punish honest clients. They make files unstable and make dealing with those files a nightmare. I'd never subject my clients to that out of the fear that a few people would pirate the book.

Katie Cuts Her Finger:

Katie bought a pair of headphones from a local electronics store. It was encased in a plastic, clam-shell case. She scratched her head, wondering if there was an easy way to open it. When all attempts failed, she retrieved a kitchen knife and started hacking away. Ouch! The sharp edges of the freshly cut plastic bent against her finger and drew blood.

Why was the packaging so difficult and dangerous to handle? Because the company that produced the headphones wanted to make the packaging a theft deterrent. So for the sake of scaring away a few thieves, they were willing to risk inflicting bodily injury on one of their clients, Katie.

I Highly Recommend

Your ideal audience is both targeted and insatiably hungry for your offerings. The best method to attract people with these attributes is to do so indirectly, with a referral. Referrals are powerful because, while most potential clients won't trust you, they will trust others' opinions about you. There are three methods to secure a referral:

The first method is to do such an A-level job servicing your clients that they'll gladly speak about you to their friends. This is the most powerful method, since friends trust friends. In addition to simply doing good work, you should also strive to make your clients feel like they have a personal connection with you. People are much happier to refer friends to friends than anonymous artists to friends. Give them your business card and keep in touch.

The second method of gaining a referral is to befriend people who provide complementary services and swap referrals with them. If you sell art prints, why not swap referrals with someone who sells artistic calendars? The key to this method is to never recommend someone who won't do a great job, otherwise you risk harming your reputation.

The third and final method of gaining a referral is to spend time promoting yourself to family, friends, and strangers. Eventually, someone will ask one of these people if they know a good artist and that person will point to you out of vague recollection. The important thing is to be as open about what you're doing as possible. Don't be paranoid that if you tell everyone about your offerings, that someone will steal your idea or style. The feedback and referrals you obtain from spreading the word are far more valuable than the possibility of getting ripped off. Even if your idea does get stolen, success is all about the execution, the details, and the perseverance. Ideas are a dime a dozen.

Your referral program can end with these three methods, or it can go further. There are much pushier methods of gaining referral business, but I recommend keeping it simple and honest. You are the brand, so you can never be too careful.

Jade's Referral System:

Not one to laze around, Jade goes to great lengths to acquire referrals. She works hard to produce A+ work for clients and often invests extra hours into a project without billing for it. She also gives her clients and all her clients' friends 10% off any future purchases they make from her.

Have you ever walked into a restaurant with a friend where the waiter knows you and gives you preferred seating? Even if not, wouldn't you feel elite seeing the impressed look in your friend's eyes? You want your clients to experience that same feeling with you. That's why Jade's clients always tell their friends: "remember to tell Jade I sent you!"

Boris' Q&A:

Q: Is there anything more direct you can do to convince clients to refer you to their friends? The method you outline above seems a little too hands-off, leaving much to chance.

A: If you receive any sales training, one of the first things you're taught is to ask for the sale. Salespeople who end a conversation with something like "So now that I've told you all the pros and cons, can I sign you up?" typically outperform salespeople who remain quiet. I think the reason stems from transforming information to action from the customer's perspective. We listen to information all day, but we're rarely engaged to actually take action on it.

You can apply this sales concept to your referral system by politely asking clients you served to refer you to their friends. Remember to mention that special "friends" discount you offer, too!

10% Extras:

The difference in effort between the memorable and forgettable is often negligible on your part. With just 10% more effort you can create an exponential amount of extra good will with your clients. For example, maybe you could spend a little more time in how you package your art prints. Instead of simply rolling a print up and handing it over, you could roll it up and tie three beautiful ribbons of different colors around it. Think of as many 10% extras as you can, they'll go a long way.

I Bet That Testimonial Is Fake

When I was 14 years old, a fellow in Miami emailed me and asked if I could design his website. That was the first and only web design job I ever accepted; it left a pungent taste in my mouth. I learned three lessons from that job:

First, I learned that you have to believe in what you're selling, otherwise every second of work will seem dishonest and you'll have to fight to stay motivated. This is the definition of "selling out."

Unfortunately, the website I was asked to design was for an eBook that purported to offer dating advice, but instead offered a Microsoft Word file full of haphazard and useless copied-and-pasted conversations from user groups.

Second, I realized that selling services required patience. The client kept asking me for changes, again and again, and if the tiniest detail was off, I'd have to calm down his temper and adjust the design quickly.

Decide early on whether your offerings will be more service or product-oriented. I'm more of a product guy, personally, but that's not true of everyone. If you love working with people, a service role might be preferable.

Third, and most vividly, I learned about the importance of testimonials. Mr. Miami was so adamant about using testimonials that he even asked me to invent a few for him (ugh!). Here are three tips I've learned over the years about testimonials:

- **Use Testimonials.** Consumers rarely trust advertising, but they will trust other people. Putting testimonials on your website, on note cards at a convention, or on your flyers can be the important push needed to get a client off the fence and on your side. The more testimonials you jot down, the better. Don't be afraid to overwhelm your potential clients with them, front and center.
- **Defend Testimonials.** Don't give people the chance to question the integrity of your testimonials. Defend your testimonials, placing underneath each quote the testimonial giver's full name, email, and (better yet), photograph.
- **Keep Testimonials Honest.** Don't "overcorrect" testimonials if the grammar is off. You want to keep the speaker's unique voice intact. If the testimonial is 90% positive and 10% negative, keep that negative 10% in there since it'll lend it more authenticity. Also, never cheat on testimonials. Besides the ethical and legal ramifications, people can usually tell a fake testimonial from a mile away.

How do you collect testimonials to use in the first place? You can either wait for clients to hand them over or you can be more proactive and build systems and processes that encourage those clients to (wait for it) testify! Unless you serve a lot of clients, you'll probably have to go the latter route. One simple way to accomplish this is to ask for feedback. If the feedback is positive, you'll receive a testimonial. If the feedback is negative, you've procured some good tips for how to improve.

In case you were wondering, my client from Miami lost interest in the venture, so I didn't have to compromise my integrity by falsifying testimonials or releasing my design to the public. He still paid me, which was nice, but from that moment on I swore never to accept another web design job. Boy, did I learn a lot though!

Power Naming

Naming companies command astronomic prices for inventing and testing names for organizations and products. They use complex software to generate thousands of name combinations related to the image or description of a product and then test relentlessly to find the perfect one. The practice of naming is half science and half art.

Thankfully, as an artpreneur, you don't need a naming company. With a few tips and guidelines, you can create excellent names on your own. Having read two full books and countless articles on naming, I've created a bulletproof process to come up with the perfect name every time:

- **Create An Association List.** Create a list of words and phrases that relate to your offering and your target audience. You've probably played word association games before; this is the same concept. For example, if you're releasing a set of Valentine's Day prints and need a name for them, your association list would include words like "love," "passion," "romance," "heart," and "red." You want to make your list as long as possible.

Once you have a formidable list, grab a thesaurus and for every word on that list, look up its synonyms. If any of the synonyms are missing from your list, add them. Then use a dictionary to look up definitions for your favorite words and see if that inspires you to come up with more words. Record the Latin and Greek roots of every word too, maybe one will strike you as a perfect name. Strive for length, even if it means your list is filled with words that look ridiculous.

- **Combine and Remix.** Now that you have an epic list of words and phrases, it's time for some ingenuity. Start combining words to see if they create a name that sounds pleasant (e.g. FederalExpress, GoDaddy). Also start tinkering with words by adding, removing, and/or substituting letters to see if that creates a new name (e.g. Flickr, Cheerios). Record every unique name you come up with using this technique.

Here are a few positive signs to look for in a name: easy to pronounce (e.g. Kodak), is not an acronym (e.g. KFC), easy to spell just by hearing it (e.g. Frogger), no negative connotations (e.g. Radio Shack - who wants to go to a shack?), relevant to your offering, visual balance (e.g. Xerox), use of "power letters" (e.g. the hard "k" sound), under four syllables, and easy to type on a computer keyboard.

- **Check Availability.** Click GoDaddy.com and check to see if the .com for each of the names you invented is available. If not, move on to the next.

You always want to buy the .com of your name as soon as possible. If you don't have a .com and your product or business takes off, the owner can hold it hostage and sell it to you at an inflated fee. Also, run a quick Google search for the name you invented to see if anyone else is using it.

If you spend sufficient time on this exercise, chances are you'll find a few different names that you'll like equally. You might be tempted to poll your friends for their opinion, but this ultimately won't lead anywhere, since the best names grow on people over time. Spend a few days thinking about your pool of names and then go with the one that you feel is the best.

Adam's Winning Name:

One side project I almost dipped my fingers into was a service that would automatically remind people of events by email. I created a ridiculously long list of words related to reminder services (e.g. "forget", "remind", "holiday", "birthday", "never forget") and after some effort, came up with the name FingerKnot.com. The domain was available and I grabbed it.

Two weeks later, a developer who came up with the same name for a similar service, emailed me and offered \$350 for the domain name, which cost me less than nine dollars. A good name is worth its length in fifty dollar bills.

Creating Your Own Solutions

I don't want you to blindly copy everything written here. This is a 101 book, an introduction designed to teach you a series of relevant, rapid-fire, foundational business concepts. The most important step to take after reading these concepts is to innovate on top of them and come up with your own creative approaches. As an artist, this should sound familiar.

If you attended any sort of art school, you went to class to learn both the history and theory of art. Then, when you returned home, you applied that theory to your own style, netting an innovative outcome.

The biggest successes are often those with no precedent. Successful case studies are successful because there was never anything like them previously. That's one reason why lessons on theory are presented first in this book and the case studies (interviews) are toward the end.

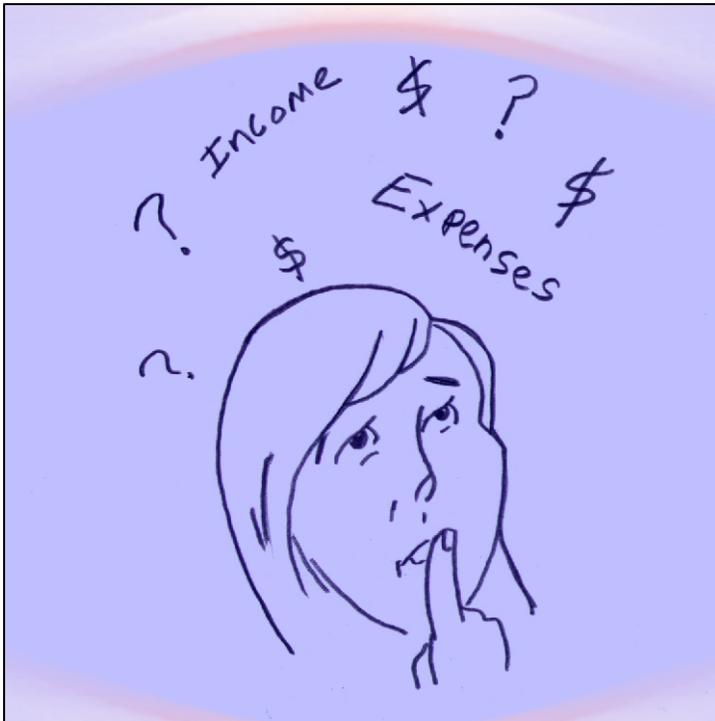
Another reason I want to encourage you to innovate is because, having studied corporate behavior, I've noticed that companies who innovate perform a lot better in the long-run than companies who copy. The companies who innovate are constantly inventing new processes, marketing strategies, and design approaches. The companies who copy are so used to relying on the leaders that they're forever playing catch-up.

I want you, of course, to behave like the leader companies. Followers rarely last...

Katie Walks Backwards:

After Katie bought this book, she mistakenly came to see me as some sort of "know all the answers" guru. Every time she hit a problem, she'd hurriedly email me, asking what to do. The second time she asked, I sighed and told her that she can't build a sustainable career as an artpreneur if she keeps looking to others for help. At some point, she has to clamp down and come up with her own solutions. That's the only road to innovation and self-sufficiency.

How Much Am I Really Spending?



In the section on pricing I mentioned that you shouldn't price your offerings based on how much they cost you. I also mentioned that it's important to know what your costs are, so that you don't price below them. Knowing your costs is also vital because it gives you a baseline number that you can fight to lower. This section will teach you how to "cost" your offerings.

The first step in understanding your costs is to know that all costs were not created equal. There are actually three distinct categories of costs: fixed costs, marginal costs, and opportunity costs.

Your fixed costs are things that don't deplete after each use. One example of a fixed cost is a paint brush. After you use it, you can just wash the bristle and it'll be as good as new. Another example of a fixed cost is the rent you pay for an art studio. You pay the same rent every month regardless of how often you sit there, painting away.

I recommend keeping your fixed costs as low as possible in the beginning. Fixed costs trend more expensive and are difficult to drop once you've incurred them. You don't want to tie all your money down at the start. For the fixed cost items that you do have to purchase, make sure the quality is good enough that it doesn't affect the quality of your offering. Also, try to leverage fixed cost items for multiple purposes.

Marginal costs are things that you have to buy again and again because they deplete after every use. One example of a marginal cost is paint. Once you use a well of paint, it's gone and you have to buy another one. Unlike fixed costs, it's hard to avoid marginal costs, since you use them to create your offerings.

How much you should spend on your marginal items is directly dependent on how much you plan to charge for your offering. If you specialize in commissions and charge a lot of money for each commission, you can buy expensive paint. If not, you should buy cheaper paint.

Opportunity cost is the most important because it's the most subtle and 99% of people don't consider it in their cost calculations, leading to under-pricing their offerings. An opportunity cost, skipping the technical economics definition, is simply the cost of your time. Your time is valuable and should be factored in! If you work at a restaurant and earn \$8 an hour, then you should charge at least \$8 an hour to draw a commission, since every moment spent doing that commission is a moment that could have been spent at the restaurant.

Jade Calculates Her Costs:

Jade has been serving clients with her unique brand of art commissions for years. While she knows how much she charges for each commission, up until now Jade has had no idea how much the commissions actually cost her to create. She runs through a quick costing exercise.

First, Jade calculates her fixed costs.

Jade spends \$120 total in fixed costs, buying brushes, pencils, graphic design software, and business cards. Spread over the 12 commissions she draws per year, that works out to \$10 per commission ($\$120/12$ commissions).

Second, Jade calculates her marginal costs:

Jade figures that for every commission, she'll use about \$10 worth of paint and canvas. Thus her marginal costs are \$10 per commission.

Third, Jade calculates her opportunity costs:

Each commission takes Jade two hours on average. She knows this because she times it with a stopwatch (remember to measure everything!). She works in retail during the day and earns \$15 per hour there. So her opportunity cost is \$30 per commission ($\15 per hour * 2 hours).

Fourth, Jade puts it all together:

Fixed Costs + Marginal Costs + Opportunity Costs = $\$10 + \$10 + \$30 = \50 . Thus, the total cost to Jade to create a typical art commission is \$50. Jade should thus price her commissions at a sum greater than or equal to \$50 each

The Archives Of Dr. Spider:

"Count your pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves."

Just In Time! The Inventory Problem

One of the reasons I love selling digital products is that there's no inventory. Sadly though, while some artists do make money selling digital products (desktop wallpapers, for example), most have to stick to the tangible world. One of the reasons I hate selling physical product is that there's lots of inventory.

Let's say you print 500 posters featuring your artwork and each poster costs \$1 to produce. This sounds straightforward enough, but the moment your package arrives from the press, you're at risk for three reasons:

First, if you don't have much cash in the bank and suddenly owe money, there's no easy way to instantly trade your posters for cash to pay the debt. Second, it might take months to break even on your poster investment and you'll have to store the posters until they sell out. Third, if the demand isn't there, you've wasted a lot of money that could have gone toward more successful offerings.

One of the innovations of modern management theory is the proliferation of what's called "just in time" (JIT) inventory. The idea with JIT is that you only create something when you have an order for it. Or, in the sample case, you only print a poster after someone buys it.

This way if you receive 50 orders a month, you just print 50 posters per month and ship them out. Your closet remains empty and you don't have to wait to recoup a cash investment. Sounds easy? In theory, yes, but not in practice. In practice it's quite difficult to apply JIT inventory in its most perfect form. Printing one poster at a time might raise your costs to something like \$10 a poster instead of \$1. And if you're going to spend \$500 for 50 posters, you might as well just spend \$500 for 500 of them.

With regard to JIT inventory for the artpreneur, I recommend two strategies:

First, try to convince as many people as possible to pre-order offerings from you. Existing clients work best for this. That way, at least to start, you won't have to deal with as much uncertainty about how many offerings to create.

Second, always try to make your processes as "just in time" as possible. Unless you're absolutely certain you can sell all 500 posters, why not print 50 instead and test the waters with that? It'll cost more per unit, but overall it should be cheaper and safer.

Adam's Sells T-Shirts:

As a fun side project, I set my mind on printing a set of limited edition t-shirts featuring artwork from one of my community's best artists. I knew though that t-shirts are a nightmare to handle inventory-wise, since there are so many different size and gender combinations. Thankfully, I had two options at my disposal to overcome this inventory hassle.

First, I had the option of signing up for a print-on-demand service, which would let my customers order the shirt directly from the printing company and the printing company would only print the shirt after they received the order. This was as "just in time" as they come. The downside was that the shirts would be a bit too expensive, since printing shirts one at a time is costly for the printing company.

My second option was to take orders for the t-shirts and then, once all the orders were in, pay a company to print them. This kept the price per t-shirt low, since I was able to negotiate a bulk discount. It also eliminated any demand uncertainty, since I knew exactly how many of each size and gender combination to order ahead of time.

I wish I could say the t-shirt project went without a hitch, but I did make one grave mistake in the process. I was only 90% confident in the printing company before I took orders. Needless to say, they bailed on me and I had to delay the shirts for two weeks as I scrambled to find a replacement company. Never take money from a client unless you're 110% confident in your vendor; that was a lesson I learned.

How Much Do I Charge?

Academics and executives have argued about pricing models since the birth of commerce. It's a complex topic and arriving at the "right" answer can take a ridiculous amount of testing and work. The airline industry, for example, has an army of Ph.D.'s and super computers to set the price of its tickets on a given day.

Instead of extending the concept of pricing to hundreds of pages, I've decided to focus on a handful of important sub-concepts to guide your thinking.

99 cents or \$1?

You've probably wondered why a lot of stores, both online and offline, end all prices in either 95 or 99 cents. The reason is quite simple: in Western languages, people read from left to right. While \$9.99 is only one cent less than \$10, the human eye focuses on the left-most values and compares \$9 to \$10. The end result is that \$9.99 looks a full dollar cheaper than \$10. I've seen reports that adopting a 95 or 99 cent price-ending strategy can increase sales by as much as 30-40%.

Keep in mind that price-endings should also depend on your location. If you're manning a table at a convention, you might want to charge customers an even amount that's easy for them to access quickly (\$1, \$5, \$10, \$20). If they're carrying a lot of things (e.g. convention flyers, souvenir bags) they might not want to deal with the hassle of change.

Wal-Mart uses a very interesting price-ending strategy. They purposefully end all prices in unusual numbers, like .88. The reason is that they want to emphasize how cheap they are compared to other stores. I wouldn't recommend this for your art, but it's a fun piece of trivia.

Pricing For Bundling

Remember when I discussed the importance of bundling? When you bundle, make sure that each additional item offered in your bundle is priced aggressively. The bigger the discount you can afford the better. You want your clients to look at your bundling offer and think that they'd have to be crazy not to take it.

If you sell one print for \$5, then sell two prints for \$8 and three prints for \$10. Because the second print only costs your client \$3 and the third only costs them \$2, everyone will start buying three prints at once. If each print only costs you \$1, that's a nice addition to your bottom line.

Know Your Costs, But Don't Price Off Them

Know exactly how much your offerings cost you, in both time and supplies, but at the same time don't price your offerings on cost alone. Not only could you use the extra money, but you need to take into account the money you'll spend on advertising/marketing, on growing, on buying new supplies, and on administrative expenses. Charging more also gives you more room for error.

Instead of pricing on cost, price on what the other person is willing to pay. There are a few methods of figuring this out: By administering a survey, by benchmarking what other artists are charging, or by simply making an intelligent guess. You'll never arrive at a "perfect" answer, so don't try to be perfect, just try to be good enough.

I almost always recommend trying to position yourself as the more expensive, but higher quality solution. Life becomes so much easier when you don't need to sell high volumes to do well. And when you're not focused on volume, you can focus on improvement.

Discrimination Is Good!

Let's say you sell art prints and your target audience is evenly divided into three categories: Those who are only willing to spend \$5 per print, those who are willing to spend \$10 per print, and those who are willing to spend \$15 per print.

How much do you charge?

Assuming you have 30 customers, if you charge \$5, you'll earn:

$$\$5 * 30 = \$150$$

If you charge \$10 per print, you'll lose 10 customers (since they were only willing to spend \$5) and you'll earn:

$$\$10 * 20 = \$200$$

If you charge \$15 per print (losing 20 customers), you'll earn:

$$\$15 * 10 = \$150$$

So is the ideal for you to charge \$10, since that generates the most revenue? Not necessarily. Let's look at what happens if you can creatively charge each group the maximum price they'd be willing to pay...

$$\begin{aligned} \$5 * 10 &= \$50 + \\ \$10 * 10 &= \$100 + \end{aligned}$$

$$\$15 * 10 = \$150$$

$$=\$300$$

This technique is called “price discrimination” since you’re discriminating between customers. You’re charging different people different amounts. You can clearly see the power of this technique, since your revenue is 50% higher than your best non-discriminatory option.

Practically speaking, price discrimination is difficult to implement. Imagine selling prints at a convention; are you going to swap price tags based on how wealthy your customers look? Even this sleazy tactic wouldn’t work because some wealthy people are much stingier than their starving companions.

To use price discrimination, you have to be very creative. Airlines, for example, have a “first class” for their business flyers and a “coach” for their normal flyers. First class is much more expensive but offers more business-oriented features. This is a prime example of price discrimination since they’re charging two sets of customers different prices for roughly the same service (“get me from point A to point B”). Baseball stadiums have a similar setup with their seating arrangements.

While I recommend keeping your “menu” of offerings small, it’s important to have a few upgradeable options since it allows you to discriminate. Remember, creativity is just as important in business as it is in your art!

Simple And Flat

Keep the price simple for each of your offerings. If you sell prints, don’t price each print differently. If you draw commissions, don’t have a thousand different pricing options. Try to use flat rates whenever possible and don’t slap your clients with any hidden fees.

You want your clients to focus on you and your art, not on how much they’re going to spend. The longer someone looks at a price tag, the more they think about losing something (their money) instead of gaining something (your artwork).

Price Value Perception

In the absence of other information, people will assume that the price of your offering is indicative of its quality. If you price a commission at \$10 and the artist next door prices their commission at \$100, most people will naturally assume that the artist next door is 10 times more talented than you. Don’t demean yourself with low prices!

If you're in direct competition with another artist, you can take advantage of this phenomenon by pricing higher than them. You'll steal away all quality-seekers and even make a few extra dollars per sale.

If the quality of your offerings is the same as another artist but your prices are far lower, be prepared to fight. You'll have to convince every single client that, despite the low price, your work is just as good as your neighbor's (and they might still be skeptical).

Final Advice

Pricing is a complex and ambiguous field, so spend time thinking about your strategy. If there's one rule to take to heart though, it's that you should always price higher than your first instinct and then devise ways to make the quality of your offering justify the price.

Where Does The Time Go?

You toil for three hours one evening uninterrupted and produce ten hours worth of output. The next day you stare at a blank canvas for two hours and, zombified, drift to sleep; an easel as your pillow and drool as your paint.

If the above scenario sounds familiar, know that I'm with you. I've battled time management issues most of my life and it's frustrating that productivity seems so cyclical. One day you can create without fatigue and the next day, nothing. Is there a way to consistently perform at your super-productive levels? Here are some thoughts...

I believe that, at any given moment, your subconscious is predisposed toward certain actions. Doing those actions, at those moments, will lead to above-average productivity in them. The problem is that your conscious mind isn't always attuned to these dispositions and you can easily override them.

Say you're sitting at home and your subconscious is subtly prodding you to write. You might feel this urge briefly, but oh—your favorite show is on TV. Once the show is over your subconscious is ready for sleep, and you oblige. A moment of literary inspiration wasted.

The answer is to constantly align yourself to your natural predispositions. Before you instinctively turn on the TV, flip open your laptop, or drown your thoughts with music, first do nothing.

Sit down on a pillow on the floor with no distractions and empty your head. Focus on breathing. Ask yourself what you should do next and wait for your subconscious to push out suggestions. If nothing happens or you're having trouble quieting your thoughts, just keep sitting and breathing. If a few ideas pop into your head, passively observe each one. Eventually you'll have a "eureka!" moment and will know exactly what to do next. The entire process should take no more than a few minutes.

The beauty of the above technique is that it also keeps you outcome-oriented. You emerge from your meditation session with a strong idea of your next move. This technique is also a safeguard against those moments when you're spinning your wheels on something unproductive for hours on end. (I get this way when I'm surfing the internet and simultaneously listening to music, hours can pass, wasted.) If you blink and find yourself in such a state, stop immediately and start breathing.

A final note is that sometimes the back of your mind doesn't want to do anything productive. Maybe it wants to take a nap, or play video games, or watch a movie. In those cases, it's an utter waste to try to do any work. Relax and go with the flow (just don't stay with the flow for too long).

“I Didn’t Come Here To Read!”

Reading is the single most important task I accomplish each day. Nothing else I do between rise and slumber is more important for my personal and professional development. It’s a habit I want you to pick up too—I want you to read so many books that you’ll barely remember reading this one six months from now. Here are only a few benefits for reading:

- **Writing Improvement:** Reading is one of the best ways to improve your writing. In school you probably noticed that the best writers were also the most obsessive readers; not a coincidence! Writing is critical because, as an artpreneur, you’ll have to maintain a website, edit sales material, draft letters to clients, and communicate with your fans via email. People will judge your intelligence based on the flow of your words, and you don’t want to sabotage yourself with less than the best.
- **Compound Interest:** Reading builds on itself. The more you read, the faster you become at it. **More interesting:** The more you read, the more your mind starts connecting concepts from one book to another, leading you to innovative and original thoughts.
- **Mental Flexibility:** There’s never just one way to accomplish a task and nothing is ever as cut-and-dry as it seems. The more you read, the more likely you are to expand your point of view and open yourself to new ideas.
- **Idea Generation:** Reading is a form of meditation. While you’re reading, you become more receptive to your subconscious predispositions. “Eureka!” moments can abound.
- **Relevance:** Reading anything is powerful, but you’ll gain the most from reading works related to artpreneurship. This will let you “steal” from other people’s experiences, rather than having to learn through trial and error. If you find business and art books boring, then try other non-fiction topics (I love psychology books, for example).

Since you’re going to be spending a lot of time moving forward reading, you might as well learn how to read better, too. Here are some tips I’ve picked up over the years:

- **Margin Stars:** Every time I read a paragraph that inspires thought, I draw a star in the margin. The simple act of starring helps me remember that paragraph later on and the stars themselves help me skim through the book after I’ve finished.

- **Finger Following:** Move your index finger under each word you read. There are two benefits to this: First, it keeps you from losing your place in the book, and second, it pushes your eyes to read faster (speed readers utilize this technique).
- **Mental Outline:** Before you read a chapter, first make a quick mental outline of it. Read the title and first paragraph to understand what it's going to be about, and then skim through the headings to understand how it's going to discuss what it's about. Also put your bookmark at the chapter's end, to serve as a finish line. It's a lot easier to run a race when you know how long the track is!
- **Skimming:** Don't feel obligated to read a book carefully, cover to cover. If a particular chapter is mind-numbingly boring, it could disrupt your reading routine. Instead of fighting through it, just skim until you find an interesting section. This new section could then give you the context needed to re-read the boring part.

I hope I've convinced of the importance of reading. Just do it, every day, forever. (I bet you didn't expect that piece of advice out of a business book!)

Upgrading Yourself

Studies have shown that most people aren't listening to what you say (and if they are, they'll forget everything you said soon after). They will, however, notice how powerful your voice is and the gestures you make while speaking.

Since art is, for the most part, a client-facing medium, you want to maximize the impact of all your communication. Improving your non-verbal abilities, in addition to boosting your bottom line, will also build confidence and guide you to richer interactions with others.

Here are some tips to improve what you say, your body language, and your vocal dexterity.

- **What You Say:** Read interesting books and make a note of interesting things that happen throughout the day. Before you go to bed, mentally run over the highlights; you can talk about them tomorrow. If you meet someone new, have a few conversation topics in the back of your head, so if the conversation starts to strain, you can change the subject immediately. This will prevent those frightening awkward pauses.
- **Your Body Language:** How's your posture? Do you keep your chin up throughout the day? When you walk, do you push your chest out? Do you fidget? When you sit down, do you lean back or lean forward? When you make hand gestures, do you use an open hand or a closed hand? I strongly recommend reading "The Definitive Book Of Body Language" by Allan and Barbara Pease. It will teach you how to carry yourself and how to interpret the body language of others (useful for reading clients' minds). Seriously, go buy it now.

I also recommend video taping yourself constantly with a critical eye. You can't improve if you don't know where you stand (pun intended). Most digital cameras can record video now, anyway.

The most incredible benefit about improving your body language is that it will simultaneously improve your confidence. Your body is connected to your brain, so if your brain notices that you're walking with your chest out, it'll rationalize that behavior as meaning you're in a confident mood. And then you will be! (Sounds strange, but this is how the brain works.)

- **Your Vocal Dexterity:** Your voice needs exercise. Buy the CD course "The Sound Of Your Voice" by Dr. Carol Fleming to help you strengthen and enliven how you sound. Learning to sing is also useful for this purpose, as is seeing a speech pathologist. Similar to video taping yourself to improve your

body language, buy a tape recorder and record your telephone calls with others, so you can critically analyze how you come across.

Very few people put any time into improving their communication ability beyond what they say. This is a huge mistake, since as we've learned, no one ever remembers what you say anyway. Over 90% of how people perceive you is how you sound and how you look.

PART TWO: ARTPRENEUR INTERVIEWS

Artist Interviews Introduction

Because I don't want you to view me as some "know it all" guru, I've included four interviews in this book with successful artpreneurs. Combined, these artists have decades of "in the trenches" experience. They talk about their struggles, their successes, and, more importantly, what they've learned over the years.

One sound piece of advice I want to impart to you before you read this chapter is that you should seek an artpreneurship mentor ASAP. Find someone of the caliber of the artists I interviewed and ask them for ongoing guidance. The learning will be invaluable and, who knows, maybe you two could even work together some day on a project.

How did I find these four artists to interview? I posted a paid project online at Guru.com, a freelancer's directory. I received dozens of replies, many offering to impart their wisdom for free. I chose the four artists I found most interesting. There are dozens of freelancer's directories, hundreds of artist message boards, and thousands of artist websites out there. Try them all to find your perfect mentor...

Echo Chernik



You can find Echo's website at <http://www.echo-x.com>. I'm absolutely in love with her art style and she was very generous in sharing all the online resources she uses to market her artwork. Study this interview carefully and try out all the websites and companies she mentions.

"What's your story?"

I'm a professional commercial illustrator - my signature style being Art Nouveau. I graduated Pratt Institute in 1995, summa cum laude; and immediately thereafter began my freelance career as an interior black and white artist for various gaming companies. In the late 1990's I also freelanced as a web designer, and for five years I taught web design, graphic design and digital illustration at Skidmore CCI and Pratt Institute. In the middle of teaching, I began defining my color portfolio, and gathering commercial clients.

Trek Bicycles was my first major full vector poster, and from there I began to receive more commercial quality work - clients including Miller Brewing Company, Camel Cigarettes, Sears, Gran Centenario Tequila, Arlo Guthrie, Dave Matthews Band as well as several publishing companies including Random House and Penguin Books.

"What qualities are important for an artist to make it on their own?"

Perseverance, self discipline, and a love of Ramen noodles. This is by far NOT an easy field to support oneself (or a family) in. It's always month by month (for me anyway). Although I personally love that the ability to make great money in a few days is always right around the corner.... It's so very fluid. "When it rains, it pours" they say - which means you either have no work, or ALL the work.

It's tough to discipline yourself to not overbook, to meet the deadlines, and to schedule to take vacations like normal wage-driven folks (I haven't quite gotten that one down myself). Good advice that I've received: "After you finish up a big project, be sure to take a few days off and rest yourself."

"What avenues have been most successful for you to attract clients?"

It's important to realize the value of advertising, and exploit it at every opportunity that comes along. Parting with the big bucks is hard when times are lean, but you have to promote yourself everywhere possible. With the growth of the internet, there are many more venues available than ever before. Back when I was in school, we

were taught about the 'portfolio drop', which included schlepping your portfolio all over Manhattan, dropping it at agencies' doors for review. Now I only send out my book on request, and do most of my promotion online and through mailings.

For those on a lean budget: Some professionals disagree, but there are many sites online in which you can post your work for free. The companies vary in their level of quality however, but exposure is exposure...Try renderosity.com, artwanted.com, vectorpeeps.com, illustratorworld.com; also portfolios.com (like many sites) offers a basic portfolio (\$100 a year, sometimes it's under promotion for free). I've also had good luck with my free myspace.com page (www.myspace.com/echochernik)

If you're able to spend moderately: A good strategy is to diversify - spend a little around the board. Illustratorworld offers membership in a pro only category IAVAP, but your Gold Membership on the site is \$65 a year (not bad for top ranking!); Portfolios.com offers tiered memberships, you can invest in a mid level "Leather" book for only \$200 a year. Folioplanet and FolioFinder are also relatively inexpensive. 21portfolios.com offers something moderate as well (although I didn't have luck with them). Altpick offers a reasonable \$199 a year - targeting a slightly different market. A Graphic Artists Guild membership will not only get you their very useful Pricing and Ethical Guidelines book, but also a link from their website. So, by diversifying with the moderate and low level sites you can make \$500 go pretty far. If you have another \$500 then do a mailing (\$250 for 1000 cards, and 100 for the stamps...the tough part is putting together the mailing list, which you can do with time and effort on your own...).

Once you start getting some steady work and can afford to put aside some money for advertising - portfolios.com's Titanium membership is very nice (about \$500 a year), some people have luck on the ispot.com, and you can throw some money into perks - folioplanet will give you first page listing for a month (\$199) - nice for a boost.

Invest in a mailing list for your postcards - like ADBASE or Langerman lists. And the hardcopy directories are nice too - BlackBook, Directory of Illustration, Workbook, Showcase - they have corresponding websites as well, and offer tear sheets that you can use for mailings.

It's nice to enter some award shows too. Word of mouth is great as well. And don't forget to post your own website! It sits there and markets for you!

"What avenues have been least successful for you to attract clients?"

Some of the portfolio sites haven't been very fruitful...that's why I suggest to diversify. The directories (which are very expensive) are starting to lose favor over the internet...I choose one a year to advertise in, and diversify there as well. Two years ago I was in Showcase, last year it was the Directory of Illustration, and this year it's BlackBook RAW... I don't receive a lot from the directories...and I hear that across the board, but 'you don't win if you don't play'.

“Do you think commercial success can compromise your work?”

I'm a commercial artist. I thrive on each challenge that comes my way - if it involves taking on new challenges or mixing up my style a bit - Great! Of course you need a good level of continuity in your portfolio (to show that you can be consistent in your style and quality); I'm at the point where I have the freedom to play with the execution a little bit - and some of my pieces are more realistic, others are more vector oriented. Of course, I work with the client to find out what direction works best for them. But to answer the question, no - I'd love even more commercial success!

Now, maybe folks who are fine artists at heart feel differently, but I look at each piece as a challenge to solve a need...to make the client happy (rather than for personal expression), so that's what sets me apart from being a fine artist by nature.

“What business lessons have you learned?”

The number one lesson: always work under agreement. I've developed a contract over the years, and I use that unless the client has one of their own (which I often modify). Most companies don't mind using my version (although they put it through legal first). With larger companies, I often just request a P.O. (Purchase Order) upfront. But ALWAYS have something in writing. The number one reason you have something in writing: You can take that to a collection agency to collect on your debt. If you don't have anything more than verbal, you can't collect. It also helps spell things out, so there are no questions about licensing, etc. The Graphic Artists' Pricing and Ethical Guidelines is a good book to read - to learn the ins and outs.

A good rule of thumb - if someone refuses to sign a contract with you, they most likely intend to not pay you. Or, trick you into working on spec, and THEN decide if they should pay you.

A note about spec work: don't do it. As tempting as it is, at least insist that you get paid for sketches. Artists working for free is what sets the stereotype that artists will (and should) just do it 'for their portfolio'...Think about it this way....Can you go into the grocery store, buy some groceries, bring them home, cook them up and serve them to your friend....decide if you like what you got and THEN go back and pay the grocery store if you feel it was a worthy dinner?

Same thing. And just like you would probably not be motivated to get back in the car and go down and pay the grocer, even if you DID enjoy the dinner, once the client who asked for work on spec has 'enjoyed' your work...unless they really really want it, they won't bother going through the hassle of paying you either. Spec is nothing but asking for work for free - get paid for your time, you're worth it.

(Spec work is “work on speculation.” Advertising agencies do spec work to win big clients - however, individuals rarely have the financial security to be able to afford to

do work to win a client...usually its requested of illustrators specifically to exploit their talents and to 'taste the merchandise' before paying).

"How do you find the time to pursue art for yourself?"

I generally don't. I do some personal pieces, but I rarely have time. I prefer a big name client to my own work, so if I'm working on something, I push it to the back burner as soon as something juicy comes along. I have few artistic hobbies - people come to my home and ask if I painted the paintings on my walls - the answer is usually no. I prefer to pick up art pieces that I like from other artists. Honestly, I consider my profession 'pursuing art for myself'...it's interchangeable.

"How have you seen art change commercially over the years?"

I'm working hard so that it gets stronger....I went from traditional media to all digital (awesome for quick changes and color shifts). The downfall is that there are no originals to display in galleries or for sale (that cuts your income).

"How do you manage your competition?"

I have a very decorative style. It's extremely time consuming. There aren't a lot of people who put as much time into each piece as I do, so I don't believe there is as much competition as there might be for someone with a simpler style. I keep advertising, and keep a professional business approach to things. Be a business person, it's the best way to succeed.

"What technical skills should young artists learn?"

Learn to draw. The number one most important thing is to know how to draw. Everything else is just a choice of medium. Whether you work digitally or traditionally, if you know how to draw, it shows (and if you don't it shows too). Take drawing classes, get traditionally trained if possible (or read a lot of books on color theory).

"What do you see in terms of trends?"

There was a vector style trend a while back, as well as the style with the eyes popping out of animals heads (I forget the name of the program). Whenever a new program comes on the market, or a new technique is developed, a trend ensues. Pratt's motto is: "Be true to your art, and your art will be true to you."

"What's the best part of being an artpreneur?"

Being able to determine my own hours. I work from the early hours of the morning until about noon, so that I can spend the afternoons with my kids (or not, depending on the projects on hand). But I can set my own hours, which rocks!

Kathy O'Malley



Kathy's website is online at, what else, <http://www.KathyOMalley.com>. While not original, I don't think there's anything wrong with having your name as your website's address—it keeps you forefront as the brand. Kathy is a children's book specialist, having illustrated dozens of titles. This is a “sexy” industry within the art world, so I was very happy Kathy was able to take the time to answer my questions.

“What's your story?”

I have been a watercolor illustrator for over 25 years. I primarily illustrate children's books but I do a variety of other commercial projects to maintain a living as an artist. Some of these include greeting cards, gift bags, magazine editorial illustration, brochure illustration, and architectural illustration (I do home portraits). I also do design work. That includes doll and stuffed toy design, collector's plates, kitchen products (porcelain design) and ornament design.

“What qualities are important for an artist to make it on their own?”

First off, you need to be able to handle rejection and criticism. A never-give-up attitude helps. You need to be able to sell yourself (so being a bit of a salesperson). A good business sense doesn't hurt, either. Understanding the needs of today's business, particularly being able to work fast, will help you succeed.

“What business lessons have you learned?”

Do not make any decisions (financial or otherwise) about a particular project with a client until you give yourself time to think it all through. If you are pressed by a client who needs it right NOW, tell them you will call them back. Be patient. Don't rush to take every job. When you're on your own, it's easy to bite off more than you can chew, or to accept a job that doesn't pay fairly. Also, keep very good records of all your transactions and communications, and get everything in writing.

“What avenues have been most successful for you to attract clients?”

In the pre-computer past, my portfolio was always key. But in the last few years I have joined the modern world and done a lot of promotional mailings to direct potential clients to my new website, which I update regularly.

“What avenues have been least successful for you to attract clients?”

Cold phone calling. Time is too precious for a freelance writer to waste it this way.

“What lessons in customer service have you learned?”

Customer service is extremely important and that works both ways. A satisfied client is certainly more likely to call again when the next project comes up. Repeat business is the lifeblood of a freelancer. As an artist you need to be timely, follow direction and be able to communicate well, and hope that the people you’re dealing with are equally efficient.

“How do you manage your competition?”

The competition is brutal. All you can do is your best and know that if you don’t get this job there is always another one around the corner. There will always be someone worse than you and someone better than you. There will also be someone who will do it cheaper.

“How do you find the time to improve and expand your art skills?”

Simply painting everyday improves my skills constantly. Just by having to paint something different all the time challenges my craft. Not always successfully but just the same I’m learning. I find that if I’m away from my drawing table for awhile, I need to get “up to speed” again.

“What technical skills do you think a young artist should learn?”

Most young artists today are probably learning computer design more readily than they are traditional art styles. I don’t know if that’s a good thing or a bad thing. As for what I consider to be MY technical skills, yes...they are very important. For a commercial artist, classes in perspective, design and even something as simple as knowing how to use all the tools and what tools are available will help an artist achieve their goals.

“How do you promote yourself?”

I mail a postcard out to over 400 publishers every six months. In that same time I’ll update my website with my newest pieces. Today, that’s the only way to go.

“How important is talent in children’s book illustration?”

Just take a look at a handful of children’s books and you can see that you don’t need a lot of talent to do kid’s books. Whether or not an artist is talented and successful is each individual’s opinion.

“What were the biggest obstacles you faced?”

My biggest obstacle was myself, and my self doubt. You need to believe in your talent. I have never given up, and I know I never will, but there have been PLENTY of times when I wanted to.

“What’s the best part of being an artpreneur”

Being free to do what I want, when I want.

“What made you get into children’s literature?”

I got into children’s literature because children’s books have always interested me. As a child I was drawn to fantasy artwork and I still am. Children’s illustration allows an artist to really use their imagination in ways other kinds of commercial artwork might not.

“How do you handle clients differently since when you started?”

I take my time now with clients. I no longer give answers immediately but rather think over all the details of a specific job before I commit.

“Can you recount a story of a great failure?”

The biggest mistake I made with a client was “trusting” that their word was enough. I started a very large children’s book project before a contract was delivered to me. I had submitted hours and hours of work and by the time I received the contract it wasn’t what I had agreed to. I ended up pulling out of the job with all my sketches but received no payments for the time I invested.

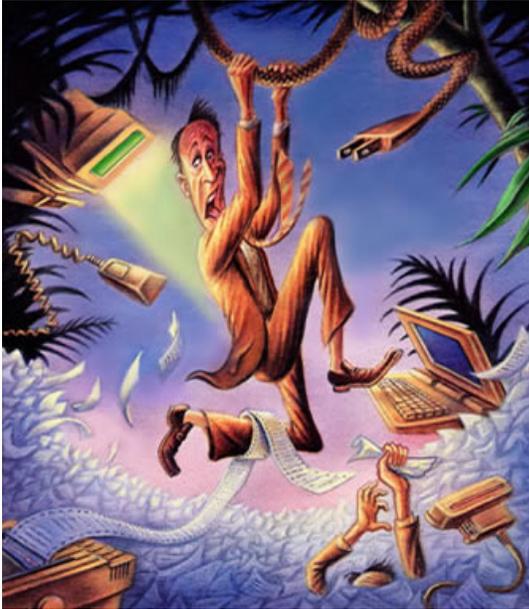
“Can you recount a story of a great success?”

I’m currently working with a FANTASTIC publisher in Michigan. They have been my greatest achievement because of the books I illustrated and the collection of people behind the company. I have illustrated 2 books for this publisher and from the very beginning they have been generous with their time, art direction and payments. They also put a lot of thought into their books and a lot of time into promoting the “illustrator” as well as the author. I have never seen a publishing house work like this and I’ve never seen a collection of people so passionate about their work.

“If you were mentoring a young artist interested in illustrating children's books, what would you advise them to do at the start?”

If I could mentor a young artist there would be many, many things I would tell them. They need to put together a portfolio of only their BEST works. They need to stay focused on “who” their customer is. If it’s a publisher, put together several samples that show you can keep a character looking consistent in a book. Advertising? Magazine? If it’s magazine or ad art, collect samples from magazines and illustrate your own examples of how you could do the ad better. If you want to design dolls or get into fashion, then show more than one sample. Focus on your best. A young artist needs to ask him/her self “do I want to work alone” or would I be happier in an office/studio setting with other creative types? Another thing I would tell someone just starting is not to be afraid to call and talk to other established artists. You can learn a lot by asking questions to artists that are doing what you’d like to do.

Peter Fasolino



I was thrilled when Peter responded to my online “call for help.” He’s the #1 requested artist on Guru.com, a major freelancer’s directory. More than that though, he has a passionate voice and “tells it like it is.” Artpreneurship is extremely hard work and I hope this interview is yet another reminder of that. You can find Peter online at: <http://www.pfasolino.com>.

“What’s your story?”

I went to Arizona State University for my schooling in art. It had a marginal graphic design department at the time but had no illustration major (only two classes were available in that subject). I made the best of it

by integrating as much illustration with my graphic design work as possible.

I graduated with an Advertising Design degree which would normally place me in an agency as a production artist. All my college friends did just that, prepared to start at the lowest rung and work their way up. I would have none of it.

My credo was always that I choose to work WITH people not FOR people. Leaving Arizona, I went to the nearest city as far away from provincial Phoenix as I could get. LA was the choice. I did some work for a magazine, movie advertising, and various smaller agencies. This made me a little money and let me tell people that I was an ILLUSTRATOR who drew pictures for a living. That declaration meant more to me when I uttered it at cocktail parties than saying that I worked as an assistant art director for Young and Rubicam.

“What qualities are important for an artist to make it on their own?”

The usual clichés are true: confidence and a disregard for how immense the competition is in the illustration profession. Illustration is like the fashion industry, which consists of fleeting tastes and hot trends. Ineptly drawn and aberrant visuals as if drawn by a nine year old are sometimes even praised as “contemporary” or “edgy.” I consider myself a skilled craftsman who is diverse in styles. I also consider myself a graphic entertainer.

“Do you think commercial success can compromise your work?”

Let me put it this way. I am not going to tell you that every project I do is a potential prize winner. I submit my sketch to the client. He makes suggestions about changes. I dissuade him as best I can but ultimately will succumb to his wishes since he is cutting me a check. I am in COMMERCIAL art which is a graphic service to accommodate clients. My self expression is infused in the work that I do for clients. I never had the wish to be a FINE ARTIST who has his work featured in gallery spaces where "art lovers" are more concerned with what is being served at the gallery's open bar and buffet table than what is on the walls. Fine art venues are essentially an excuse for people to be seen as cultivated and to exhibit their latest wardrobe. Art is not confined to gallery spaces.

“What business lessons have you learned?”

Simple! Up front payment for half of total fee for sketches. Then balance of payment upon approval of finished art. This is only when you work with companies or individuals online who you do not know. Of course if you are working with established publishers, this is not possible, but you will be paid. I have only been "screwed" once in my 25 year career. It was unavoidable. Here is what went down: I did a book project for a client who paid me for sketches. Then upon completion of the art, he never responded to my setting up a time to deliver the art to him. He kept leaving me messages that he was traveling on business. He never saw the finished art and I never got paid for it. The irony of this is that his occupation was a "Christian" who wrote children's books about Christian principles. Besides books, he was a musical director for congregation choirs throughout the southwest...I'm not making this stuff up.

“What avenues have been most successful for you to attract clients?”

Actually, guru.com has been good to me. It has given me global access. Previously published work is the best advertisement for future work. I illustrated "Treasure Island" for a Korean publisher. I illustrated multiple Christian books dealing with the Creation. I have done a Political Christmas Advent calendar for THE NATION magazine, satirizing the Bush Administration. I have done pooper scooper bags for a Pet supply chain that wanted Osama Bin Laden's image on the bag. Diverse, wouldn't you say?

“How do you pursue art for yourself?”

As I mentioned earlier, I enjoy visualizing what a client's needs are as well as suggesting to clients what would be graphically suitable. I personally find 90% of the art I see in the New York gallery scene to be self indulgent dreck. "Pursuing art for myself" you ask? I find that 90% of artists should keep their self-expression to themselves. They bore me with their esoteric, visual ramblings dealing with the non figurative. I do not need to pursue art for myself. I want to be seen by the masses in a publication where my work communicates clever, coherent ideas done with

illustrative skill. And the dirty little secret is that FINE ART is the exchange of celebrity and commerce. The art critics anoint artists they think best alienates the general public who are incapable of appreciating conceptual or any art that is seen in galleries today.

“How have you seen art change commercially over the years?”

As I mentioned earlier, Illustration is the fashion industry without the anorexic models strolling down the cat walks of Paris or New York. Of course art changes!! For the better? Well, just take a look at any juried Illustration show. Art is personal. BUT what does not change is craftsmanship and good ideas. Do I see a lot of that these days. Not much. Do Illustrators working today, know the fundamentals of drawing? Not many.

“What lessons in customer service have you learned?”

I deal with disembodied voices on the phone. I will never meet the faces of these disembodied voices. So I am pleasant, agreeable and feign interest in the clients product or manuscript. I occasionally even have sincere interest in a client's project. Be pleasant, upbeat and attentive. Never miss a deadline and don't be disgruntled if there are more revisions than you thought there would be. Just be clear on what the client needs or thinks he needs.

“How do you manage the competition?”

I have covered this topic but will expound by using a visual that I will offer the interviewer with this commentary (image at the top). It best expresses how I feel about competition. This art depicts the state of the illustration profession. Illustrator's art samples are in that paper pit you see in my painting. And those samples are from "weekend artists" who have part or full time jobs trying to justify being freelance illustrators by getting hired for the occasional \$50 job. I've been a full time illustrator for 20 years and have had to compete with these people. When my rates are a bit too high for some employers, they brighten some dilettante's day by hiring them for a \$40 double page spread for their un-publishable book.

“How have you been able to improve and expand your artistic range?”

I improve my artistry by listening and observing pop culture, CNN, independent movies, my favorite painters from the past, and going to NY downtown galleries that have 10 per cent of the worthwhile fine artists working today.

“What technical art skills do you recommend that young artists learn?”

Learn to draw, kid! Computer graphic skills are a given.

“What trends do you see?”

Stock art eroding the pricing of commissioned art, and clients going for the lowest bid as if they would be taking bids on their plumbing repairs...it is a buyers market out there with hoards of illustrators to choose from.

“How do you promote yourself?”

Postcards, postcards, postcards. Did I mention postcards? Get a mailing list of people who buy art. Magazines, publishers, agencies, design studios, etc. Then send them postcards through regular mailings. This will direct them to your website.

“What’s the role of pure talent in commercial artistry?”

Talent has not gotten in the way of some illustrators’ success. Shock artists who have social interaction with people who commission art by either glad-handing or buying "expensive gifts" to art directors for winning bids. YES, PAYOLA is in illustration as well as in the music industry. In a way illustration is politics.

Half talent, half tenacity (as a door to door Jehovah's Witness would have) are the nutrients to build a healthy career. Art representatives are an option for some illustrators to find work. They can do the glad-handing and payoffs for the artist so he can concentrate on his work. Reps prefer to have artists that already have house accounts so they can get a percentage of those house accounts which they never earned. Some will get new accounts for you and others will not. They will demand YOU to pay for your advertising which features their name and phone number. And then they take 30% cut from any work you will get from that ad that YOU paid for.

“What have been your biggest obstacles?”

The obstacles an illustrator faces are how to get your work out there to be seen. How do you make a consistent living with a steady income? There is a glut of illustrators out there. Your eye would glaze over if you had to look through massive artist advertising directories to find an artist. There is so much mediocrity out there that art directors do not have the time to scan through these five inch thick books to find an artist. That's why sending my postcards with my art to specific magazines and publishers is still the best, old fashion way to be known. Do I get moments when I want to give up? Every time I unemployed for more than two weeks I feel that way. Ask any freelance illustrator and they will say the same. Insecurity is a bedfellow of being a freelance illustrator. No one owes you a living. There is no tenure in the illustrator’s world.

“What do you miss about working for an employer?”

I only worked at a full time job for one year right out of college for a Christian textbook company. I drew black and white illustrations for Christian school

curriculum. After a year I went crazy and had to quit. No. I do not miss working for ANYBODY. I am a sole proprietor like a hot dog vendor, plumber or carpenter plying my trade.

Barbara Fox

You can tell just by looking at Barbara's work that she's a kind soul. While she specializes in so many different types of art, from greeting cards to needlepoint, all her work carries her distinctive, soft style. You can find her online at: <http://www.barbarafoxartstudio.com>.

"What's your story?"

I always loved art, and was good at it, but wasn't too sure I wanted to be a "starving artist", so I decided to become a commercial artist. I earned my degree in Fine Arts, and learned graphic design doing internships.

After college, I worked as a graphic designer for an advertising agency for a few years and then started my own freelance business. Looking back it seems very naïve of me, but I had a lot of confidence in my abilities, and I knew how to live very inexpensively, so I did all right. I got married, had a baby, and moved to a very rural area of California. PCs and fax machines were in their infancy, so there was no way I could continue my graphic design business. I began pursuing illustration work from greeting card companies and also worked as a needlepoint designer. That was about 15 years ago, and these two fields are still my main source of income.

Painting my own watercolors evolved from my experience in using watercolors in my illustrations. I just loved the medium. I began painting a lot, teaching classes, exhibiting, and entering juried competitions.

I have been self-employed as a commercial and fine artist since 1981. I am very proud of that, and feel I have been successful because of my answers to the next question...

"What qualities are important for an artist to make it on their own?"

Optimism, self discipline, and motivation.

"What business lessons have you learned?"

Several lessons:

- You must constantly promote yourself because this is a very competitive business.

- Don't agree to do something you are not comfortable with, be it subject matter, medium, or weird client.
- Not everyone is honest. Don't sign any contracts without going over it with a fine tooth comb, and understanding it 100%. Let the client know if you want anything changed in a contract. You have that right.
- If you don't understand something, ask an expert. It is worth the time and money to get the right answers.
- Be professional in all your professional dealings: your phone manners, your dress and hair, tidy presentations, etc. You are a representative of your artwork. A grubby business card or dirty fingernails does not speak well for your artwork.
- The best advice I ever got was from a gallery owner who said, "don't give anyone an excuse to NOT buy it". She was talking about my paintings, and how the framing and matting should be as top notch as the artwork. I relate this advice to almost everything I do, in trying to present a neat and attractive image of myself and my artwork.

"What avenues have been most successful for you to attract clients?"

Direct mail flyers or postcards with a website address to see more artwork. Free publicity in the form of press releases and articles. Joining local trade organizations and becoming involved.

"What avenues have been least successful?"

Direct mail postcards without a website. When I was first starting out, I called potential clients and made appointments to show my portfolio. That was extremely time-consuming.

"How do you pursue art for yourself?"

You must carve out blocks of time to do your personal artwork, whether you are a commercial artist or a mechanic. I'm fortunate in that I have a studio, and my art supplies are easily at hand.

"How have you seen art change commercially over the years?"

I think illustration has become "edgier" over the years. There seems to be room for any art style, not just for pretty pictures. I think a lot of the contemporary illustration is more interesting, and is done by more talented artists than the "fine art" that is marketed by the print and poster companies these days.

“What lessons in customer service have you learned?”

Being a commercial artist is like being a restaurant: You can go along for years providing a wonderful product and keeping your customers happy, then ONE bad experience will send your customer to the next restaurant/commercial artist. And, there are a lot of restaurants and commercial artists out there...

KEEP YOUR CUSTOMER HAPPY.

Also, I've found that many clients don't appreciate a rough sketch. They can't see how a rough sketch will evolve to the finished illustration. Unless your client is an agency or studio that uses rough sketches themselves, spend the time to do a fairly detailed drawing.

Always have your assignment in writing. Verbal communication is too easy to forget or misunderstand.

“How do you manage the competition?”

There is a lot of competition in both the fine art world and the commercial art world. Focusing on one style or medium immediately reduces your pool of competitors and allows you to become better at what you do. The only way to deal with competition is to be great at whatever artwork you do AND to let the potential clients know it.

“What technical skills should young artists master?”

For an illustrator, keeping up to date with computer programs is essential. Even if you want to illustrate the old-fashioned way, learn how to use Photoshop or Illustrator programs. Clients want frequent updates, they want the finished product on a CD, they want vector files, etc., etc. Have the tools to give the client what they want. Also, learn how to develop a website. Often clients want artwork or graphics for their website, and you should understand how it all works. You could learn by designing a website for yourself.

Check out Monster.com or Guru.com to see what kind of skills employers are looking for in a designer or Illustrator these days.

Learn as much as you can about commercial printing, as that is usually the final step of developing the product that you illustrated or designed.

“Describe your favorite type of clients”

Greeting card companies have been my favorite clients. The projects are fun, there is a constant demand for new art, and it pays pretty well. Breaking into this market is

not easy, and even when you do get some assignments, you have to continue to promote yourself as there are lots of illustrators vying for the same work.

“How do you promote yourself?”

As a fine artist, I think it is important to be involved in the artistic community. Join a local art group or organization, show your work in exhibitions, donate artwork to a worthy cause, get your name in the paper, hand out a business card that directs people to your website.

To promote my illustration work, I regularly send out postcards that direct people to my Website. My portfolio is on a CD, and is very easy and inexpensive to provide to potential clients.

“How important is talent in your field?”

I’m not sure. I think it is very important for myself, as I am not very assertive, and my work speaks for itself. I’ve seen untalented people with a big ego and lots of energy go a long way.

“What are the biggest obstacles you’ve faced?”

Most of my obstacles are financial ones, and those are the times when I think, “I have to get a REAL job.” I have taken part time jobs, but I’ve never given up on my own business. The nice thing about creating art is you never have to give it up.

“What’s the best part of being an artpreneur?”

The best part is doing what you love to do. I also like working at home and having a flexible schedule. This does NOT mean that I stay in my robe and slippers all day, or only work three hours a day. I try to work five “productive” hours a day. These are the hours where I am actually producing something that I get paid for. There are also the hours I don’t get paid for: self-promotion, packing and shipping product, cutting canvas and mixing paints, ordering supplies, research, customer interaction, re-doing mistakes, creative time, etc.

“What do you miss about working for an employer?”

A regular paycheck, a social environment, and benefits.

PART THREE: COACHING SESSION

Coaching Session



I held a two hour long “coaching session” with Lindsey Henninger, an up-and-coming young artist. The purpose of the session was to train her on how she could apply the concepts of this book to her own life. Lindsey is one of the top artists on theOtaku.com and other art websites, so she starts with the benefit of an audience. One interesting thing about this coaching session was that Lindsey wants to ultimately become a children’s book artist. No matter what type of art you’re passionate about, the concepts of this book apply, as you’ll see.

I consider this coaching session to be the ultimate practical example. Aside from the information you’ll glean from it, you should gain an idea of the thought process I used to understand and advise Lindsey. Reading it will hopefully give you a more powerful idea of how to apply the concepts of this book to your own artistic and business pursuits.

The transcript of the online coaching session is reprinted below, with permission...

Adam: Hello Lindsey.

Lindsey: Hi Adam!

Adam: Everything starts on time, I love it! Are you comfortable now?

Lindsey: Yes, indeed. I'm all about showing up promptly. I have my iced tea, so I'm happy.

Adam: OK, let’s go...can you start by talking about your background in art and whether or not you've done **anything** commercial with it, even if it was just a small project?

Lindsey: Sure. I've done art basically all my life. Drawing little Disney characters here and there but never taking it very seriously. Until one day, my best friend was flipping through my sketchbook and told me that I should go professional. This was around 11th grade or so in high school. And so, I did!

I began by just copying pictures/drawing still life and doing photorealism work. I then went into an art college and began a major in Fine Arts. Junior year of college, I realized I hated doing Fine Arts and wanted to break into more fun and creative works. So, I began taking side-classes in Commercial Arts. In the end, I got a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree with a Minor in Communication Design. Since, then, I've been

hired to do many portrait works for various clients as well as illustrations. I have had one set of works published for our Historical Society in which I illustrated a series of short local horror stories.

Adam: What kind of illustrations? Can you tell me a little more about the Historical Society thing, was that a paid assignment?

Lindsey: Illustrations in that someone would say to me, "I have a character design idea but can't draw, can you draw it for me." I've done random illustrations of people's logos and original characters and such. The portrait aspect is pure photorealism in that they give me a picture of a child or a pet and they ask me to draw it for them.

The Historical Society was not a paid commission. They had picked up one of my business cards at a place where my artwork was showcased in a gallery. This was something they told me up-front, they couldn't pay me to do but it was something that I could use in a portfolio. I didn't want to pass up a learning experience like this, so I did it and the results were fantastic. They were very pleased because they've been selling this short-story book like mad.

Adam: The learning is certainly important, though you have to be careful not to take too many of these "for the portfolio" projects as it can devalue your work...so your two "core" offerings you'd say thus far have been (1) Illustrations, and (2) Portraits?

Lindsey: Yes. I tend to do purely traditional art.

Adam: But that's only what you've stumbled into based on what people have asked you for, right?

Lindsey: Yes, I have yet to really push myself to higher means. I have a friend who I worked with in NYC, who is a very talented writer and she has children's book ideas she would want to be illustrated. So we're going to combine our skills and complete one children's book and then send it out to a variety of publishers and hope that possibly, one will decide to print it.

Adam: Right. I would say for that, there are two things at work: First, is the publishing industry itself and the trends for how they choose children's books...From what I remember it's a hypercompetitive industry. I think the process for getting a book published is authors typically find an agent first, and then the agent tries to shop the book around. In that vein, I'd advise first finding agents and casually just talking to them about the children's book market...if that's ultimately your plan, you want to make sure you're not driving blind :)

Lindsey: My friend knows all the things into getting works published since she's been looking into it for a long time. I'm pretty blind myself but she's been telling me about getting an agent and everything. I can feel my wallet getting lighter already.

Adam: ...And second, I'd really consider just creating the book and then selling it yourself rather than through a publisher. The main advantage of a publisher ultimately is related to exposure that can lead to more business opportunities in the long-term. I wouldn't say getting published is an end to itself because

publishers take so much of the proceeds and the success rate for books is so slim even if published.

Lindsey: That is good advice. I've also been told about the "print on demand" approach to start in which your book will only be printed when a certain store or group decided they want it.

Adam: Psychologically, it's also important because it's more proactive, you're kind of paving your own path rather than waiting for permission from someone else.

Lindsey: I've heard the horror stories of just the waiting period to hear back from publishers.

Adam: Actually, if you're able to sell a few yourself, that increases the odds significantly of a publisher wanting to pick it up, because then you can show them published reviews, you can show them buyers' feedback, and they'll know at least a few people are willing to pay money for it.

Lindsey: Yes, that's something we may end up doing first. I know it costs a few thousand dollars though but hey, you have to start somewhere. I didn't think about that. That would be better in that aspect as well.

Adam: There's no need to put thousands of dollars upfront. If you take that approach, you'll print let's say a few hundred books and they'll take a long time to sell through and you'll be under too much pressure to recuperate your investment. It's a classic inventory problem.

Lindsey: Really? Then how much do you think it costs to have a couple books published. I heard just getting one book published is incredibly expensive

Adam: The big action is to take a step back and define your offering a bit broader...you're not really providing a physical book; I mean no one will ever buy a blank book, you're offering the content of the book. Next, ask yourself why people buy children's books?

Lindsey: Working at Barnes and Noble has helped show me the kind of books people buy and don't buy. It usually has to be something that both the children and parents will enjoy. Since parents are often the ones reading it to their kids.

Adam: How do you think parents use children's books? You mentioned reading it to their kids, but do you think children's books are "consumed" differently too? For example, maybe 60% of the time children's books are read during the day by the kids and the parent isn't even home.

Lindsey: Right. I notice the best selling books are the ones with nice, colorful, illustrations. Kids certainly view the book more-so visually.

Adam: With your offering, it's important to know a few things...whom exactly you're targeting and everything about them, especially how they make their decisions to choose you versus hundreds of others. It seems with children's books, primarily for very young children who can't make decisions on their own, that your target is parents, but is it the mother or father? They each require different approaches. I feel there has to be some industry demographic/statistical information about children's books in general that you can tap into.

Lindsey: I know that mothers tend to shop more-so for their kid's books than the fathers. That's just something I've very much-so noticed while working in a bookstore. Well, with our first book we want to do, my friend and I discussed that issue as well...who should it be aimed for, boys or girls? So, we're certainly trying to make it so both can enjoy it, same with what age group will be reading it.

Adam: I'd actually reconsider...

Lindsey: Reconsider?

Adam: Well, first, I'd focus more on the parent's perspective rather than the child's perspective. While creating a great product is crucial and the child has to enjoy it, your customers are really the parents. Second, I'd focus, focus, focus on the audience :)

Lindsey: Yes, there are many things that one needs to consider.

Adam: If you have two children's books, one that tries to serve both guys and girls and one that only serves guys or girls, I guarantee the second would do 10x better.

Lindsey: Haha! And yes, focus on that as well...hence why there's an entire Disney Princess book-line in the children's department. I don't think too many boys would be picking up that book.

Adam: Right, but it's so targeted to girls who like Disney princesses that they become 10x more motivated to buy it. Well, not girls, parents, because parents think that's what their daughter would like, assuming that the daughter is young enough that she can't make her own decisions. (The moment the daughter becomes old enough to choose books on her own, the dynamic shifts and you should focus on the child's perspective.)

I also want to talk a little about subsets. Within every group of people you can always find subsets. You could target parents who are really education-focused by focusing a lot more on education than any other children's book. When you target your audience it's easier to find and motivate that audience to buy what you're offering.

Lindsey: Very good advice.

Adam: So there are a few ways to really define a target...you can get third party information online, I'm sure there are a LOT of statistics about the children's book market.

Lindsey: I think there's an entire book written on that actually.

Adam: I'd buy it immediately :), if you were willing to spend thousands of dollars upfront on printing physical books, spending \$20 on a title that could make such a big difference in your efforts is really important. You can do your own surveys/interviews...you can look at the book charts for best-selling children's books and then see who they're targeting to/what they're emphasizing. Also, your own art/story for the book should lean toward a particular audience anyway.

Lindsey: Yes, indeed. Saving as much money as possible is a good thing

Adam: But the reason I said earlier that putting thousands of dollars upfront isn't necessary is the advent of the Internet--you could put your *entire* book online for free at nominal cost. Just hire a freelance designer to throw together a professional website at a couple hundred dollars.

Lindsey: That's a popular thing people are doing these days too. It's a good way to get people interested in your work and style.

Adam: Of course the question is "Why would I put it online for free? I'm going to spend a lot of time making it, why give it away?"

Lindsey: Well, it's certainly worth putting snippets of your work online. Same idea with why people post their artwork on sites like theOtaku.com or DeviantArt.com to begin with! In hopes that it snags people's attention and lured them in to want more of your work.

Adam: Exactly, you're privileged in that you've used such amazing sites to gain an audience for yourself; building an audience is one of the most important things an artist can do

Lindsey: LOL...Yes, sites like those are great since they allow people to give you feedback right away.

Adam: About the question of putting the book online...first, it doesn't have to be all at once; you can put one page up every week on a fixed schedule. Second, the quality of the pictures will never be as good as the quality of the pictures in a printed book, so the online version won't compete with the printed version, and no one wants to read to their kid from the computer. They'll quickly browse the online version, and then click "buy" if they like it.

Lindsey: I know some people will only put snippets of their works on their sites too just so people can get the hint of what the book is about and hopefully go from there. I'd probably start by putting completed pieces on there since...you know, beggars can't be choosers. ;-)

Adam: You really want to think about flows. So you'll have this site. You'll work to get visitors to the site, you want the visitors to give you their email addresses, and then you can gauge the success of the book before you even have a physical product. If you have trouble getting people to give you their email address about when you launch your book, you'll have a LOT of trouble selling it, but if you get thousands of people signing up for it, then you can be more confident to print.

Lindsey: Yes, I already have an "official site" that I link to all the places where my artwork is located so people can go there as well. Very true, it's good to see what people would actually buy the book by getting their email addresses and maybe even keep them posted on how things are going along with it too so they won't forget about me.

Adam: With a digital copy of your book as well, you can get places to review it, and build some buzz--notice, all this buzz building and getting people interesting in the book requires almost no cost.

Lindsey: I show my work in galleries a few times a year and if I showed parts of it along with my other pieces, I'm sure it would draw attention.

Adam: Then you only invest the money to print when you're super-confident you'll sell through your print run.

Lindsey: Yes, it's certainly better to have some confidence in what you're doing before you just attempt to launch yourself out there.

Adam: Well, the thing with the galleries again is whether your target audience will be there; you can go to a college and show your children's book to 10,000 college students, but very few would really care since they're not in 'buy children's book' mode quite yet. That's why defining a very narrow target is so important.

Lindsey: Yes, but most people who view my galleries are adults...and many have kids or grandchildren.

Adam: Again I'd think in subsets; let's say 500 people attend one of your galleries. 100 might have grandchildren, 100 might be dads, 200 might be moms, 100 might not have kids. Grandparents have much different personalities/needs/wants than dads, who are different than moms, and even among grandparents, there are really conservative grandparents who like the children's books they used to read as kids, more new-age ones, etc.

If you know whom to target, at your galleries, you'll know whom to approach and spend the most time on, rather than just throwing a lot of mud against a wall to see what sticks.

Lindsey: Haha! Nice way of putting it.

Adam: But one warning for spending a great deal of time on more personal-oriented selling is that for printing hardcover books, it's really a volume business. You'll never get anywhere printing one book at a time and at a gallery showing. If 500 people show up, you'd be lucky if that nets you like two sales. Spend your time at gallery showings procuring live feedback to see what people respond to and ultimately how you should tweak the presentation of your offering.

Lindsey: oh yes, I learned that when I was trying to print out some of my pieces to sell. You usually have to print 300-500 prints at a time and it runs you a lot of money. That's why I just have my business cards so if people decide they want to own something, they contact me that way

Adam: Right, and I hope it has your website address on it. :)

Lindsey: Of course! It's printed on the back. I have my email and phone number on the front

Adam: The great thing about marketing, positioning, and targeting is it doesn't have to compromise the art itself. You simply adjust how you PRESENT the art and that can make a huge difference.

Lindsey: Which is best since it's tough to just jump back and do a new style.

Adam: For example, if I sold bubblegum the same as every other bubblegum on the market and one day I put some pictures of extreme sports on the packaging,

all of a sudden, everyone who wants to associate themselves with extreme sports will lean more toward buying my gum, even though the product is the same. So by targeting and then adjusting the presentation for that target, I'm motivating a group of people that like being catered to specifically :). While you can't practically give every single person something just for them, you can get close by targeting narrow segments.

Lindsey: Especially sports fans, like how they always show lawyer commercials during Court shows like Judge Judy.

Adam: It doesn't always have to be so obvious though. Judge Judy fans might be 80% female housewives, so you could also see like toaster commercials.

Lindsey: LOL! Well, I know but I get the idea; same with soap operas.

Adam: No, soap operas just have soap commercials (don't mind my cheesiness).

Lindsey: *Smacks forehead*

Adam: Do you have any questions, related to our conversation or just in general? I could literally talk forever.

Lindsey: Really? Couldn't tell...but no, at this point, I've gotten tons of great info from you. I know who to go to if I ever have a question though.

Adam: The three take-home points for you I'd say. First, to define your audience narrower and to possibly focus on parents rather than the kids. Second, to create mechanisms so you build a lot of interest in your book before you actually physically print something. And I recommend the web and digital copies for that. Third, to do a lot more real research on who buys children's books, what they're most concerned about...all the statistics. I think working at a bookstore might actually be a liability for you because it's easy to see trends and then make assumptions that might not be true for the larger population, so it's important to get the hard numbers.

Lindsey: Very helpful indeed. Well, I don't work there anymore but yes, I'd look into true research than just what I've noticed working there.

Adam: Maybe 80% of children's book buyers are in the South, and people in NYC are quite different than in the South. :)

Lindsey: Wow, that's a shocker! I think people from NYC are different from just about every place else in the world...in my humble opinion.

Adam: Thanks Lindsey, for agreeing to this coaching session. I'm sure a lot of readers will benefit from seeing some of the theoretical concepts in this book applied to an up-and-coming young artist. Best wishes in your future endeavors...

EPILOGUE: MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

Closing Letter

Dear Artist (or interested non-artist):

I hope you really made it this far and didn't just skip to the end!

As I said in the prologue, my goal in writing this book was to inspire dozens of ideas in artpreneurship. I hope I've succeeded in that goal or, at the very least, piqued your curiosity to read other books.

If you have feedback or questions, please don't hesitate to drop me an email. My address is: Adam@Velegant.com. It's the second best reward I can receive (aside from being able to raise money for arthritis research!). Just remember to make the subject of the email "Artpreneurship," so I notice it.

I literally believe that artpreneurship is among the hardest paths a person can walk and hope this little book helped make that journey a little lighter on your feet. Before I end this letter and this book, I want to thank you for your time and wish you the best.

Take care of yourself—

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Ghahramani". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a horizontal line.

Adam Ghahramani