

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — You Need This More Than Artistic Talent

I'm Cindy Hohman and this is the Art Marketing Project Podcast where I help you, the artist, take the reins of marketing and selling your own work, and this is episode 11.

Just so you know, you can find show notes for this episode at artmarketingproject.com/11. So, this is a topic I'm really interested in talking to you about, because it's near and dear to my heart.

If you're listening to my podcast, if you're reading my emails or browsing my website then you're interested in selling your art, but there's something you need more than artistic talent to be able to be successful at that.

You need to approach selling your art as a business. Without making that internal commitment, your art will just continue to be a hobby, but you say, "Being a business owner is hard." Well, you're right, it is, but there are a few things you need in your art business toolkit for you to be successful.

First of all, you need a willingness to learn about yourself. The good and the bad. Entrepreneurship in my experience and the experiences of all the people I know who have created their own businesses, is like the most intense therapy you'll ever experience.

So, you need to have that willingness to kind of go deep and learn about yourself and what you're good at and what you're not good at. It can bring up some really deep insecurities, some deep feelings that you didn't know you had.

It can also really be phenomenal and kind of help break you through plateaus that you have found personally. So, I have worked with therapists, life coaches, business coaches, I've even done some energy healing in the four years that I've been an entrepreneur, and I expect this to continue as my visibility, my business and my success grow.

Because honestly, that kind of support is required and that kind of knowledge of yourself, if you're going to break through those plateaus and get yourself to the point of really being successful, rather than just doing okay.

Next is, you need to have a deep curiosity to keep testing new things. You can't approach your art business with a, "I've tried it once, it didn't work. I'm never going to do that again" kind of mindset. Because so many things in business require testing and tweaking to be successful.

So, if you're going to have this, "Tried it once, didn't work, done with that." Approach, you're never going to find the success that you're looking for. I've been testing things in my business since day one.

So, I don't know how long you have been following me, but I created this business a number of years ago, just doing one on one work with artists. And I learned that artists could not afford to pay me to be their marketing director.

So, then I created a course, my six week course that I still sell, but I created a course that I had to price a fairly high price and I found that I just couldn't serve as many artists as I wanted to at that price, and in that design of my program.

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — You Need This More Than Artistic Talent

So, what I did eventually, is I took that course that I created and put it inside a monthly membership. So, it's an affordable monthly fee and I'm able to serve so many more artists on a continuing basis and it really now resonates with me, but I did not know that this was where I was going to be several years ago when I started this business.

So, you just have to keep trying and testing, and putting things out there and seeing what works, and then refining that and that's how you can be successful, and how you will be successful.

So, if you don't have that curiosity and that interest in being able to test things, then you're not cut out for this. Another thing you need is an independent spirit. Those of us who do our own businesses, run our own businesses are typically the type who don't want to be fenced in.

We're not a fan of the nine to five working world or its expectations, and we tend to be willing to do whatever it takes to not live that life. And the other thing is, you need to be okay with working on your own.

I personally am an extrovert and I work on my own from my home most of the time, and it can be very, very quiet and you need to be okay with that kind of environment, because when you run your own business, especially a small art business, you're not going to have a staff of 10 people or even three people most likely, who are helping you get all the stuff done in a big office building and it's just not going to work that way.

So, you need to have that comfort in having independence and an independent spirit, and willing to kind of, do this on your own. That being said, I don't think you should completely go at this alone. I think another thing that is important, is to have the support of a coach, a mentor, a group of like-minded artists, or even just a friend or family member who's gone through the process of building a successful business.

And that's because these people can help support you and help you rally when your confidence wanes. It can allow you to see blind spots in what you're doing, because it's easy to have blinders on about your own art and your own business, especially when it's such a personal thing such as creating art that comes from your creative core and your soul.

So, these friends, family, mentors, coaches, can help you step outside of the bubble that is the life that you live, and the business that you're running and the work that you create, and bring new thinking in and help you see things differently so you can see opportunities for growth, changes that you can make that will help you make a big sale and help you really skyrocket your business.

And I'm not saying this just because I am a marketing coach for artists, because I work with ... You know, I have a group of like-minded entrepreneurs who I meet with weekly, I also have a business coach and I'm in a larger coaching group, so I have a cohort of other business owners like me, a much bigger group that I have access to, to ask questions and get feedback, and help me see things differently when I get stuck.

So, I think this is a really, really important thing for you to have. Next, you need to have a commitment to the long game. Building a successful business takes time and you know, you hear this, it takes three to five years for any business to get up on their feet and running, and successful.

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — You Need This More Than Artistic Talent

And I feel that, that is, in my experience, very, very true. And, so, you need to be able to have that perspective and say, "I'm going to commit to this for the next three to five years to make it successful."

And most of the people out there, I'd say 99.9% of people out there who you see that look like they've made overnight successes of themselves, are people who have been working quietly behind the scenes for years to have what looks like a public overnight success.

It can be really easy to give up. Trust me, but you need to have that fortitude during the challenging times and remind yourself of the future that you're creating, and just, that you have committed when you started this business of selling your art, that you made a commitment to yourself that it was going to be a long game and you were committed to that.

So, just remind yourself of that, because I've had those moments and I know you will have those moments, if you haven't already. And one of the big things that's important to that long game commitment, is having confidence in yourself.

It really is important, because it helps you weather those dips in any small businesses lifespan. So, it's important for you to accept that, number one, none of us are 100% confident all the time. It's really easy, especially when you're running your own art business, you're creating this work that comes from your soul, it's a little bit ... You know, this whole independence thing, it can be a little bit like you're living in a silo and you get into your own head real easily, and it's easy for you to say to yourself, "Well, everybody else is super confident and I'm not." That's not true.

Other people are struggling with confidence just like you are, but you need to have confidence in what you're doing and why so you can continue playing this long game. Even if you have those moments when you're not completely confident in yourself, or even in your work if you can have confidence about the why you're doing what you're doing, then that can help really, buoy you until you can get yourself through a challenging period.

And without confidence you can easily come across as needy, pushy, or unprofessional. So, my recommendation, and trust me I have been there and some days I still am: fake it till you make it.

I have a little story about this that I think you'll appreciate. So, we all have had challenges to our confidence in our adult lives and so, oh gosh, this was probably eight years ago, but I was interviewing for my dream job at a big art museum.

And I wanted that job and I knew who was interviewing me, and she was a woman who was just a huge person in the city where I lived, and where this museum was located. And she was very, very well known as a business owner, she owned a big advertising agency and she was intimidating to so many people. Everybody would tell you that about her.

And I knew she would be in on my interview, and I knew I would be nervous. And I looked up online about how to calm your nerves before something like this, before a big interview. And I read this story online about the CEO pose, which is, if you picture in your head the CEO sitting at his desk, hands behind his head, elbows out, feet kicked up on the desk, that's the CEO's pose.

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — You Need This More Than Artistic Talent

And it said, basically this pose can help you build your confidence and build, I think it's like ... I don't remember exactly what the bottom line was, but it helps build the hormones and the energy in your body to feel like you have confidence, and to be able to go into a situation like that and speak confidently and hold yourself with confidence, and walk tall.

And so what I did, is I pulled my car up in front of the place where my interview was, about 20 minutes ahead of time and I pushed my seat back and I leaned my seat back so I could kind of, get into this kick back pose and I put my feet up on the dashboard of my car, and put my hands behind my head and kind of, kicked my elbows out like I was just relaxing.

And I did that exercise for about 10 or 15 minutes ahead of this interview and I walked in super confident, and I nailed the interview and I got the job. And it was just, a really cool exercise, because the bottom line is, I was faking it. I wasn't confident. I wasn't, I was so nervous, but I just went through this exercise to help me appear and have the appearance of confidence, and it worked.

And the funny thing is of course, when you do that and you get the job, your dream job, then your confidence goes up. And it's just a ... It's a cyclical thing, right? So, that's my little story about helping to build confidence in myself.

All right, another important one is, you need to accept that failure is required for you to find success, because failure is a lesson on the path to success. It really is something that, if you're completely afraid of failing in your business, you're not going to be successful.

Owning your own art business and selling your own work is not going to be the right thing for you. So, if you think you're going to start your art business and never have any failures, you're fooling yourself.

And you're not giving yourself the opportunities for the lessons that come from failures, because either you have the success that you were looking for, or you get the lesson that you need. So, failure is good. Try to keep that in your head.

Failing, "failing," because nothing is an absolute failure, but in your head failing at something gives you that lesson, gives you that information so you can be curious and say, "Okay, why didn't this work? And how can it work the next time?"

So, failure is required, failure is a good thing in your business, because it gives you the lesson that you need to move forward and make changes. All right, last on the list is something that might be a little scary to you my artist friend. I know that many artists that I talk to have this fear, but of, you need the ability to put yourself out there.

Many artists I know are introverts and this just doesn't come naturally, but the bottom line is, that you are the core of your business. So, to be successful you're going to need to put yourself in front of people and allow them to get to know you.

Because these days the approach of giving a gallery your work to sell and then popping into an opening reception for an hour once, twice, three times a year is just not the way it works anymore.

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — You Need This More Than Artistic Talent

Buyers these days, especially when a lot of sales happen online, they want to know who they're buying from, especially when they're buying directly from the artist, they want to know who you are. They want to get to know you, they want to have a deeper connection to the work that you're creating and then, the creator that you are. They want that connection.

So, it's important that you put yourself out there. I talk to a lot of artists inside the Art Marketing Project membership who have fears around this, and I think it's really important for all of you to take the step to put yourself out there, and be seen, because what you'll realize is no one's going to die. No one's going to send you awful messages.

The honest truth is, people who pay attention will think it's great, the people who aren't paying attention you don't have to worry about, and it's something that is important in your business and once you do it once, the second time is easier, then the third time is even easier. And the more you do it, the more comfortable you can be with it.

All right, so, if you're going to be successful at selling your art to the world you need to approach this as a business, and take my list of things and behaviors, and beliefs that you need in business to be successful. And I have an action step for you.

So, review this list. Ask yourself in what areas you're strong? In what areas you're weak? And then take some steps to shore up the weak areas. Find a supportive group of artists, work on putting yourself out there, baby steps are fine. Put yourself out there on ... Do a live video or an Instagram story. Those go away after 24 hours. Or any other thing on this list.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this episode and what action steps you were taking. So, as reminder, you can get the show notes for this episode at artmarketingproject.com/11. Thanks so much for joining me today, I'll see you or maybe you'll hear me again next week. Bye.

All right friends, if you have enjoyed this episode and if you look forward to my future episodes, please subscribe. Rate the podcast, leave me a comment, any of the above or all of the above and you can keep up with me on Instagram or on Facebook at Art Marketing Project.

So, I am looking forward to seeing you again next week and I'll catch you next time. Bye.