

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — Episode 13: The Two Things You Need to Sell Your Art

[00:05](#)

Well hi there, friends. I'm Cindy and this is the Art Marketing Project podcast where I empower artists to take the reigns of marketing and selling their work into their own hands. On today's episode, we're going to talk about the two things that you need to sell your art. And I know that sounds like a pie in the sky idea that I'm putting out there, but the reality is that you need two things specifically if you're going to sell your work. And so let's get into talking about that. But before we get started, just a reminder that you can find show notes for this episode and all the links that I talk about on my website at www.artmarketingproject.com/13, which is the number of this episode.

[00:53](#)

So I know it's pretty simple to say there are only two things that you need and I am definitely the person who is consistently beating the drum of the message that marketing and building your art business is a marathon and not a sprint. And there's, you know, I've said this many times in my career that these days there is no one silver bullet that you know, one thing that's just going to make or break it for you in this complex environment today, there are multiple things you need to be doing to be successful at marketing. It's not just one thing, but in this episode, I truly believe there are two things that can make or break your art sales. And this is whether you're selling online or you're selling in person or a combination of both. And one you may know of, the other, you may not.

[01:45](#)

So let's talk about what those two things are. **The first thing, and of course this isn't going to surprise you, is you need an audience.** You know that you have to have an audience before you can expect to sell anything. One of the big things that I want you to consider about having an audience is most people, you know, I run an online business and the expectation or the baseline in the world that I work in is that the people who buy from you within your audience are in the single digits. So one to 3% maybe that you could expect to buy from you. So what that means for you is you don't just need an audience, you need a big audience, and you need to make sure you continually build that audience for your art business if you're going to be successful. So of course in building an audience, there are two important questions.

[02:43](#)

One is who should be your target market to bring into that audience? And number two is how to build a big audience that can really support your sales on the first, I'm sure you've heard me say that understanding your ideal buyer is a critical task because you need to know who you want to be talking to, who makes up the audience that you're building? Who are the people who would be interested in your work? Some mistakes I have seen around identifying your ideal buyer are making your ideal buyer profile too broad. The reason that the word ideal is included in that is because you want to create a description of the best person out there, the person who is absolutely someone who would buy your work because you want to focus on the right person, the right people, and then they're going to be people in the periphery who are going to be interested in it as well.

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — Episode 13: The Two Things You Need to Sell Your Art

[03:42](#)

But if you create an ideal buyer profile that is extremely broad, it's not an ideal buyer profile, it's a very generic, it's not black or white, it's very much in the gray area and you're going to be defeating the purpose of having a kind of a target market or an ideal buyer. And I've seen this before in talking about the age of your ideal buyer. I do a lot of coaching on this with artists and I've had so many artists come to me and say, here's my ideal buyer profile, the age of my ideal buyers, somewhere between 24 and 65 and they kind of live all over and they kind of are just generally in a professional career and so when you get down to it, you're describing like everyone out there, right? If you want to target 24 year olds, very, very different to find those individuals then finding 55 or 60 or 65 year olds to buy your work.

[04:41](#)

And so if you create an ideal buyer profile that super broad, you're not targeting anybody, you're basically targeting everybody, which is not target. It's just like "How about everybody come buy my work," which is not going to work! You have to focus on the people who are most likely to buy because if you try to be everything for everybody, it's just not going to work. You're not going to appeal to anyone. Another mistake that I've seen is thinking that you can't create an ideal buyer profile if you don't have any buyers yet. If every business out there waited until they had buyers to decide on who their target market was, there'll be far fewer successful businesses. You have to create an ideal buyer profile based on what you know and then refine it as you learn more. So look at your work. Look at the style of work that you create, the subject matter.

[05:33](#)

Think about is your work more appealing to city dwellers or folks who live in a more like a smaller cities, smaller town, less urban environment. Is it going to be appealing to a 24 year old or is it really more appealing to a middle aged or older individual? So you just need to come up with what you think is reasonable for the person who would buy your work and then refine after that. I say it a lot. I probably said it on this podcast in 13 episodes. I've said it a lot already, but create a crappy first draft. Just get an ideal buyer profile done and then make it better as you go.

All right, so on the second issue, to really build your audience, you're going to need to do things outside of your comfort zone.

[06:28](#)

Some suggestions are to really be visible on social media, which means live video; Stories (Instagram or Facebook Stories or both); regular posts sharing uncomfortable or scary things on social media; and being real all the time. So if social media and that free opportunity to get your name out there and find an audience is really how you want to approach to this, you're going to have to go big. You're going to have to be there regularly, commit significant time to it. And these days on social media, you really need to be using video using the stories format.

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — Episode 13: The Two Things You Need to Sell Your Art

You need to be taking advantage of all the tools that are out there rather than just static postings. You know, people want to be seeing you. And honestly for me, Instagram stories work really well to bring in a new audience for me. So go big on social media or on other ideas to pursue a big partnership or big sales opportunity like the festival that you're not sure you're ready for, or you know, a third party website, third party in-person sales opportunity. So like a boutique store or a gallery or one of those opportunities.

[07:33](#)

But creating a business partnership for your art business is going to be something that will help you grow that audience. And hopefully what you're doing is understanding who your ideal buyer is and then creating partnerships where you feel like you can find those people. And I had a whole episode on partnerships, it was earlier in my podcast here, and we'll link to that in the show notes, but talking about what to do when you're creating partnerships like this and if you're really looking to grow your audience and that is a reasonable goal for you, especially for everybody out there who is, whether you've been doing this for a number of years or you're just starting out, continuing to build your audience is an important objective that you need to be working on.

[08:27](#)

So if the goal of the partnership is specifically to grow your audience, be clear with the partners that you reach out to, that's what you're looking for and ask them for all of the opportunities that they can help provide to bring their audience into your business and turn them into your audience.

Another idea is to get clear on your story and then put some effort into getting it shared broadly. That could be pitching your story to the media, so your local newspaper or your local TV station, your local public radio station. It could be pitching yourself to be interviewed on more non-traditional media or new media such as a podcast or a YouTube series. You can pitch yourself to write a guest blog post or a guest post for a website where you feel like your ideal buyer would be reading.

[09:20](#)

One that comes to mind for me that I know accepts a lot of guest writers is the Huffington Post, but there are a lot of them out there that bring in writers who are not staffed. They're freelance writers. So if you're a good writer, offer to write an article for one of these websites, another idea, spend some money. So galleries, festivals, third party websites and more, they all spend money to bring in an audience. So if you're thinking that you can just build it and they will come, that really isn't realistic. If you're serious about selling your work and making this a business rather than just a hobby, I think you're going to have to spend some money to make this happen. And not just on materials to create the work, but marketing money and advertising money. So think of spending some money; we'll talk a little bit more about that later, but some of the options include mailing

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — Episode 13: The Two Things You Need to Sell Your Art

postcards, placing ads, whether traditional ads in local magazines or newspapers, radio, TV.

[10:32](#)

There's newer media — you can actually purchase ads on some individual websites and blogs and also digital ads such as Google search, Spotify, Alexa does Facebook and Instagram ads that you can run. So this can be a really good way to grow an audience that is right for you, that is right as buyers rather than just your friends and family and other artists. And I know that that comes up. A lot of people have just other artists following them. Well, advertising yourself and targeting your message to your ideal buyer can really help you grow that audience of buyers.

Okay, so the second thing that you need to sell your art is a promotion plan that gives your audience a reason to buy during a particular time period. So think about it. When do you normally buy things that aren't necessities like food? Of course we all go to the grocery store regularly, but some people are consistent shoppers who are always out in the world looking to buy something.

[11:39](#)

But most people need a compelling reason to buy. So take a moment and think back to the last “just for you” thing that you purchased, something that was attractive or inspiring or just brought out emotion you but was not one of the fundamentals of you know, survival. Think about the last time you purchased something like this. And think about why you decided to buy when you did. So I'll tell you what mine is. So I just subscribed to a meal preparation service. So that's one of these like you order online and they ship you a box with all the stuff prepared for you to be able to cook a meal at home. And I have been interested in this idea just because, well my work life has gotten a lot busier these days between running the art marketing project, creating this podcast, teaching two university courses and still consulting with visual and performing arts organizations.

[12:37](#)

I have been really busy so I have in my head kind of been considering this idea thinking that might be something that I wanted to try. The more I've gotten busy in my days and my weeks, it had me thinking more about those opportunities. But what got me to buy? I got a postcard that offered me a percentage off. It was I think like \$20 off your first four orders. It made me want to subscribe and just try it out because it lessened the impact of the cost. And it also, they said this offer is available for two weeks. And so I thought, well you don't know, seems like might be the time that I'd want to try this. So I bought during that time because I got a postcard offering me the percentage off and gave me a deadline. So this is a promotion. This company picked a timeframe and an offer.

[13:36](#)

They shared that through marketing tools. So for you that could be organic or free tools such as your social media outlets and just putting it on your website and sending it out in your email newsletter and also paid marketing outlets such as Facebook ads or you know, sending a postcard or something along those lines. But

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — Episode 13: The Two Things You Need to Sell Your Art

this company just as easily could have, you know, instead of a postcard could have targeted me with an online ad. So my recommendation for you is to plan a promotion for your art once a quarter. You could do this twice a year if you're just getting started. But the reason here for doing this is if you just think that you can build a website and put items on your website and then hope people are just going to find it and buy, that's not how people work. That's not how consumer behavior works these days.

[14:34](#)

People are expecting a promotion, some kind of opportunity for why right now is the time to buy from you, so decide what that timing is. Think of your audience, think about holidays, special dates or even just make up a date for yourself. If you say, I need to do something in June and I'm just going to do it the last week of June because that makes sense for me, that's just fine. Then decide on the offer. That could be free shipping a percentage off of their purchase added value, so buy this piece, get something else for free along with it. A special pre-sale of a series that you've been working on and promoting and then decide how you're going to get the word out. I absolutely recommend you use your email list and your social media and you know, put it on your website, but then consider using paid tools such as mailing a postcard to your audience if you have their mailing address, online ads such as Facebook and Instagram and other sources, those are probably the two I would recommend the most because if you want to put ads on television, you really need to have something significant that you're promoting because they can be expensive.

[15:46](#)

Same thing with ads on your local NPR station or your public radio station. Those can be really expensive so you need to have something big that's going on. But for small opportunities just for you selling work online, a postcard would do really well. And so would Facebook or Instagram ads. So I know what you're thinking when I say Facebook and Instagram ads. You're saying, "I've tried them before and they haven't worked so I'm not doing it again."

Well I will challenge you on that. Both the idea that they didn't work because that's simply your perception, not necessarily the reality and that your plan is to never do that again. And the reason I will challenge this is because just because you ran an ad, there are all sorts of things that running an online ad can do for you. It can help build your audience, it can engage the audience that you currently have and that can help you sell, but if you simply click the blue button that says boost post and spent \$25 or \$50 on boosting that post, you're not using all the tools available to you and I think one of the biggest challenges of doing that is the fact that you really aren't focusing on a particular goal.

[17:04](#)

When you boost a post, for the most part, the goal or the objective that you would be achieving in doing that is just more visibility of that post or more comments on it. It's not going to get you clicks through to your website for people to buy from

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — Episode 13: The Two Things You Need to Sell Your Art

you and if that's the way you've done it in the past, I would say it probably worked for what those kind of posts can do, but it probably didn't work for you for what you were eventually looking for, which is probably sales on your website and so Facebook ads, which by the way, Facebook owns Instagram and Facebook and Instagram ads run on the same platform, which is Facebook ads, so they're both combined, but Facebook and Instagram ads, which are honestly, they're run from the same, it's just one tool. It's a fairly complex system that can bring you a lot of success if you know how to use it correctly.

[17:58](#)

Done right, Facebook ads, in my opinion, are the tool you need to sell your work online. Because like I said, if you think that you can just build a website and put your artwork out there and people will find it and buy it, that's just not what works these days. And it really didn't work before, back when everyone was selling through galleries, galleries spent money to bring people in their door during a particular time period to purchase from them. And so it's basically using the same model. But I think a lot of artists out there have this idea in mind that like selling your work online just requires putting up a website and it does not. There's far more than that. So maybe you believe me about Facebook ads and Instagram ads being a good place to promote your work, but you know, maybe you don't know anything about how to do that.

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Well, rest easy. I've got an upcoming masterclass on the basics of Facebook ads for artists. I'm actually doing this as a training for members of the Art Marketing Project. But if you're not a member, you can still join the masterclass; you can pay to get into the masterclass and join me live for that. So that masterclass is coming up Tuesday, June 25th at 1:00 PM Mountain Daylight Time. So we'll include the details of that here in the show notes as well as a link to where you can learn more and register. So the Facebook ads for artists beginning masterclass is going to be \$37 and it will be probably 90 minutes of presentation and a Q&A to help you understand this platform and how you can use Facebook ads to support the promotions that you're running to sell your work. So my action step for you today is to download my Ideal Buyer worksheet, which is linked here, as well as my Artist's Promotion Plan free worksheet.

[20:02](#)

So make sure that you have an idea of your ideal buyer and then map out your promotions for the rest of this year. And when you're done, send me a message on Instagram and let me know what your plans are because I'd love to hear and if you can make sure you keep building your audience and doing big things and sometimes scary things to build that audience and you're running regular promotions for you twice a year, three times a year, four times a year. However often it makes sense for you and is doable for you to do that, you're going to see some success, so just a reminder that you can find all the links that I mentioned and the show notes for this [episode@artmarketingproject.com/13](https://www.artmarketingproject.com/13). Thanks a bunch for listening today.

The Art Marketing Project Podcast — Episode 13: The Two Things You Need to Sell Your Art

[20:48](#)

I hope I will see you again next Thursday. Thanks everyone. Bye. Thank you so much for joining me today and listening. I really appreciate it. If you enjoy this content and you have a minute, I would love it if you would rate the podcast or leave a review wherever you listen to podcasts. If you have questions for me, a suggestion for a podcast episode, or if you just want to say hi, you can connect with me on Instagram at art marketing project. Thanks everyone.