

ART SALES STRATEGIES FOR

B2B

MARKETS

How to Find and Approach New Sales Channels

BY CAROLYN G. EDLUND

Artist JJ Galloway (foodandbeverageart.gallery) is a self-employed painter and illustrator who knew she wanted to “leverage” the art she created and earn ongoing income from more of her designs. Her specialty is food and beverage-related art, and she had chosen to pursue income from licensing her work. She sells her originals, but knows that as the copyright holder, each image can be licensed and earn royalties for her.



1

"I needed to find a way to make my business grow and art licensing was a natural fit for me," Galloway said. "Specializing in a niche allows my work to stand out to potential clients who may be publishing books and cookbooks, menus, magazine articles or blogs. My artwork might appear on aprons, napkins, plates or other food-related products."

Art licensing is one channel in the "Business to Business" (B2B) marketplace, which contains a variety of options for artists. Unlike selling to retail consumers (B2C), these channels target customers who are also in business. The artist may be selling wholesale to store owners and buyers who markup merchandise and sell retail to the public. Other potential B2B customers are interior designers, architects or curators, who purchase art for installation into corporate environments. They may be licensees, such as manufacturers or art publishers who use art imagery on any number of physical products, or who sell digital products, such as stock photo providers.

B2B customers don't have the same motivations that B2C customers have for purchasing art. As an artist looking to break into the B2B market, you'll need clarity about your chosen sales channel. This includes an understanding of



2

1 Neapolitan Cake, 2012, by JJ Galloway. Oil on masonite panel, 11" x 14". Copyright © 2012 JJ Galloway. Used by permission of the artist. 2 Merchandise for the Annex Stairwell Project at the Erie Art Museum, 2012, by Todd Scalise. Dye sublimation and vinyl applique on various materials. Copyright © 2012 Higherglyphics. Used by permission of the artist.



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the type of art that is suitable for that market, a knowledge of the way business is done and a willingness to undertake activities that are proactive and targeted to buyers. Selling B2B also involves embracing a sales mindset that is different than attracting retail customers to your booth at a show or fair or using social media to send traffic to your art website.

START WITH RESEARCH

Galloway launched her business by doing serious research, learning everything she could about the art licensing world. She learned about the timeline of a typical project and identified potential customers and decision makers. Then, she discovered prospective clients she didn't expect, such as advertising agencies that could use her artwork in their campaigns.

"There is a lot of licensing business out there," she said. "You just have to pursue it, and be aware that it takes a lot of time and legwork. You must be persistent and flexible. Believing in yourself is key."



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[3] *Sashimi*, 2016, by JJ Galloway. Watercolor on paper, 9" x 12". Copyright © 2016 JJ Galloway. Used by permission of the artist. [4] *Erie POP* at the Erie Art Museum, 2012, by Todd Scalise. Paper-backed vinyl wallpaper, 292" x 144". Copyright © 2012 Higherlyphics. Used by permission of the artist.

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~Carolyn G. Edlund



Galloway's website, portfolio presentation and marketing materials are tailored for her specific niche. The language she uses in advertising and promoting her services identifies the needs her prospects have and the solutions she provides. Galloway knows that licensees want to work with artists who are responsive and can hit deadlines.

"I understand what their goals are, and I'm going to do everything I can to make them happen," she said. "I know that I need to be a good partner to my clients, and that my professionalism will drive repeat business."

Her first step was to create a consistent online presence and branded marketing collateral for her business. Then, she looked at other artists in her niche to get ideas and insights on how they earned a living. She also did an online search for "food and beverage art" to identify potential clients.

"I backtracked from finished products through the production process to learn how it all started, and how art was

sourced," she said. This allowed her to design a plan for success that she needed in order to become a licensed artist.

Her initial outreach to prospects often takes place through email, with a PDF attached that is a digital information kit. The next step is a follow up, which may be direct mail, a phone call or another email, with the goal of scheduling an introductory conversation about the client's needs and how they might work together.

To keep track of each prospect, Galloway uses OnePageCRM (onepagecrm.com), a customer relationship management software program. It keeps her organized, and reminds her of upcoming activities such as meetings, calls or deadlines. She's able to identify her best prospects, and keep everything moving forward toward closing deals with new or existing clients.

"My ultimate goal is to build solid relationships, sign licensing contracts and grow a consistent and repeat income with long-term customers," she said.



[5] Merchandise for the Annex Stainwell Project at the Erie Art Museum, 2012, by Todd Scalise. Dye sublimation and vinyl applique on various materials. Copyright © 2012 Higherglyphics. Used by permission of the artist. [6] Orangesicle, 2013, by JJ Galloway. Oil on masonite panel, 10" x 8". Copyright © 2013 JJ Galloway. Used by permission of the artist.



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Galloway's business strategies are logical and her methods are straightforward because she has done a lot of preliminary groundwork to prepare for licensing her art. If you are also an entrepreneurial artist, an initial part of your business planning will include selecting a sales channel that fits your body of work as well as your interests, much like she has done.

5 STEPS TO BREAK INTO B2B

Step 1: Choose Your Sales Channel & Learn The Ropes

Artists in the B2B market may sell their work to corporate clients, license to manufacturers or art publishers, wholesale their lines to retailers or engage in any number of other business relationships that will

help them earn a living. It's important to choose and then be clear about your chosen sales channel.

Even after choosing a channel, there is no replacement for learning the ropes about any market you plan to enter. This means immersing yourself in research. Get to know the industry lingo, typical buying and lead times, contract terms and standard practices. Is your chosen channel a good fit for the type of art you make? How should your portfolio be presented? What formats are needed? What requirements must be met?

Every B2B customer has needs and concerns with regard to the art they are seeking, and you should place yourself in their shoes to gain insight into their thinking. It's your job as the artist/vendor to understand

[7] Perry 200 Wallboard, 2013, by Todd Scalise. Vinyl on concrete, 96" x 96". Copyright © 2013 Higherglyphics. Used by permission of the artist.

those needs, and to approach prospective customers prepared with answers. Getting caught flatfooted in a meeting where you cannot produce information they need about shipping costs, installation arrangements, turnaround times or other essentials will only guarantee one thing — you won't earn that client's business.

Absorb everything you can about specific markets first by reading books, articles and blogs or joining discussion groups. You may find that consulting with an industry expert who can provide insider knowledge and strategies is well worth the cost. Everything you do ahead of time to create a professional presentation and develop solid solutions for potential clients will give you an advantage when decisions are made.

Step 2: Develop A Business Vision, Goals And Systems

Successful artists who thrive in their chosen B2B channels have a vision of the business they wish to build. (See "Your plan for 2018 starts with Your Vision" on Page 68). To realize that business vision, set long and short-term goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-sensitive (also known as SMART goals). Reaching those goals will involve a series of steps that you can plan out by working backwards from completion to what can be done today. Make those steps bite-sized so that you can check them off your list easily and stay motivated by knowing you are accomplishing tasks.

This type of logical thinking also helps you plan how to take individual business prospects through a process where they ultimately become your customers. This is known as a "sales cycle" and as you come to know the cycle in your own business, you will become more efficient at implementing it.



8

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Measuring results will help you learn what works, what doesn't, and why, thus helping you tailor your sales activities to get the best result. Once you have worked out the kinks in your systems and identified your most successful strategies, you can use them to market, prospect, follow up, negotiate and close sales — over and over again.

Step 3: Stay Organized

If you're just getting started with B2B planning, focus on one sales channel at a time to avoid getting overwhelmed. Artists who pursue too many directions at once often find that it waters down their efforts, slows progress and can become confusing to potential customers. Careful advance planning also helps you understand clearly what you want to achieve with every activity you undertake, and to do so purposefully.

Whether prospects are identified through advertising, press exposure, online marketing, networking, referral or another method, organization is essential. Build your prospect list with as much information as you can learn about each potential customer and plan to customize communications and presentations for them whenever possible. Whether you use a customer relationship management system like Galloway, or create your own spreadsheet, recordkeeping is crucial to staying on top of the sales cycle and knowing where you stand with regard to every one of your prospects.

Step 4: Overcome Challenges

Following up with prospects can be difficult and frustrating for many artists. (See "The Fine Art of Follow Up" on Page 20.) If you feel this way, you're not alone; it's one of the biggest challenges for professional salespeople also. But following up is one of the most important activities you can undertake when selling your art. The vast majority of sales are made after numerous "touches" with a prospect. You must become known and remembered by potential customers, which requires that you contact them on an ongoing basis. And you must either reach them at the time of need or be so familiar to them that they seek you out as the "go-to person" when they are ready to buy.

Sales is a numbers game. The majority of your prospects will not become customers, and you as the artist will experience a significant amount of rejection. Prospective

8 Scottish Shortbread Stack, 2014, by JJ Galloway. Oil on masonite panel, 11.5" x 12". Copyright © 2014 JJ Galloway. Used by permission of the artist

B2B customers may personally love your artwork, but if it doesn't fit well with their own customers or their project, they will not make a purchase. As the saying goes, "It's business, not personal." Keeping the big picture in mind when approaching commercial customers, allows you as an entrepreneur and professional to keep an objective viewpoint and deal with rejection as a part of the sales process rather than reacting emotionally.

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Step 5: Get Creative With B2B

As an entrepreneur, you're the one in control. How you build your business is limited only by your imagination. Working on something you're passionate about that also attracts clients and serves their needs is possible when you have a concept that provides a "win" for all parties involved.

Artist Todd Scalise (higherglyphics.com) used an innovative approach when he started Higherglyphics, a small business based on the concept of *creative placemaking*. He designs and installs art in public places that transforms ordinary spaces into exciting environments.

The artist identified a need in his hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania and developed a market that didn't previously exist. Centered in the rust belt with an industrial past that had long since faded, Erie needed to reinvent itself as a city with a rich history. Scalise realized that art was the perfect vehicle to create buzz for the city, increase civic pride and attract tourism dollars.

Taking a risk by self-funding his first endeavor, Scalise designed and installed the Annex Stairwell Project, a 1,200 square foot, four-story narrative about the history of Erie in the local art museum.

The uniqueness of community art attracts visitors to the heart of a city like Erie where the real return on investment awaits. Community art stimulates more than just the soul – it also stimulates economic development. The Annex Stairwell Project has seen 7,000 visitors a year, and



9 Peanut Butter Cup, 2017, by JJ Galloway. Oil on masonite panel, 8" x 8". Copyright © 2017 JJ Galloway. Used by permission of the artist.

with a projected lifespan of twenty years, will help the art museum draw tourists into the foreseeable future. Earned media from the project has led to significant magazine, newspaper and television exposure. The project was highlighted in the museum's annual fundraising campaign and has been a significant contribution to the Erie Art Museum's \$10 million expansion.

There are additional perks for the client, too. "Once the project is complete and installed, merchandise is created from the project art," Scalise said. "The merchandise provides a residual stream of revenue for the client, and increases their brand awareness. This in turn helps defray marketing costs, because there is no better form of advertising than someone wearing your brand."

Success with merchandise sales is shared by the artist, who takes advantage of yet another B2B model – wholesaling. Scalise leveraged images he designed and used in the Annex Stairwell Project. Those images are printed on products that are wholesaled to the Erie Art Museum store, then marked up to retail price, and sold to the public. Wholesale orders and reorders have produced a five-figure income to date, and continue to earn for him.

"The client isn't the only one who benefits from the publicity. The artist does as well," he said. "It is through this marketing strategy that I have pursued new clientele, creating increasingly larger and larger community art projects."

Subsequent projects have included an exterior mural design for Mercyhurst Preparatory School and a 2-year bicentennial visual public relations campaign to commemorate Oliver Hazard Perry's victory over the British in the Battle of Lake Erie. Given his success with the Annex Stairwell, these projects were fully funded and paid by his clients. The risk he took by self-funding the initial project has paid off with experience in this market, a reputation for results and the trust of his target customers.

GET STARTED

The idea of entering a B2B market may be daunting, but be assured that plenty of other artists are working successfully and profitably in these sales channels. People buy art from people and the commercial accounts you will be approaching are made up of individuals who may find your business concept and your art as exciting as you do. PA

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