

AMP 025: Creating an Art Marketing Plan for 2018



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Coming up on the Art Marketing Podcast, we're gonna be talking about the state of attention in 2018, your step-by-step marketing plan for domination in 2018 to 2019, and how we came up with it.

So you want to sell your art, online and off, and build a thriving art business, is that correct? Good. The question I get asked all the time next is, if I was gonna start an art business in 2018, what would I be doing, where I would I focus all of my energy, how would I approach it? Okay, I love answering this question, but I want to give you some context first, because a question that we've been thinking a tremendous amount as a business over the last few years? Why? It speaks to sort of how our business has evolved as is evolving, and I wanted to briefly touch on this as the overall evolution that this represents really is the foundation of everything that's to come on this podcast.

And so what we've learned so far, as a business, without question, the overall artist demographic, those that self-identify as artists in the various different mediums, is an absolutely insanely big gigantic huge group; it's huge. And I think, like any huge group, you have so many different opinions and ways of going about things and how you feel about the industry and the working you're putting in and the talent and everything else, like with any big group, right?

I think without questions, one of the things that we know is that in attempting, if you are attempting a please a group that big, that means you are not providing a good service for any of them; it's just too diverse. It's boiling the ocean type of task, which as we know, is a great job for the U.S.S. Fail Boat, right? So, we have to have our niche as a business, no different than you have to have your niche for your art, your photography.

So we've come to realize sort of who our sweet spot is, where our sweet spot it, where we believe it to be, quickly to find it's artist that have validated their art, [inaudible 00:02:04] they've sold some art before, are looking to sell more, and they're willing to work at it, right? They like us, they're taking a particularly long view of their business, and willing to work at it and realize that success is not gonna come overnight. Here's where it gets interesting though, and next I'm gonna talk about why transaction fees are actually awesome.

Fees? Fees? I don't allow fees here, fees are not awesome, everybody hates fees. Why would, how could you ever possibly like fees? Let me explain why they don't suck in every single solitary situation. Now first, we're talking about the art world here, right? They're sort of a pre-established, big, thin, industry standard. This is not something that art storefronts invented, not in the slightest; we didn't come up with them.

You start up at the very, very top with agents, or with galleries, or with marketplaces, or other website providers. The fees have been a part of that relationship literally for time eternal. Now, what I believe used to suck about these fees, specifically from a software perspective, is you didn't really get anything for them in the past. You paid them as a part of the deal, and that was that. So what's changed since software, and what we like to call SaaS, which is software as a service, what we do, a hosted solution, has gotten more competitive. I mean there are a multitude of options out there, right? Everything from free to paid and everything in-between, the consumer has so much choice, and all of us are competing for the same business. This is completely awesome for the consumers, awesome for you guys.

So in order to win, you can't just sell software anymore. That's the way the deal was going back ten years and up to a little bit ago. You could just get away with selling software and build a great company, a great business; that party's over, that time is finished, it's done. Artists don't have a software problem anymore, they now have a success problem. You need to be proactive in the success of your customers if you want to build a profitable, meaningful business. At the end of the day, that's what you're selling. You're not selling software, artists don't need software, you don't need software, you're selling success; the path to it, right?

Now success is different numbers for different people, but in all cases, it takes work and forward progress towards that goal. What's more, I would say, still harping on the fees thing, in our case, because we charge these fees, they take our interest as a business, and it lines them with you, the potential customer. The more successful the customer is, the more successful the business is. The analogy that I love that we use is like, it literally takes us as a business entity, the artist business as a business entity, it drops both of us in a rowboat, it throws both of us oars, and the job is to get those oars both moving in the same direction. Start slow at first, absolutely, but after time, you start picking up speed and then next thing you know you're rowing together in the right direction.

So the company ends up becoming sort of an unofficial art consultant, right, based entirely on shared goals. So when I alluded towards this whole evolution thing, what has been amazing, and it really has been amazing, is that we've been at this long enough now, a period of years, with continued rowing in the same direction, i.e. continued education, what impact that can have on both of the businesses, and it's become profound. I mean, you get to see these folks that work at it and work at it and work at it and make a real progress and start getting good. You go from sending no emails to

sending a few emails, next thing you know, you're emailing all the time. Then the next thing you know, you're backing those emails up with Facebook or Instagram ads, and after that, you're really running our playbooks for the holidays and all the various different steps in that.

Now, I'm not saying in all cases we're talking about people selling \$20,000 of art a month. In some cases, it's going from 0 to \$200, then it might be another two months until you sell \$400 in total. Well you know what, that was more than they did online in the entire two years previous before they came onboard. So the point is, is that the forward progress is happening, and we've really, really enjoyed seeing the fruits of our labor in terms of this education and how it affects customers bottom lines. And so, for the stable of artists that we have onboard, the overall sales volume, the volume of their art selling online is going up. It's continuing to increase, which is just, it's just super encouraging and damn rewarding, quite frankly.

So why am I telling you all of this? Most of you are not customers. I'm telling you this because it's through the combination of trial and error, close study of the data, and an ever-increasing base of customers, and that corresponding data, that we have what we feel is a pretty amazing and clear picture of what is working right now to sell art online. It's through this work, through years passing in the ability to be able to study the progression in sales, that we've arrived at this marketing plan that I'm gonna cover and continue to start pounding in the months and years ahead.

I think it's important to explain how we arrived at it, right, like it's not some esoteric, hyperbole thing that we got from some mastermind or some group or some Facebook group, the 21 ways to sell your art online and profit and live on an island. Like, no, no, we have the scars and the nicks and the scrapes to show for this. We've taken a lot of licks in, over the years to get here, run a tremendous amount of case studies, failed more times than I even care to talk about, to get where we are now.

I mean, and it's, we're pretty proud of it actually. We've realized that we need to be laser-focused on not just teaching it, but on holding our customers hands, and believe me, sometimes kicking and screaming as, I get there's stuff that's really hard and technical if you're new to online marketing. A tremendous amount of artists are, but you get better everyday. So that's where we're at, and I just, I think that context is important to, before I lay it out, we really, firmly believe in what we're teaching in this capacity. So, that being said, let's get into the plan, shall we?

Of course I'm gonna start with attention. Before we get there, we gotta talk about attention. I always talk about attention, the coin of the realm, the only thing that really matters. Strange analogy, but it works in my mind, at least. Are anyone an alcoholic out there, are you familiar with alcoholics anonymous or heard of it? It's got 12 steps, right? What's the first step? The first step is the alcoholic has to admit that they are powerless over alcohol, that it's having a serious negative effect on their life, and until they admit that, the recovery process cannot begin.

Now, why the hell would I bring something like that up? Why did I need to bring that up? Am I worried about my only level of consumption? That's debatable, that's debatable. The real reason though, in the alcoholic's case, the whole point of step one of the 12 steps is you cannot get help until you admit you have a problem. You need to come to terms with that, and I love that analogy, because it is absolutely the same with this notion of attention.

So I think the modern entrepreneur, and this is just as true for you guys trying to sell your art online as it is for us selling software, I would say [inaudible 00:09:16] too but it's important, that you need to understand how important attention is in 2018. Step one, you as an artist, photographer, entrepreneur, you need to realize that attention is the essential element of your business, the coin of the realm; it is the be all end all. You are not going to be successful, you are not gonna build a thriving business if you don't come to terms with this and realize. It's step one, and by the way, I am reminded of this all the time.

A most recent example, I'm currently, A, a huge nerd--surprise--B, utterly, totally, and completely obsessed with voice, right? I'm talking about Amazon Alexa, I'm talking about, uh oh it's connected. I'm talking about Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, to a lesser extent, Cortana, and some of the other ones. I've played with them all, I've got multiple devices all over my house, I have my house wired up, I yell at my wife and kids through these things. I love them, right, I've got two phones, I'm playing with them constantly, understanding it. I geek out on it, I love it. What is the biggest problem in voice right now, is discoverability, right?

So you have all of these, and let me explain, you have all of these developers out there--and let's just focus on Alexa now because it's the one with the most market penetration for the time being--Alexa has these things called Voice Skills, right? And so a third-party developer will create a skill and submit it to the app store, and people can use it. Now, there is huge, tremendous problem. You've got all of these developers out there that are attempting to create these skills that are putting all this time, energy, and effort, and hard work into creating the skills, they're submitting it to the skill store and, nothing; crickets. There is a tremendous, huge, discoverability problem with Alexas skills, and a whole lot of these guys are creating these skills, and they're not getting activated. No one's using them, no one's leaving reviews, and it's a huge, huge problem. Maybe you're not into voice, let's flip the script a little bit and talk about the App Store.

If you're in App Store, and I don't care if you're talking about Google Play or iOS, whatever one you're on, try submitting an app to that store right now. Spend all your time, energy, and effort, creating, programming, storyboarding, coming up with your app, whatever it is, submit it, go through all of that, and then see what happens. For most of them, it's crickets. There are so many apps in that store that there is just no way anyone is going to ever find yours, that's just the way that it works.

Okay, but there are successful apps, there are successful Alexa skills. How are those ones getting discovered? What are they doing differently? And yes, in very fringe cases, they got very lucky, but in most cases, you know what happens? That particular app developer understood and understands attention. They either have a brand name that drives that traffic and gets attention, or they have an email list or a Facebook group, or they called 3,000 people or they knew how to hack and get featured on radio shows, or they had a buddy that works at Apple and got them featured app of the day, or featured Alexa skill of the day.

The point is, the only ones that are succeeding in those markets right now, are the ones that understand how to get attention. It's the whole ball game. It doesn't matter how good their app is, it doesn't matter how damn good your art is, if you want to stand a chance to build a relationship and make a sale, you need to understand attention. So step one is understanding that, right? But once you get it, step two, working all year long getting more of it. Once you start realizing that, once you come to terms with that first step, you've got to start asking the right type of questions, the right type of critical questions, about your business and where you are allocating and spending your marketing budget and time.

How is what am I doing, how is what I'm doing driving and giving me more attention for my art? How is this show that I'm about to attend for an entire weekend and spend \$1500 on, giving me more of the right kind of attention for my art? Is that \$500 I am about to spend for a magazine insert that talks about my art, more effective than the attention that I will get from spending that \$500 on Instagram ads? Those are the type of questions that you will find you start asking once you realize how critical this role attention plays in. And that's it, there's no need to complicate it further than that.

So part one of your marketing plan for 2018, 2019, until further notice, is market all year long and do so consistently, and it's all about attention. Love Gary V's book here. If you're not familiar with who Gary V is, famous marketer, prolific author, New York Times Bestselling guy, he's got a book called Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook. The premise, summed up quickly, is you give, give, give--jab, jab, jab--provide value, then after you've done that, you have the audacity to go for the right hook, to go for the sale. So with Gary V, it's Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook, with us, we'll call it romance marketing; it's the same thing.

So where do most artists go wrong? I can't tell you how often I see this. Most artists come into the digital space, and they go around right hooking all day long. Buy my art 20% off, 40% off, prints available, come check out my prints, come to my show, [inaudible 00:14:24], right hooking machine, right? They spend \$15, they come on, I ran, I took your advice, I went onto Facebook I ran these ads, I spent \$150 on these Facebook ads and I got nothing, I got crickets."

Oh, really? Really? So you showed your ads to a bunch of people that don't have any idea who you are, don't know what you do, don't have an emotional connection with you, and quite frankly don't give a damn about what you do, you spent money to give them a 40% off coupon on the first time you've seen your art, and it didn't work? Whose fault is that? Is that Facebook's fault? No, right?

So that's what most artists do, they're running around right hooking all day long. So knowing this, knowing this, if you don't do that, you need to market, you need to jab, jab, jab, all year. You need to romance market all year long. Once you know that and you realize that, the second part of it, is you have to do so consistently, consistently, and this is so key. You ... it's quite literally the secret to success. I saw, I was reading something the other day it was profound, I think somebody shared it on Twitter and I saw it. It was

analyzing like a whole bunch of mega-successful people and it was geeking out on their morning routines, like everybody loves geeking out on morning routines.

If you listen to some of the other podcasts it's like, "Oh what's your morning routine, what's your morning routine", right, and everybody asks that question for the same reason. We all think that there's some sort of special thing these high performers are doing in their morning routine. Maybe they get up and take a cold shower and have a coffee, a Bulletproof coffee, maybe they get involved in some meditation and do some yoga or whatever it else, and if I just go and do that stuff, then that's gonna change everything and that's gonna be the game changer; wrong.

This quote that I saw on social media, which I think was awesome, it said the universal thing about some of these high performers that it was detailing--actually I don't even know that, I just assumed that--but the number one thing, the secret sauce for all of these high performers? It was not the routine that they set, it's never the routine. It is their monomaniacal focus on never missing a day. I read that and that was so profound to me, and I think that's so true. It doesn't matter what you make your morning routine or what steps you take, it's just how consistently you do it. It is showing up every single solitary day and doing it.

So, leave you with those two things. You market all year long and you do so consistently. That's it, that is how you're gonna get more attention and more sales. So, let's say you're gonna do that, you're gonna market all year long and you're gonna do that consistently. Step two is sales. Sales, called specials for those of you who don't like discounting, but sales when the time is right. So you jab, jab, jab all year long, you have the audacity to right hook. For most people, this really comes true in the fourth quarter, more art is traditionally sold in the fourth quarter than in any other time throughout the year, but in addition to those end of year wind-down holidays, there's also other holidays throughout the year.

Another great time are holidays and events that are specific to your brand's style, subject matter, and material. If you're a photographer shooting our four-legged friends the dog and it's National Dog Day, probably a good time to go for a sale, right? So whatever those holidays are that fit for your niche, you go for the sales. And then also, you go for the sales when the opportunities present themselves, i.e. after art shows, i.e. when somebody joins your email list for the time, or when you just finish a Facebook contest and they didn't win and then you say, "Hey, here's a coupon code."

So all of those opportunities that present themselves, when it is appropriate and a smart time to go for the sale, you go for the sale. Now a key portion of all of this is the trade craft, right? It's what we've laid on and what we call our playbooks, and we've been covering in these playbooks, I mean I'm assuming a lot of you have probably never seen one, I'll put links in the show notes by the way for the ones that we have covered, but we cover every single aspect of a sale, and it's not just what you do leading up to the sale, it's not the advertising portion of it if you're running ads. It's how you ask for the sale itself, what you do after the fact, and then what you even do after the fact after that, and all you have to do is start learning how to run these playbooks, and then you just never stop running them. We're updating them regularly with the latest and greatest too, formalizing the Facebook Messenger one now, actually, which I'm insanely excited about.

So you market all year long, you do so consistently, you go for the sale when the time is right. Now granted, those two have a bunch of intricate pieces in them, but that's what we're teaching, intending to teach; that's what we're 100% laser-focused on going forward. So, Patrick, in 2018, if you were just starting an art business, what would you do? I would have my own website, I would constantly be gathering emails, i.e. attention I own. I would be marketing like crazy on both Facebook and Instagram. Look, it's all about attention, it always has been and it always will be. Right now, that is where the attention is. I reserve my right to change my mind at any point in time, but my mind won't get changed, I will just go wherever the attention, if Facebook goes down in a heap, Hindenburg blimp status and burns up, we'll move onto the next one because the attention will go somewhere else.

So there is not one-size-fit-all advice, some of you might have a really young audience, then great, you're on Snapchat; the attention is there. Some of you might have an art that fits particularly well on Pinterest, fantastic, attention is there. But for most, at a macro, Facebook and Instagram are where the eyeballs are.

What else would I be doing? I'd be running contests with Facebook Messenger and ManyChat. I find it to be one of the highest leverage activities I've ever seen in my entire life. If you listen to episodes 18, 20, 21, highly recommend it, go through that particular portion of the playbook. I just, I love Messenger marketing, it is absolutely the way of the future. I think just by the fact that you're hearing this puts you ahead of 90% of artists,

90%, 905, 98.5% of artists out there, pretty much everyone let alone artists, who am I kidding?

So you get into this level of marketing, you're gonna start winning. I would be attending art shows and fairs. Yes, they still work, and if you run, if you exhibit at them intelligently, i.e. run our fishbowl technique and then run a corresponding playbook after the fact--we're about to update this by the way in a future episode--you're gonna do great at them, right? I would run sales throughout the year when it fits my business, and that's it. That's it, that is my 2018, 2019, and until further notice marketing plan.

It's not super sexy-sounding, I'll give you that, but it works, You just gotta stay at it and do the work, you have to be cognizant of the fact that it's gonna take three to five years to build anything of value, and if you have not been for the, I don't care if you've been an artist for the last 20 years, if you have not been building a reservoir of your own attention, you're a doggone startup and you've gotta realize this. And so that's where you're at.

And so, the question becomes, "What is this podcast gonna do about it? What's in it for you, what is Art Storefronts as a business gonna do about it? This is gonna be the focus going forward, right? It's going to be the lens with which we focus all of our content. So we're gonna come with more content about attention, about how to get it, about how to move it around, how to move it from one platform to another. We're gonna come with more content about how to romance market to get that attention, how to jab, jab, jab to get that attention, all year long and consistently. We're gonna spend more time on the playbooks, and these really are the key but, they're what separates the men from the boys, they just are.

We're gonna do more content on how to generate attention, retain attention, sell to that attention once you have it, and also, we're gonna come with more interviews from real artists and photographers that are going a great job on all of the above. They are seeing success of all of the above, and attempting to kind of distill and unpack how they're achieving it. We've had a couple of those in the past, but we want to do more of them, and so we're gonna make sure, selfishly in our own case, that every new customer, and old customer, listens to this podcast. We need them to understand it to get ready to put it into practice if they're not doing it already, and constantly be reminded of it because I think it's so easy to get distracted and start running off to chase this shiny object or that shiny object, when you don't need to. You just focus on these tenets.

I think, in terms of what else is coming up during the time of recording this podcast, we're early April, right, and I know for a great deal of you, show season is gearing up. So for the next couple of weeks, if you follow anything that we do, if you've listened to this podcast in the past, you'll be able to find it just by searching our sites, but we're gonna come with everything that we got, the kitchen sink included, on our best show content. Everything from how to find shows you can exhibit at, booth setup and the best way to do that, how to best capitalize in your booth traffic, how to capture leads at shows, how to follow up with them after the facts, and we're really excited about, I think we've got some great stuff.

So if you're listening to this and you're like, "Oh great", for the next couple of weeks, "I don't do shows, it doesn't fit my art, I can't drive that far, shows aren't in the cards", that's fine, that's fine, I get that, no worries. If it's not in the cards, time to start running contests on Facebook with ManyChat and Messenger. We're gonna come up with an update playbook on how to do just that, plenty of podcast ammo to go in that department as well. And again, Messenger marketing is just, it's insane, it's just absolutely insane. So summon things up, tension is key, you gotta market all year long to get it, and do so consistently, you run sales when the time is right. You do that, and it's just a game of pressure over time; it's just a game of pressure over time.

Now speaking on attention, we'd love some more of it too. I like attention, so if you're getting value out of the show, love, love, love to have you leave us a rating on iTunes. It strokes our ego, let's be honest it strokes our ego, and also it helps people discover the podcast and we would be highly appreciative. So let us know what you think, leave us a five-star review on iTunes, let us know what content you'd like to hear more of on the show, what's working for you, what you'd like to hear about, and thanks for listening and have a great day.