

BY LINDA MARIANO

YOUR "NO EXCUSES"

DAILY

TOP 10

FOR SALES SUCCESS

START—AND END—EVERY DAY IN A GREAT WAY AT YOUR GALLERY



Roderick Stevens
Original Painting
- "American Wrap"

START YOUR YEAR OFF RIGHT! Whether you're new to the art business or an experienced gallery owner, dealer, or artist, to make this year a good one, you need to know the sales basics that serve as the foundation for a successful art career. For almost every endeavor, it's best to begin by being prepared, so make sure you think of our Daily Top 10 every single day.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Each day begins with possibility. Be mindful of how you present yourself to potential clients, as your attitude affects how clients perceive you and how you perceive yourself. Says award-winning artist Ilene Richard (ilenerichard.com), "I am fun and professional to work with. I make my clients feel very much at home when they come and visit me in my colorful studio."

It's not just your energy that's important, but your physical appearance as well. Know your market. Should you be wearing Ralph Lauren or Hugo Boss?

Never underdress. And don't forget your fingernails. Remember, everything counts.

STAGE AND FRESHEN

Take a look around your space. Is it inviting? What are the key elements you can use to make it more so? Try to have your space pack the maximum appeal, starting with sound to invite clients in and make them want to linger. Choose the music that fits them, not you—and invest in a good sound system.

Next: How does everything look? What is the first impression someone will have when

"BECOME AN AUTHORITY ON THE ARTISTS YOU REPRESENT."

they walk in the door? If it isn't attractive to your customers, re-stage your space. Litsa Spanos with Art Design Consultants (adcfineart.com) tells it like it is: "Warm colors are inviting and encourage visitors to relax and stay awhile. If your space feels a little cold and seems to be missing an element of comfort, then turn up the heat with warmer colors and the right artwork."

Do a sight inspection to make sure that your display is correct and that each piece has its own space and isn't overshadowed by another. Lighting, too, is a key element that can literally make or break a sale. Make sure the lighting can be adjusted to show the mood and personality of individual pieces. And cleanliness is almost everything! You are selling an experience, and no one wants their experience to include dirt.

It might not be the first thing you think of, but lighting a candle can be another way to increase your gallery or studio's appeal. Clients respond to comfort in the air, and a simple scent can put them at ease while also supporting the theme of your art. No matter how much you enjoy them, the smell of deli sandwiches and french fries do not add to your ambiance.

Another key element is remembering to change up your display, re-hanging and re-merchandising fre-

quently to keep your space alive and fresh. You will be surprised at how much doing so affects your enthusiasm for your artwork.

MARKETING MATERIALS 101

3 Be absolutely sure you have the information you need to talk about the artwork as well as the right printed materials to give to your clients. The value of brochures, books, and



Ilene Richard at the easel in her Studio Gallery

Ilene Richard - Snazzy Gals™ at Western Avenue Studios, MA

reprints of articles explaining each artist's background and body of work, as well as individual pieces, cannot be underestimated. Be sure you keep them up-to-date and easily accessible. And have electronic versions of all materials available for customers who live through their iPads.

And everyone knows how important business cards are in the sales process. Take a look at yours right now and check for the key essentials. Every line should be legible,

with text no smaller than 8-10 point font. A catchy design with your logo and tagline makes your card memorable. Your phone number, e-mail, and website addresses should already be included, but make them bold so they're impossible to miss. And, last but not least, never run out!

KEEP YOUR CLIENTS CLOSE

4 Continual client communication is essential to sales success. To

make that communication easier keep a client-history list. This is a simple database, either on a computer or written out, with every client's most recent contact information and titles of the pieces they've either bought or expressed interest in.

Start every day by reviewing your client-history list, making necessary updates and determining who to follow up with that day. And you'll be surprised at the rave reviews you'll get by sending out client-response cards.



These are hand-written cards thanking your client for their recent visit or purchase or even just saying hello. Keep them handy and send some out at least once or twice a week.

KNOW YOUR ARTISTS AND YOUR INVENTORY

5 Once your space is ready, the next important element is education. To have great sales success, you must know your artists and your inventory.

Let's start with the former. Become an authority on the artists you represent. What is the artist's background? Why was this piece created? Why is that one important? How does it fit in with the rest of the work done by the artist? The client wants to connect with the details of the artist's life and inspiration, and

they expect you to be able to discuss both readily. If you are the artist in question, don't be shy—be ready to talk about your art and yourself in a compelling manner.

As for the inventory side of things: When you're in sales, what could be more valuable than knowing what you have to sell? Know the details of the art that you have on hand and what else you can get. James LaMantia of publisher LaMantia Fine Art (lamantiagallery.com/fineart/) knows the importance of providing galleries with what they need: "My dealers can get a hold of me in a heartbeat...they can get answers [and] marketing materials or place an order. We listen so they can be successful."

Create an inventory guide that shows the title, medium,

and materials used, size, series data, pricing, and any details on special promotions or incentives for each piece. When a client has a special request or wants to commission a piece, you need to be ready with the details of how that works and a timeline for delivery. As Ilene Richard says, "Customizing pieces to their specifications makes the customer feel like they had a hand in creating the painting. This pretty much solidifies a sale for me."

10 LUCKY PEOPLE

6 Remember that client-history list? It's time to put it to work. Pick 10 people from the list every day and connect with them by e-mail or phone. Tell them some news about your gallery or studio, update them on the desirability of their

collection and inform (or remind) them of an upcoming event. While you have their attention, bring up an item you know they're interested in, creating some urgency by offering a limited-time sales opportunity.

To really make an impression, try to engage the client on a personal level, mentioning family and friends when appropriate.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

7 Always welcome your guests. Never confront them. Let them know you are glad to see them and are there to assist them when they have questions or need information. Remember the old adage that everyone loves to buy but no one wants to be sold. It's true. Never prejudice, which is an easy thing to say but a hard one to do. You never know who might be your next major client. And don't forget to wear a name badge; a proper welcome includes asking for the guest's name and also letting them know yours.

THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES

8 It's called the "30/5 Rule." You have 30 seconds to create a good first impression and just five minutes to capture a customer's attention and interest.

Tailor each encounter to the person you are with. To do this, ask a few quick questions: Have you been in

Litsa Spanos discusses art selection with client

"LET THE CLIENT SHARE WITH YOU WHAT IS IMPORTANT AND EXCITING TO THEM."

before? Do you collect art? What kinds of art do you enjoy? And really listen to the answers. Find out what caught their attention and adjust your presentation to fit that interest. Tell them a little about the gallery or studio, its purpose and the artists and artwork on display. Then focus on something new and exciting.

Next is the "catch and release" phase. After your introduction and a brief discussion, release the client and allow them to have their own experience. Watch for the "nibble," but give them space. Let them ask questions. Watch as they begin to zero in on the artwork that's of interest to them. Always be careful not to oversell artwork that you particularly like. Instead, let the client share with you what is important and exciting to them.

CLOSING THE SALE

9 This starts with your space. Every gallery has locations within it that showcase paintings or sculpture more powerfully than others. The lighting or the angle of a wall can make a difference in how the artwork presents. Know where these "power spots" are and use them to magnify the importance of the art the client has selected. Once a client

focuses on a piece, move it, even if it is already in a great location. Doing this makes the connection between the customer and the artwork more personal.

Once you have done this, ask a few questions. Would you hang this in the bedroom or the living room? (Remember the adjustable lighting—it's extra important in these key spots.) Do you prefer the gold frame or the walnut? Would you showcase this on a pedestal or on a shelf? Do you want it shipped or would you like to take it with you? All of these questions start to give the piece permanence with the client and make it feel like it is already theirs.

Creating a sense of urgency—whether relating to availability, price, or some other factor—is also key. But remember: Avoid the hard sell. Giving them a reason to buy now doesn't mean pressuring them. It's just giving information to help them better understand the purchase opportunity.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOW-UP

10 When a client buys a piece, what they're really buying is an experience, of which the artwork is a souvenir. Provide your client with an experience



LaMantia Fine Art's Daniel Del Orfano - "City of Love"

that they'll want to repeat by going the extra step even after the sale is already finished.

Roderick Stevens, artist and creator of the "Yes, It's a Painting!" series (yesitsapainting.com), sums it up nicely: "I find that an immeasurably important aspect of selling art is facilitating the pleasure of owning it. I like to exert the extra effort to help diminish any 'buyer's remorse' one might feel by offering various services and alternatives that help the collector feel at ease, including delivering and installing larger pieces whenever possible."

It's said that fortune favors the prepared mind.

You'll be better prepared by making these "top 10" steps part of your daily work routine. **ABN**

About the author: With a career that spans 30 years, ABN Contributing Editor Linda Mariano is a leader in marketing, brand management, e-commerce, and promotion initiatives. Through her company, LM² Art Marketing & Licensing (LM2ArtMarketing.com), Mariano brings her expertise and years of experience to help artists and art industry leaders set and achieve high goals. She can be reached at LMariano85@yahoo.com.

