

The Artist as Entrepreneur

Getting Down to Business: What's My Market

Lesson Description

In this lesson, students will continue to develop their business description by carefully analyzing their customers. This will require that they consider the type of art they wish to produce, the price range for that art, and the type of competition in the field. They must also state factors that will set them apart from others producing similar work.

Concepts

market plan
business plan

Related Subject Areas

business
marketing

Objectives

Students will:

choose venues where their art will be seen
define their market

Materials

art magazines and catalogs
artists' websites
scrap paper
The Artist as Entrepreneur notebooks

Procedure

1. Explain that there are numerous approaches for marketing art. In this lesson, students will identify their customers and explain in what ways they plan to compete with other artists creating similar work. They will develop a marketing plan in a later lesson.
2. Explain that describing the art consumer depends very much on the artist's work. If the artist produces fine art – one-of-a-kind pieces or limited numbers – the approach to defining customers will be quite different than the artist producing computer graphic art, which is quite different than the artist producing jewelry, which is different from the artist producing prints for posters or greeting cards, and so on.

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3. Begin by focusing on fine arts. This area too can have many variations. Does the artist create large-scale or small-scale pieces? Must pieces be site-specific? There are many questions that the business plan must address. If the artist creates small-scale, portable pieces, his or her potential customer base can be geographically diverse. The goal is to get the work seen by many people. Although small-scale pieces are portable, packing and shipping expenses can make showings in far-away places prohibitive. For the artist who is just starting out, it is best to find opportunities in local markets.
4. Begin a discussion about art venues with which students may be familiar by asking the following questions.
 - ◆ Which local galleries have you visited? (*Answers will vary.*)
 - ◆ Which local art fairs have you attended? (*Answers will vary.*)
 - ◆ In what other locations or venues have you seen art displayed and offered for sale? (*Answers will vary, but encourage students to think about unusual locations, such as restaurants, store windows, swap meets, or the doctor's office.*)
5. Explain that the artists who are just starting out must be creative, not only in their art, but also in how best to get their art seen by the public. Instruct students to brainstorm specific sites in their locale. Write their suggestions on the board. Suggest locations the students may not have thought of. (*empty store fronts, malls, school buildings, libraries*) Display Visual 1, *Where to be Seen*.
6. Ask students if any of the locations listed on the visual could be used for graphic art, where many copies are produced, such as posters, greeting cards, fabric art, and so on. (*Students should recognize that some of the venues would work for this type, although not many. Posters can be hung in store fronts; swap meet rental space would work.*)
7. Instruct students to think of low cost approaches to marketing graphic arts. (*Answers will vary, but some venues would include arts and crafts shows, consignment shops, specialty shops, record stores, flower and gift shops, and coffee houses.*)
8. Explain that finding customers for computer graphic arts is different from the approaches for fine arts and graphic arts. Business cards are effective, but authoring a top-notch web site is key. Customers will want to see your work, and will judge it according to creativity and functionality. Instruct students to brainstorm low-cost methods of getting a website viewed. (*Answers will vary, but students might consider entering website competitions, using key words that will place the site high on search engines, and asking related businesses to link to your site.*)

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9. Finally, instruct students to think of sites where craft items, such as jewelry, furniture, or clothing could be seen by potential customers. (*This would include craft fairs, consignment shops, specialty shops, flower and gift shops, craft alliances, and street fairs.*)
10. Explain that before students can continue their business descriptions, they must consider the price range of the art they intend to market. When pricing their art, they will have to consider their costs of producing the art. However, for this exercise, they might consider prices they have seen other artists charge for similar work. The price range of their art will play a part in deciding where the venues they seek are located. For example, a jewelry artist may seek high-end community craft shows rather than those at the local high school. However, for the artist that is just starting out, it may be difficult to be accepted into such venues. Such shows are often by invitation only.
11. Instruct students to add to their business descriptions. This paragraph should include a statement which answers the question, "Who are my customers?" The answer to this question should include the types of venues where the artist plans to have his or her art seen and the type of area where these venues are located.
12. Explain that ordinarily a business description would include a comparison between the new business and businesses offering similar products, pointing out why customers would prefer the product or the operation of the new business. However, it is much more difficult to compare the work of artists than it is to determine why someone would prefer Joe's Car Wash to Bob's Car Wash. People's preferences in art are very personal.

Closure

Choose a few students to read aloud their business descriptions. Ask classmates to help refine statements that may have omitted pertinent information.

Explain that students have essentially completed their business descriptions. The final part of the description will be to determine their business structure.

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Visual 1

Where to be Seen

Government buildings

Malls and empty stores in malls

Public buildings, including libraries, schools, and train stations

Commercial sites such as cafes, hair salons, bookstores, furniture stores, and so on

Yards, parks, beaches, or empty fields

Rooftops

Storage paces in storage buildings

Loft spaces

Concert hall walls and performance spaces

Slide projections on billboards, walls or other sites

Swap meet rental spaces

Newspaper advertising space

Vehicles as exhibition sites, such as your car, or flatbed truck exhibitions

Source: The Practical Handbook for the Emerging Artist. Margaret R. Lazzari. Hartcourt Brace & Company. 1996. pg. 27.